A cross-cultural analysis of apology strategies: Chinese and British

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Chapter 5   Findings: Evaluative Questionnaires

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of evaluative questionnaires are presented. In each questionnaire, the participants were asked to assess, for each role play situation: 1. social distance between the speakers in terms of closeness; 2. social power of the speakers in terms of status; 3. severity of offence; and 4. degree of ‘face-losing’ for the apologiser. Correlations between the participants’ evaluations of the above aspects were calculated. The participants were also asked to write down what they considered to be the most appropriate and the least appropriate strategies for each situation. The participants were also asked to reflect on aspects of the open role plays (e.g. video recording, to offer some insight into methodological issues.

5.2 Native Speakers of British English

5.2.1 Evaluation of Contextual Variables

The following Table 5.1 shows the evaluation of contextual variables in the twelve situations by the NB participants.

5.2.1.1 Social Distance

In terms of social distance, the participants were asked to assess the degree of closeness between the speaker and the hearer in the twelve given situations. They rank the closeness according to a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘1’ = ‘very close’ to ‘6’ = ‘not close at all’. For NB participants, social distance was considered to be close in RS8 (mean=1.81), RS9 (mean = 1.06) and RS11 (mean = 1.38). On the other hand, social distance was assessed to be far in RS4 (mean=5.81), RS5 (mean = 5.50), RS7 (mean = 5.63) and RS10
(mean = 5.56). The social distance between student and tutor was judged to be relatively distant in RS1, RS2 and RS6.

5.2.1.2 Severity of Offence

The offence was ranked most severe by the NB participants in RS11 (mean = 1.31), followed by RS4 (mean = 1.44) and RS10 (mean = 1.69). RS2 (mean = 2.81), 6 (mean = 2.88) and 12 (mean = 2.38) were also considered to be quite severe by the NB participants. The least severe situation was RS7 (mean = 5.81). RS5 (mean = 5.63) and RS9 (mean = 4.50) were also assessed as light offences.

5.2.1.3 Status

The NB participants mostly assessed the speaker and hearer in the situations as having relatively equal status, with the apologiser having higher status than the apologisee in RS8 (mean = 2.88). The tutor in RS1, 2, 6 and the manager in RS4 were also judged to have higher status.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role play situation s</th>
<th>Evaluation of Social distance between speakers</th>
<th>Evaluation of severity of offence</th>
<th>Evaluation of status of the speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. mobile phone went off in a tutorial</td>
<td>Mean 3.69</td>
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<td>4.69</td>
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<td>Mean 3.63</td>
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<td>Std. Deviation .885</td>
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<td>3. noise complaint</td>
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<td>Std. Deviation .704</td>
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<td>Mean 5.81</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>5.63</td>
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<td>11. damaged friend's mobile</td>
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<td></td>
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Table 5.1 NB participants’ evaluation of contextual variables

(social distance: 1=very close, 6=not close at all; severity of offence: 1=very severe, 6=very light; social power: 1=much higher status, 6=much lower status)
5.2.2 Evaluation of Degree of ‘Face-losing’

Overall, the NB participants did not perceive it to be ‘face-losing’ to apologise as shown in Figure 5.1. ‘Very face-losing’ was only indicated by 4% of the NB participants across all the situations; ‘not face-losing at all’ by 41.66% of the participants; and ‘not face-losing’ by 16.1% of the participants.

Table 5.2 shows the mean of NB participants’ evaluation in each situation. The NB participants considered it more ‘face-losing’ to apologise in RS4 (mean = 3.44) and RS11 (mean = 3.75). The least ‘face-losing’ situations was RS7 (mean = 5.63) and RS9 (mean = 5.38).

Figure 5.1 Evaluation of ‘face-losing’ across all situations by NB participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play Situations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>4.38</td>
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<td>1.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. didn't turn up for a tutorial</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.731</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. noise complaint</td>
<td>5.19</td>
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<td>.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. being late for an interview</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>2.220</td>
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<td>5. mistook a stranger for a friend</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.167</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. return of book</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. incorrect amount in payment</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
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<td>8. cancelled cinema date</td>
<td>4.94</td>
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<td>1.289</td>
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<td>9. forgot DVD</td>
<td>5.38</td>
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<td>.885</td>
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<td>10. spilt soup on waitress</td>
<td>4.81</td>
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<td>1.377</td>
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<td>11. damaged friend's mobile</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>1.949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. gave wrong deadline</td>
<td>4.38</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1.544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Extent of ‘face-losing’ by NB participants

5.2.3 Evaluation of Appropriateness of Strategy Use

Across all twelve situations, ‘explicit apology’ was considered the most appropriate strategy (n=177). The next strategy was ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=101), then ‘offering explanation’ (n=65) and ‘offering repair’ (n=57) and finally ‘future forbearance’ (n=13). It is important to remember that the participants could choose more than one strategy type at a time.

In terms of least appropriacy, ‘future forbearance’ was most frequently chosen by NB participants across all the situations. The next least appropriate strategy was ‘offering explanation’ (n=66). ‘Offering repair’ (n=42) and ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=18) were also mentioned as not appropriate in some situations.

5.2.3.1 Situation 1: Mobile phone in tutorial

Here, the most appropriate strategy to NB participants was ‘explicit apology’ (n=16). However, six participants rated ‘future forbearance’ to be most appropriate.
The least appropriate strategy here was ‘offering explanation’ (n=10). ‘Offering repair’ was also thought to be inappropriate in this situation by 7 participants. Only male participants mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=1) and ‘future forbearance’ (n=3) as inappropriate.

5.2.3.2 Situation 2: Didn’t turn up for a tutorial

In situation 2, 93.75% of the NB participants judged ‘explicit apology’ (n=15) to be the most appropriate strategy. 50% of the participants also mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=8) and 43.75% included ‘offering explanation’ (n=7). More male participants perceived ‘taking on responsibility’ to be an appropriate strategy in this situation, while more female participants considered ‘offering explanation’ and ‘offering repair’ to be more appropriate.

62.5% of the NB participants rated ‘offering explanation’ to the least appropriate strategy. ‘Future forbearance’ was mentioned only by the male participants (n=5. 62.5%).

5.2.3.3 Situation 3: Noise complaint

87.5% of the NB participants judged ‘explicit apology’ to be the most appropriate strategy in situation 3 (n=14). ‘Offering explanation’ was also considered to be the most appropriate strategy for this situation by 75% of the NB participants (n=12). More female participants chose ‘explicit apology’ and ‘offering explanation’ than male participants. ‘Future forbearance’ was rated as the least appropriate strategy for situation 3 by the majority of the NB participants (n=12, 75%). 62.5% of the male participants and 25% of the female participants also mentioned ‘offering repair’ in this situation.
5.2.3.4 Situation 4: Being late for an interview

In situation 4, 'explicit apology' and 'offering explanation' were evaluated as the most appropriate strategy by 100% and 87.5% of the participants respectively. Another 50% of the NB participants also mentioned 'taking on responsibility', with more female participants preferring this strategy.

'Future forbearance' was considered to be the least appropriate strategy by over half of the NB participants. 75% of the male participants judged 'taking on responsibility' (n=6) to be not appropriate in this situation; however, this was not mentioned by female participants. On the other hand, more female participants (n=4) included 'offering repair' than male participants (n=1).

5.2.3.5 Situation 5: Mistook a stranger as a friend

For situation 5, 62.5% of the NB participants felt that it was appropriate to use 'explicit apology', 'taking on responsibility' and 'offering explanation'. More female participants considered 'taking on responsibility' to be more appropriate in this situation.

Again, 'future forbearance' was chosen by all the participants to be the least appropriate strategy in situation 5 (n=16). The participants also felt that 'offering repair' was not appropriate, especially male participants (m=7, f=3).

5.2.3.6 Situation 6: Return of book

As far as situation 6 was concerned, all the participants selected 'explicit apology' to be appropriate, 68.75% of the NB participants also including 'offering repair' (n=11). Finally, 31.25% of the participants (mainly male) mentioned 'taking on responsibility'.
Both 'offering explanation' and 'future forbearance' were rated inappropriate by 68.75% of the NB participants. However, more female participants considered the former and more male participants the latter to be least appropriate.

5.2.3.7 Situation 7: Incorrect amount in payment

In situation 7, the NB participants rated 'explicit apology strategies' (n=11) and 'taking on responsibility' (n=10) as most appropriate. Only male participants (n=4) approved 'offering repair' in this situation. On the contrary, more female participants cited 'taking on responsibility'.

'Future forbearance' was judged inappropriate by 87.5% of the NB participants (m=6, f=8). The majority of the male participants (87.5%, n=7) also considered 'offering explanation' least appropriate.

5.2.3.8 Situation 8: Cancelled cinema date

All the participants evaluated 'explicit apology' to be one of the most appropriate strategies for situation 8. 62.5% of the NB participants also considered 'offering explanation' to be important here; however, the majority (85%) of these participants were female. Also only female participants considered 'taking on responsibility' as most appropriate.

Again, all the participants considered 'future forbearance' to be the least appropriate strategy in situation 8. 50% of the male participants also thought it was inappropriate to use 'taking on responsibility' (n=4).
5.2.3.9 Situation 9: Forgot DVD

'Explicit apology' (n=12) and 'taking on responsibility' (n=11) were the two most appropriate strategies to NB participants in situation 9. Only three male participants mentioned 'offering explanation', and two female 'future forbearance'.

Here, 62.5% of the NB participants chose 'offering explanation' as the least appropriate strategy. 75% of the male participants also mentioned 'future forbearance'. A small number of participants mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (n=2) and 'offering repair' (n=3).

5.2.3.10 Situation 10: Spilt soup on waitress

In situation 10 (spilt soup on waitress), 100% of the participants approved 'explicit apology' and 93.75% mentioned 'taking on responsibility'. Only five female participants selected 'offering explanation' and one male mentioned 'offering repair'.

All the participants perceived 'future forbearance' to be the least appropriate strategy in this situation. 75% of the female participants also chose 'offering explanation', and 12.5% of the males 'taking on responsibility' and 'offering repair'.

5.2.3.11 Situation 11: Damaged friend's mobile

In situation 11, both male and female NB evaluations of the most appropriate strategies were very similar. Three strategies were mentioned: 'explicit apology' (n=16), 'offering repair' (n=15) and 'taking on responsibility' (n=11).
Two strategies were mentioned as least appropriate here: 'future forbearance', (n=10) and 'offering explanation' (n=9). However, the male participants tended to think the latter more inappropriate, whereas the female participants contraindicated the former.

5.2.3.12 Situation 12: Gave wrong deadline

Finally, in situation 12, the most appropriate strategies to the NB participants were 'explicit apology' (n=14), 'taking on responsibility' (n=14) and 'offering repair' (n=11). No significant gender differences could be identified here.

'Future forbearance' was again chosen by the majority of the NB participants as the least appropriate strategy. A small percentage of the participants (31.25%) also mentioned 'offering explanation'.

5.2.4 Correlations between Evaluations of Contextual Variables

Table 5.3 shows the correlations between the evaluations of contextual variables, as well as the degree of ‘face-losing’, in the NB data.

As can be seen, the NB participants’ evaluation of speaker status correlated with their evaluation of the distance between speakers (r=0.194, p<0.01). NB participants’ evaluation of the degree of ‘face-losing’ correlated with their evaluation of the severity of the offence (severe) (r=0.255, p<0.01) and also negatively with their evaluation of speaker status (r=-0.331, p<0.01). In other words, it was less ‘face-losing’ to apologise, according to the NB participants, if the offence was less severe. However, it was more ‘face-losing’ to apologise if the status of the apologiser was higher than that of the apologisee.
### Table 5.3 Correlations between evaluations by NB participants

**Correlations of contextual variables in NB data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of closeness between speakers</th>
<th>Far distance between speakers</th>
<th>High severity of offence</th>
<th>High status of the speakers</th>
<th>High degree 'face-losing' in situation</th>
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<td>.194**</td>
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<td>Evaluation of severity of offence</td>
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<td>Evaluation of 'face-losing' in situation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>192</td>
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</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

#### 5.3 Native Speakers of Mandarin Chinese

#### 5.3.1 Evaluation of Contextual Variables

Table 5.3 shows the evaluation of the contextual variables by the NC participants in each situation.

##### 5.3.1.1 Social distance

The overall mean of 'social distance' was 3.90 (SD. 1.890). All the NC participants considered closeness between the speakers to be the farthest in RS4 (mean = 6.00) and RS5 (mean = 6.00). The social distance was also far in RS7 (mean = 5.94) and RS10 (mean = 5.94). The closest relationship for the NC participants was between family members in RS8 (mean = 1.25). Situations between friends were also considered to be close, such as RS9 (mean = 1.56) and RS11 (mean = 1.44). The social distance between a student and a
tutor was judged to be relatively far. The mean figures were 3.31 and 3.81 in RS1 and RS2 respectively.

5.3.1.2 Severity of offence

To NC participants, the most severe offence was in RS2 (mean = 1.38), followed by RS4 (mean = 1.63) and RS11 (mean = 1.63). The least severe situation was RS7 (mean = 5.44). RS5 (mean = 4.81) and RS9 (mean = 4.38) were also considered low offence situations. According to the NC participants, the offence in RS12 (mean = 2.44) was slightly more severe than that in RS10 (mean = 2.56).

5.3.1.3 Status

The NC participants judged that the speaker had the lowest status in RS6 (mean = 5.31), where a student needed to apologise to a professor. The speaker was also rated to be of relatively low status in the student-tutor relationship in RS1 (mean = 4.75) and RS2 (mean = 5.06). The status of the manager in RS4 (mean = 5.00) was also considered to be much higher than that of the candidate. Situations in which the apologiser was considered to be of higher status by the NC participants were RS10 (mean = 2.06), RS7 and RS8 (mean = 2.88). Speaker status was considered to be equal in RS5 (mean = 3.94), RS9 (mean = 3.94) and RS11 (mean = 3.88).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play Situations</th>
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<th>Evaluation of severity of offence</th>
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<td>4. being late for an interview</td>
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<td>6. return of book</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.31</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation 1.125</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. incorrect amount in payment</td>
<td>Mean 5.94</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation .250</td>
<td>.892</td>
<td>1.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. cancelled cinema date</td>
<td>Mean 1.25</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation .447</td>
<td>1.088</td>
<td>.619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. forgot DVD</td>
<td>Mean 1.56</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation .727</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. spilt soup on waitress</td>
<td>Mean 5.94</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation .250</td>
<td>.814</td>
<td>1.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. damaged friend's mobile</td>
<td>Mean 1.44</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation .629</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>.342</td>
</tr>
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<td>12. gave wrong deadline</td>
<td>Mean 3.63</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>3.44</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N 16</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation 1.025</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.727</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>Mean 3.90</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N 192</td>
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<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation 1.890</td>
<td>1.517</td>
<td>1.239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 NC participants’ evaluation of contextual variables

(social distance: 1=very close, 6=not close at all; severity of offence: 1=very severe, 6=very light; social power: 1=much higher status, 6=much lower status)
5.3.2 Evaluation of Degree of ‘Face-losing’

Figure 5.2 shows the overall frequency of the NC participant’s assessment of degree of ‘face-losing’ across all the situations. As can be seen, about 66.7% considered that it would be ‘face-losing’ for the person to apologise in the given situations. 7.8% of the participants selected ‘very face-losing’ and and 22.8%, ‘quite face-losing’ respectively. 21.9% of the NC participants thought it was not ‘face-losing’ at all to apologise.

Table 5.5 Evaluation of Appropriate Strategy Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone at restaurant</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone at home</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone while in a meeting</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phone in a restaurant</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5 Evaluation of Appropriate Strategy Use

The least inappropriate strategies, ‘future performance’ was most chosen by NC participants could choose.

Table 5.5 shows the overall mean of NC participants’ evaluations across situations. It was found that the NC participants evaluated it to be more ‘face-losing’ to apologise in RS2 (mean = 2.25, followed by RS4 (mean = 2.44) and RS12 (mean = 2.56). The least ‘face-losing’ situations for the NC participants to apologise in was RS5 (mean = 5.06) and RS7 (mean = 5.63). The NC participants thought it not very ‘face-losing’ to apologise in RS9 (mean = 4.50) and RS8 (mean = 4.25).
### Table 5.5 Extent of evaluation of 'face-losing' by NC participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play Situations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. mobile phone in tutorial</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. didn't turn up for a tutorial</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. noise complaint</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. being late for an interview</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. mistook a stranger for a friend</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. return of book</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. incorrect amount in payment</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. cancelled cinema date</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. forgot DVD</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. spilt soup on waitress</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. damaged friend's mobile</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. gave wrong deadline</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1.645</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.3.3 Evaluation of Appropriateness of Strategy Use

Across all twelve situations, 'explicit apology' was evaluated as the most appropriate strategy (n=128). Next was 'taking on responsibility' (n=92), then 'offering explanation' (n=57), 'offering repair' (n=46) and finally 'future forbearance' (n=27). The participants could choose more than one strategy type at a time.

For least appropriate strategies, 'future forbearance' was most chosen by NC participants one across all situations (n=77), followed by 'offering explanation' (n=60) and 'offering repair' (n=58). 'Explicit apology' (n=17) and 'taking on responsibility' (n=14) were also mentioned as inappropriate in some situations.

#### 5.3.3.1 Situation 1: Mobile phone in tutorial

Here, the most appropriate strategy to the NC participants was 'explicit apology' (n=12), chosen equally by male and female participants. Also ten participants (of whom six were female) rated 'future forbearance' to be the most appropriate strategy. A small number of
participants evaluated ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=3) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=4) as most appropriate in this situation.

The least appropriate strategy here was ‘offering repair’ (n=8). ‘Offering explanation’ was also thought inappropriate by seven participants. A few mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=3) and ‘future forbearance’ (n=1).

5.3.3.2 Situation 2: Didn't turn up for a tutorial

In this situation, 68.75% of the NC participants considered ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=11) to be the most appropriate strategy. 50% of the participants also mentioned ‘explicit apology’ (n=8) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=8). More female participants (n=6) considered the latter to be appropriate than males (n=2). ‘Offering repair’ was mentioned only by female participants (n=4).

As least appropriate, 46.2% of the NC participants rated ‘offering explanation’. ‘Offering repair’ was also contraindicated by 38.5% of the participants. Three participants did not mention any strategies here; in other words, they felt all the strategies were appropriate for this situation.

5.3.3.3 Situation 3: Noise complaint

100% of the NC participants judged ‘explicit apology’ to be the most appropriate strategy in situation 3 (n=16). No other strategies were significant here.

Conversely, ‘offering repair’ was rated as least appropriate for situation 3 by half of the NC participants (n=8). 43.75% of the participants also cited ‘future forbearance’ here.
5.3.3.4 Situation 4: Being late for an interview

In situation 4, 'offering explanation' was judged to be the most appropriate strategy by 75% of the NC participants (n=12). 50% also mentioned 'explicit apology' (n=8) and 37.5% 'taking on responsibility' (n=6). More female participants preferred the latter (n=4).

'Future forbearance' was considered to be the least appropriate strategy by 57.1% of the NC participants. 28.57% also mentioned 'offering repair'. Two participants did not deselect any strategy.

5.3.3.5 Situation 5: Mistook a stranger for a friend

For situation 5, 75% of the NC participants felt that it was appropriate to use 'explicit apology', 43.75% 'taking on responsibility' and 25% 'offering explanation'. More female participants considered 'offering explanation' appropriate here.

50% of the NC participants chose 'future forbearance' and 'offering repair' as the least appropriate strategies in this situation (n=8). Only female participants mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (n=2) and only one male mentioned 'explicit apology' here.

5.3.3.6 Situation 6: Return of book

75% of the NC participants selected 'taking on responsibility' as appropriate here. 43.75% of the participants also cited 'explicit apology', with the majority of the male participants preferring this strategy. Another 25% of the participants mentioned 'offering explanation'.
In contrast, ‘offering repair’ was rated least appropriate by 68.75% of the NC participants. A small number of participants mentioned ‘future forbearance’ (n=2); only female participants disapproved of ‘offering explanation’ (n=3).

### 5.3.3.7 Situation 7: Incorrect amount in payment

In situation 7, the most appropriate strategies to NC participants were ‘explicit apology’ (n=12) and ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=6). More female participants mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=4). In addition, only female participants (n=3) mentioned ‘offering explanation’ and ‘offering repair’ (n=1).

As the least appropriate strategy, ‘future forbearance’ was mentioned by 50% of the NC participants (m=5, f=3). 37.5% of the NC participants also judged that ‘offering explanation’ (m=2, f=4) and ‘offering repair’ (m=1, f=5) were least appropriate here.

### 5.3.3.8 Situation 8: Cancelled cinema date

56.25% of the NC participants evaluated ‘offering explanation’ (n=9) and ‘offering repair’ (n=9) as the most appropriate strategies for situation 8. 43.75% of the NC participants also selected ‘explicit apology’ and 37.5% ‘taking on responsibility’. Among the nine participants who considered ‘offering repair’ as most appropriate, there was only one male.

In this situation, 41.66% of the NC participants considered ‘future forbearance’ and ‘explicit apology’ to be the least appropriate strategies. Four participants did not think any strategy inappropriate here.
5.3.3.9 Situation 9: Forgot DVD

'Explicit apology' (n=9) was the most approved strategy by the NC participants in situation 9. 50% of the participants also mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (m=5, f=3) and 43.75% 'offering explanation' (m=2, f=5). Only female participants mentioned 'future forbearance' (n=3).

28.57% chose 'explicit apology' and 'offering explanation' as the least appropriate strategies here. About 30% (n=3) of the female participants also mentioned 'offering repair'. Only one male mentioned 'taking on responsibility'.

5.3.3.10 Situation 10: Spilt soup on waitress

In situation 10, 87.5% of the participants chose 'explicit apology' (m=8, f=6) and 43.75% 'taking on responsibility' (m=2, f=7) as most appropriate strategies. 37.5% of participants mentioned 'offering explanation' (m=1, f=6).

Almost all the participants (93.75%) perceived 'future forbearance' to be the least appropriate strategy in this situation. 37.5% of the NC participants also mentioned 'offering explanation' (m=1, f=5) and 25% of the males 'explicit apology'.

5.3.3.11 Situation 11: Damaged friend's mobile

In situation 11, three strategies were approved: 'explicit apology' (n=12), 'offering repair' (n=12) and 'taking on responsibility' (n=10). Overall, more female participants chose these, especially 'explicit apology' (n=8) and 'taking on responsibility' (n=8).
There were two strategies that the NC participants considered least appropriate in this situation: ‘future forbearance’, (n=7) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=10). However, the male participants tended to think the latter more inappropriate, whereas the females contraindicated ‘future forbearance’. Two participants thought all the strategies were appropriate here.

5.3.3.12 Situation 12: Gave wrong deadline

Finally, the strategies which NC participants judged most appropriate in situation 12 were ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=13) and then ‘explicit apology’ (n=11). More male participants (n=7) mentioned the latter than females (n=4).

‘Offering explanation’ was considered by the majority of the NC participants (62.5%) to be the least appropriate strategy here. A small percentage of the participants also cited ‘offering explanation’ (n=5), ‘offering repair’ (n=3) and ‘explicit apology’ (n=2).

5.3.4 Correlations between Evaluations of Contextual Variables

The correlations between evaluations of contextual variables and the degree of ‘face-losing’ by the NC participants are shown in Table 5.6.

It was found that evaluation of the severity of the offence correlated negatively with evaluation of the status of the speakers (r=-.0291, p<0.01). The NC participants seemed to evaluate the offence less severely if the apologiser was of a higher status. The NC participants’ evaluation of the degree of ‘face-losing’ was found to correlate with their evaluation of the severity of the offence (r=0.547, p<0.01), and with their evaluation of the status of the speakers (r=-0.237, p<0.01). The NC participants found it more ‘face-losing’
to apologise if the severity of the offence was higher and if the apologiser was of higher status.

Correlations of contextual variables in NC data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of closeness between speakers</th>
<th>Far distance between speakers</th>
<th>High severity of offence</th>
<th>High status of the speakers</th>
<th>High degree 'face-losing' in situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of severity of offence</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.291**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of status of the speakers</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>-.291**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of 'face-losing' in situation</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.547**</td>
<td>-.237**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.6 Correlations between evaluations by NC participants

5.4 Chinese Learners of English

5.4.1 Evaluation of Contextual Variables

Table 5.7 shows the evaluation of contextual variables by the CESL participants in each situation.

5.4.1.1 Social distance

The overall mean of 'social distance' was 3.98 (SD. 1.892). All the CESL participants considered distance between the speakers to be farthest in RS5 (mean = 5.94) and RS7.
RS10 (mean = 5.94) and RS4 (mean = 5.50) were also considered situations in which social distance was far. The closest relationship evaluated by the CESL participants was between family members in RS8 (mean = 1.19). Situations between friends were also considered to be close relationships, such as in RS9 (mean = 1.56) and RS11 (mean = 1.81). Similarly to the NC participants, the social distance between a student and a tutor was evaluated to be relatively far by CESL participants. The mean figures were 3.38 and 3.63 in RS1 and 2 respectively.

5.4.1.2 Severity of offence

The most severe offence was in RS4 (mean = 1.69), then RS11 (mean=1.81) and RS12 (mean = 1.94). The least severe situation to the CESL participants was RS7 (mean = 5.94). RS5 (mean = 5.38) and RS9 (mean = 5.25) were also considered low offence situations. RS1 (mean = 3.81), RS2 (mean = 3.19) and RS6 (mean = 3.81) were evaluated as medium offence situations.

5.4.1.3 Status

The CESL participants judged the speaker to have lowest status in RS4 (mean = 5.50). The apologiser was also rated as having a relatively low status in the student-tutor relationship in RS6 (mean = 5.19), RS1 (mean = 4.63) and RS2 (mean = 4.56). Situations in which the apologiser was considered to be of higher status by the CESL participants were RS8 (mean = 2.06) and RS10 (mean = 2.94). Status was considered relatively equal in the remaining situations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play Situations</th>
<th>Evaluation of social distance between speakers</th>
<th>Evaluation of severity of offence</th>
<th>Evaluation of status of the speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. didn't turn up for a tutorial</td>
<td>Mean: 3.63  N: 16  Std. Dev: 1.258</td>
<td>Mean: 3.19  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.981</td>
<td>Mean: 4.56  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. noise complaint</td>
<td>Mean: 3.75  N: 16  Std. Dev: 1.238</td>
<td>Mean: 2.63  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.619</td>
<td>Mean: 2.75  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. being late for an interview</td>
<td>Mean: 5.50  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.894</td>
<td>Mean: 1.69  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.873</td>
<td>Mean: 5.50  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. mistook a stranger for a friend</td>
<td>Mean: 5.94  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.250</td>
<td>Mean: 5.38  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.719</td>
<td>Mean: 3.88  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.619</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. incorrect amount in payment</td>
<td>Mean: 5.94  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.250</td>
<td>Mean: 5.94  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.574</td>
<td>Mean: 3.31  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.793</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. cancelled cinema date</td>
<td>Mean: 1.19  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.544</td>
<td>Mean: 4.44  N: 16  Std. Dev: 1.365</td>
<td>Mean: 2.06  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. forgot DVD</td>
<td>Mean: 1.56  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.727</td>
<td>Mean: 5.25  N: 16  Std. Dev: 1.065</td>
<td>Mean: 4.00  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. spilt soup on waitress</td>
<td>Mean: 5.75  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.447</td>
<td>Mean: 1.88  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.342</td>
<td>Mean: 2.94  N: 16  Std. Dev: 1.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. damaged friend’s mobile</td>
<td>Mean: 1.81  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.655</td>
<td>Mean: 1.81  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.750</td>
<td>Mean: 4.13  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. gave wrong deadline</td>
<td>Mean: 4.69  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.946</td>
<td>Mean: 1.94  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.929</td>
<td>Mean: 3.38  N: 16  Std. Dev: 0.619</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7 CESL participants' evaluation of contextual variables
(social distance: 1=very close, 6=not close at all; severity of offence: 1= very severe, 6=very light; social power: 1=much higher status, 6= much lower status)
5.4.2 Evaluation of Degree of 'Face-losing'

The evaluation of degree of 'face-losing' by the CESL participants is shown in Figure 5.3. 12% of the participants considered it 'not face-losing at all' to apologise in all the situations. On the other hand, 10.9% of the participants thought it was 'very face-losing'. 69.8% of the participants decided that there was a certain level of 'face-losing', although 18.2% of these considered it 'not very face-losing'. The overall mean was 3.52 on the Likert scale.

The means for evaluation of degree of 'face-losing' in each situation are shown in Table 5.8. According to the CESL participants, the most 'face-losing' situation was RS11 (mean = 1.88). The CESL participants also considered apology to be face-losing in severe offence situations, such as RS12 (mean = 2.13), RS4 (mean = 2.75) and RS10 (mean = 2.25). The least 'face-losing' situation evaluated by the CESL participants was RS7 (mean = 4.88), followed by RS9 (mean = 4.31).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play Situations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. forgot DVD</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. spilt soup on waitress</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>11. damaged friend's mobile</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</table>

Table 5.8 Extent of evaluation of ‘face-losing’ by CESL participants

5.4.3 Evaluation of Appropriateness of Strategy Use

Across all twelve situations, ‘explicit apology’ was judged to be the most appropriate strategy (n=127). The next most chosen strategies were ‘offering explanation’ (n=50), then ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=41) and ‘offering repair’ (n=35), and finally ‘future forbearance’ (n=20). The participants could choose more than one strategy type at a time.

In terms of strategies least appropriate to CESL participants, ‘future forbearance’ was most chosen across all situations (n=95), followed by ‘offering repair’ (n=48) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=54). ‘Explicit apology’ (n=9) and ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=7) were also mentioned as inappropriate in some situations.

5.4.3.1 Situation 1: Mobile phone in tutorial

Here, the strategy rated most appropriate by all the CESL participants (equally by male and female) was ‘explicit apology’ (n=16). Only three female participants rated ‘future forbearance’ to be the most appropriate.
The least appropriate strategy was 'offering explanation' (n=7). 'Offering repair' (n=4) and 'future forbearance' (n=5) were also thought inappropriate in this situation by some participants.

5.4.3.2 Situation 2: Didn’t turn up for a tutorial

In situation 2, 75% of the CESL participants considered ‘explicit apology’ (n=12) to be the most appropriate strategy. ‘Offering explanation’ (n=3) and ‘future forbearance’ (n=2) were mentioned only by female participants.

43.75% of the CESL participants rated ‘offering explanation’ to be the least appropriate strategy. ‘Future forbearance’ was mentioned by 31.25% of the participants, the majority male. Only female participants mentioned ‘offering repair’ (n=4), ‘explicit apology’ (n=2) and ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=1).

5.4.3.3 Situation 3: Noise complaint

62.5% of the CESL participants judged ‘explicit apology’ to be the most appropriate strategy in situation 3 (m=4, f=6). ‘Offering explanation’ (m=4, f=2) and ‘future forbearance’ (m=4, f=2) were also each mentioned by 37.5%.

‘Offering repair’ was rated least appropriate in this situation by half the CESL participants (n=9). More female participants (n=6) mentioned this strategy than males (n=3). 31.25% of the participants also mentioned ‘future forbearance’ here.
5.4.3.4 Situation 4: Being late for an interview

In situation 4, 'offering explanation' was evaluated the most appropriate strategy by 87.5% of the participants (n=14). 56.25% also mentioned 'explicit apology' (n=9). No significant gender difference was found in this situation.

'Future forbearance' was considered to be the least appropriate strategy by 50% of the CESL participants (m=5, f=3). Another 43.75% also mentioned 'offering repair' (m=3, f=4). One female participant mentioned 'offering explanation'.

5.4.3.5 Situation 5: Mistook a stranger for a friend

In this situation, 68.75% of the CESL participants felt it appropriate to use 'explicit apology', and 31.25% approved 'taking on responsibility'.

75% of the CESL participants chose 'future forbearance' as the least appropriate strategy here. Only female participants mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (n=2). Another two participants mentioned 'offering repair'.

5.4.3.6 Situation 6: Return of book

62.5% of the CESL participants selected 'explicit apology' to be the most appropriate strategy here. 37.5% also included 'offering explanation', with a majority of male participants preferring this strategy. Another 31.25% of the participants (n=5) mentioned 'taking on responsibility', again mostly male (n=4).
'Future forbearance' was rated by 43.75% of the CESL participants to be least appropriate to situation 6. 'Offering explanation' was also mentioned by 37.5% of the participants. Only female participants cited 'taking on responsibility' (n=2) and 'offering repair' (n=3).

5.4.3.7 Situation 7: Incorrect amount in payment

In situation 7, the most appropriate strategies to the CESL participants were 'explicit apology' (n=11) and 'offering repair' (n=5), with a male majority in both cases (respectively n=7, n = 4 respectively). Only one female participant mentioned 'taking on responsibility' in this situation.

Here, 'future forbearance' was least appropriate to 56.25% of the CESL participants (m=5, f=5). 31.25% of the CESL participants also mentioned that 'offering explanation' (m=3, f=2) was the least appropriate strategy, with only female participants mentioning 'offering repair' (n=3).

5.4.3.8 Situation 8: Cancelled cinema date

In this situation, 56.25% of the CESL participants evaluated 'offering explanation' (n=9) to be the most appropriate strategy. 50% of the participants also chose 'explicit apology' and 25% 'future forbearance'. Only females also mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (n=3).

Conversely, 37.3% of the CESL participants considered 'future forbearance' to be the least appropriate strategy here. 50% of the male participants mentioned this strategy. The next most inappropriate strategies were 'offering explanation' (n=4) and 'explicit apology' (n=3). Two female participants mentioned 'offering repair' and one 'taking on responsibility'.

242
5.4.3.9 Situation 9: Forgot DVD

'Explicit apology' (n=10) was the strategy most selected by the CESL participants as appropriate to situation 9. Only female participants mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (n=3) and only males 'offering explanation' (n=4). 25% also mentioned 'future forbearance' (m=3, f=1).

5.4.3.10 Situation 10: Spilt soup on waitress

In situation 10, 68.75% of the CESL participants mentioned 'explicit apology' (m=7, f=4) and 43.75% 'offering repair' (m=2, f=7). 31.25% of participants approved 'taking on responsibility' (m=1, f=4).

In contrast, 56.25% of CESL participants perceived 'future forbearance' to be the least appropriate strategy here. 31.25% also mentioned 'offering explanation' (m=4, f=1). Only 25% of the female participants mentioned 'offering explanation'; none of the males did.

5.4.3.11 Situation 11: Damaged friend’s mobile

In situation 11, the strategy deemed most appropriate was 'offering repair' (n=15). 50% of the CESL participants also mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (n=8), and 43.75% 'explicit apology' (n=7).

'Future forbearance' was chosen most frequently as the least appropriate strategy (n=9) in this situation. Male participants (n=4) tended to consider 'offering repair' as more inappropriate than females (n=1). Two female participants thought 'offering explanation' was least appropriate.
5.4.3.12 Situation 12: Gave wrong deadline

The strategy which the CESL participants judged to be the most appropriate here was 'explicit apology' (n=12). 37.5% also mentioned 'taking on responsibility' (m=1, f=5) and 'offering explanation' (m=4, f=2).

50% of the participants contraindicated 'future forbearance' as inappropriate. 'Offering explanation' and 'offering repair' (n=4) were each likewise cited by 25% of the participants. 'Explicit apology' was disapproved of only by female participants (n=2).

5.4.4 Correlations between Evaluations of Contextual Variables

The correlations between evaluations of contextual variables and the degree of 'face-losing' by the CESL participants are shown in Table 5.9.

CESL participants' evaluation of the severity of the offence correlated with that of the degree of 'face-losing' (r=0.611, p<0.01) These participants found it more 'face-losing' to apologise if the severity of the offence was higher. No other factors correlated with their evaluation of degree of 'face-losing'. The CESL participants' evaluation of the status of the speakers was found to correlate with their evaluation of the closeness between speakers (r=0.164, p<0.05).
Correlations of contextual variables in CESL data

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<thead>
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<th>Evaluation of closeness between speakers</th>
<th>Pearson Correlation</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far distance between speakers</td>
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<td>-.034</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High severity of offence</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>192</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.644</td>
<td>192</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.023</td>
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</table>

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<th>N</th>
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<td>Far distance between speakers</td>
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* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.9 Correlations between evaluations by CESL participants

5.5 British Learners of Mandarin Chinese

5.5.1 Evaluation of Contextual Variables

The results of BCSL participants’ evaluation of contextual variables are shown in Table 5.10.

5.5.1.1 Social distance

The BCSL participants rated the following four situations to be far-distance situations: RS5 (mean = 5.94), RS7 (mean = 5.75), RS10 (mean = 5.69) and RS4 (mean = 5.50). The relationship judged closest by the BCSL participants was RS8, one between family members (mean = 1.06). This was followed by two situations involving friends: RS9
(mean = 1.19) and RS11 (mean = 1.56). Overall, the mean closeness between speakers was 3.61.

5.5.1.2 Severity of offence

To BCSL participants, the most severe offence was in RS4 (mean = 1.94), the second in RS12 (mean = 2.19). RS2, RS3 and RS10 were rated at the same level of severity, with a mean of 2.31 on the Likert scale. The least severe offence to these participants was in RS5 (mean = 5.81), followed by RS7 (mean = 5.31). RS9 was also considered a light offence. Forgetting to return the book to the professor was perceived to be more severe than cancelling a cinema data with one’s nephew.

5.5.1.3 Status

Finally, in terms of relative speaker status, the BCSL participants judged the apologiser to be in the lowest position when speaking to a professor, as in RS6 (mean = 5.25). They also considered the apologiser to have lower status than the manager in RS4 (mean = 5.13), and than the tutors in RS2 (mean = 5.06) and RS1 (mean = 4.88). BCSL participants perceived the apologiser as having comparatively higher status in situations 10 (mean = 2.75) and 8 (mean = 2.94). The speakers were rated as having relatively equal status in other situations.
<table>
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<th>Role Play Situations</th>
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<th>Evaluation of severity of offence</th>
<th>Evaluation of status of the speakers</th>
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<td>7. incorrect amount in payment</td>
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Table 5.10 BCSL participants' evaluation of contextual variables
(social distance: 1=very close, 6=not close at all; severity of offence: 1=very severe, 6=very light; social power: 1=much higher status, 6=much lower status)
5.5.2 Evaluation of Degree of 'Face-losing'

Figure 5.4 shows the overall frequency of evaluations of degrees of ‘face-losing’ by the BCSL participants across all situations. The mean was 3.58 on the Likert Scale. 20.8% of the participants considered it ‘not face-losing at all’ to apologise in these situations. On the other hand, 13.5% of the participants thought it ‘very face-losing’. 20.5% considered apology ‘quite face-losing’ here, 18.2% ‘face-losing’, and 11.5% ‘not very face-losing’. Finally, 15.6% of the BCSL participants thought it was ‘not face-losing’ to apologise in any of the given situations.

![Figure 5.4 Evaluation of 'face-losing' across all situations by BCSL participants](image)

The overall mean figures for BCSL participants’ evaluation of degree of ‘face-losing’ in each situation are shown in Table 5.11. According to the BCSL participants, the most ‘face-losing’ situation was RS4 (mean = 2.38). They considered apology to be almost
equally face-losing in RS2 (mean = 2.63) and RS6 (mean = 2.75). The least ‘face-losing’ situation to BCSL participants was RS5 (mean = 4.94), followed by RS7 (mean = 4.81) and RS9 (mean = 4.69). As to the remaining situations, all were judged to embody a certain level of ‘face-losing’. Apologising in RS3 (mean = 3.19) was more ‘face-losing’ than in RS12 (mean = 3.25), RS11 (mean = 3.50) and RS10 (mean = 3.56).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Play Situations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. mobile phone in tutorial</td>
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<td>1.448</td>
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<td>3. noise complaint</td>
<td>3.19</td>
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<td>1.744</td>
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Table 5.11 Extent of ‘face-losing’ by BCSL participants

5.5.3 Evaluation of Appropriateness of Strategy Use

Across all twelve situations, ‘explicit apology’ was evaluated as the most appropriate strategy (n=162). Next was ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=88), followed by ‘offering repair’ (n=58), ‘offering explanation’ (n=47) and finally ‘future forbearance’ (n=31). The participants could choose more than one strategy type at a time.

5.5.3.1 Situation 1: Mobile phone in tutorial

In situation 1, the most appropriate strategy to BCSL participants was ‘explicit apology’ (n=14), chosen equally by males and females. Also nine participants (f=6, m=3) rated ‘future forbearance’ to be the most appropriate strategy. A small number of participants
evaluated ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=4) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=4) as the most appropriate strategies in this situation.

The least appropriate strategy here was ‘offering explanation’ (m=3, f=7). Almost all the female participants (93.75%) judged it inappropriate to offer explanation in this situation. ‘Offering repair’ (n=5) and ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=3) were only thought to be inappropriate in this situation by male participants.

5.5.3.2 Situation 2: Didn’t turn up for tutorial

In situation 2, 75% of the BCSL participants considered ‘explicit apology’ (n=12) to be the most appropriate strategy. 62.5% of the participants mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=10) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=6). Only male participants mentioned ‘future forbearance’ (n=3).

42.85% of the BCSL participants, including 50% of the female participants, rated ‘offering explanation’ as the least appropriate strategy. ‘Offering repair’ was mentioned by 28.57% (m=3, f=1). ‘Explicit apology’ (n=1) and ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=2) were mentioned only by females, whereas ‘future forbearance’ was mentioned by only one male. The male participants did not cite any strategy as inappropriate in this situation.

5.5.3.3 Situation 3: Noise complaint

In this situation, 87.5% of the BCSL participants (n=14) judged ‘explicit apology’ to be the most appropriate strategy. 43.75% mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=7), 37.5% ‘offering explanation’ and ‘future forbearance’.
‘Offering explanation’ was judged the least appropriate strategy here by the majority of the BCSL participants (n=11, 68.75%). 18.75% also cited ‘offering repair’. Only two female participants disapproved of ‘future forbearance’ and one male of ‘taking on responsibility’.

5.5.3.4 Situation 4: Being late for an interview

In situation 4, ‘explicit apology’ was evaluated as the most appropriate strategy by 87.5% of the BCSL participants (n=14). 75% mentioned ‘offering explanation’ (n=12), and a small percentage ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=4) and ‘offering repair’ (n=5).

‘Taking on responsibility’ was considered to be the least appropriate strategy here by half the BCSL participants (m=2, f=6). 50% of the males (n=5) judged ‘offering repair’ inappropriate, compared with only one female. Also, more males (n=3) mentioned ‘future forbearance’ than females (n=1).

5.5.3.5 Situation 5: Mistook a stranger for a friend

For situation 5, 81.25% of the BCSL participants judged it appropriate to make ‘explicit apology’; 43.75% chose ‘taking on responsibility’.

‘Offering repair’ was chosen by 81.25% as the least appropriate strategy here. All the females contraindicated ‘future forbearance’. Only male participants disapproved of ‘offering explanation’ (n=3), ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=1) and ‘explicit apology’ (n=1).

5.5.3.6 Situation 6: Return of book

In this situation, 93.75% of the BCSL participants selected ‘explicit apology’ as appropriate. 68.75% of the participants also approved ‘taking on responsibility’, with a
majority of the females (n=6) preferring this strategy. 56.25% mentioned 'future forbearance'. Only males cited 'offering explanation' (n=2) and only females 'offering repair' (n=3).

‘Offering repair’ was chosen by 53.33% of the BCSL participants as the least appropriate strategy here, while 33.33% chose ‘offering explanation’.

5.5.3.7 Situation 7: Incorrect amount in payment

In situation 7, the most appropriate strategy for the BCSL participants was ‘explicit apology’ (n=14). A small number also selected ‘talking on responsibility’ (n=4).

As least appropriate strategy, ‘offering explanation’ and ‘future forbearance’ were both mentioned by 50% of these participants, mainly male. More females (n=4) mentioned ‘offering repair’ than males (n=1).

5.5.3.8 Situation 8: Cancelled cinema date

In this situation, 87.5% of the BCSL participants evaluated ‘explicit apology’ (n=14) to be the most appropriate strategy. Also, 75% of the BCSL participants chose ‘offering explanation’ and 31.25% ‘taking on responsibility’.

All the participants considered ‘future forbearance’ to be the least appropriate strategy here. 50% of the males also thought it inappropriate to use ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=4).
5.5.3.9 Situation 9: Forgot DVD

‘Explicit apology’ (n=11) was the most preferred strategy by the BCSL participants in terms of appropriateness for situation 9. Also, 50% mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (m=5, f=3).

58.33% contraindicated both ‘taking on responsibility’ (m=3, f=4) and ‘future forbearance’ (m=2, f=5) as least appropriate here. Three males and one female did not choose any strategy as inappropriate.

5.5.3.10 Situation 10: Spilt soup on waitress

In situation 10, 93.75% of the BCSL participants considered ‘explicit apology’ (m=8, f=7) and 43.75% ‘taking on responsibility’ (m=4, f=3) as most appropriate.

Only two apology strategies were mentioned as inappropriate here: ‘future forbearance’ (75%) and ‘offering explanation’ (43.75%).

5.5.3.11 Situation 11: Damaged friend’s mobile

In this situation, ‘offering repair’ (n=15) was the most appropriate strategy in the view of the BCSL participants, followed by ‘explicit apology’ (n=12). 43.75% of the participants mentioned ‘taking on responsibility’ (n=7), the majority male (n=5).

Mentioned as least appropriate here were two strategies: ‘future forbearance’ (n=14) and ‘offering explanation’ (n=6). All the male participants cited ‘future forbearance’. ‘Offering explanation’ was contraindicated by an equal number of male and female participants.
5.5.3.12 Situation 12: Gave wrong deadline

For this situation, the strategies which BCSL participants judged most appropriate were 'explicit apology' (m=8, f=6) and 'taking on responsibility' (m=6, f=8). 50%, mainly male, mentioned 'offering repair' (m=5, f=3).

Conversely, 'future forbearance' was declared the least appropriate strategy by the majority of BCSL participants (n=11, 68.75%). Among these, more than half were female (n=7). 37.5% of contraincicated both 'offering explanation' (n=6) and 'offering repair' (n=6), more males citing the latter (n=5) and more females the former (n=5).

5.5.4 Correlations between Evaluations of Contextual Variables

The correlations between evaluations of contextual variables and the degree of 'face-losing' by the BCSL participants are shown in Table 5.12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations of contextual variables in BCSL data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of closeness between speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of severity of offence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of status of the speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of 'face-losing' in situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5.12 Correlations between evaluations by BCSL participants
BCSL participants’ evaluation of the severity of the offence correlated with their evaluation of the closeness between the speakers \((r=0.206, p<0.01)\). They tended to evaluate the severity of the offence more highly if they felt the social distance between the speakers was far. A positive correlation was found between participants’ evaluation of the degree of ‘face-losing’ and their evaluation of severity of the offence \((r=0.551, p<0.01)\). The BCSL participants found it more ‘face-losing’ to apologise if the severity of the offence was higher. On the other hand, a negative correlation was observed between participants’ evaluation of the degree of ‘face-losing’ and their evaluation of difference in speaker status \((r=-0.194, p<0.01)\). These participants found it more ‘face-losing’ to apologise if the apologiser had higher status.

### 5.6 Participants’ Reflections on Research Process

As the evaluation questionnaire was given to the participants immediately after the role play, it started with a section on participants’ views on the authenticity of the situations, the management of the role plays and the impact of the camera on their behaviour. The purpose of this section was to obtain participants’ reflections on the role play data collection process, so that insights into the validity and reliability of the elicitation instruments and data collection methods could be sought.

All the participants found the situations natural and very likely to happen in real life. Some BCSL participants felt that situations between students and tutors were more likely to elicit an apology, suggesting schooling and studying might be taken more seriously in the Chinese context. Therefore, the BCSLs suggested including more situations such as street or public transport scenes, etc. Very interestingly, some of the NC participants also commented on the situations between student and tutor. They felt they were put into a less advantaged position interacting with a tutor, especially when the accusation of offence was
unfounded. All the participants found the descriptions on the role play cards clear and self-explanatory. However, some of the NB participants commented that it might be helpful if it were explicitly stated whose fault it was in some situations, and more freedom of manoeuvre given to the participants.

As to the effects of the video camera, almost 95% of the participants found its presence comfortable and didn’t think it affected their behaviour, though a few mentioned that they needed a few situations to accommodate it. One participant mentioned that it was important to maintain distance between the researcher (doing the recording) and the role players. Participants also mentioned that they generally felt more comfortable with their performance in later than in earlier situations.

As to the assessment items, some BCSL participants commented that they felt ‘face’ and ‘higher/lower status’ were not common English concepts. However, this was not mentioned by NB participants.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined participants’ evaluations of contextual variables and appropriateness of strategy use. It was found that the British participants tended to attribute less social distance than the Chinese participants did; whereas Chinese participants evaluated severity of offence higher, especially when they considered themselves to be of a lower status. Overall, the Chinese participants also viewed themselves to be of lower relative status in the roleplays than did the British. In terms of degree of ‘face-losing’, the Chinese participants considered it much more ‘face-losing’ to apologise than did the British participants. The degree of ‘face-losing’ was found to correlate strongly with the
severity of offence and status of the apologisee in the Chinese data. Differences were also found in the choice of appropriate apology strategies. In line with the role-play data, the British participants viewed ‘explicit apology’ as more appropriate, whereas the Chinese participants tended to choose a combination of strategy types. Both learner groups demonstrated similarities to and differences from both their native and target cultures. The next chapter focuses on findings from individual and group interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of contextual variables</th>
<th>NB</th>
<th>NC</th>
<th>CESL</th>
<th>BCSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social distance:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>close</td>
<td>S8, S9, S11</td>
<td>S8, S9, S11</td>
<td>S8, S9, S11</td>
<td>S8, S9, S11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>S4, S5, S7, S10</td>
<td>S4, S5, S7, S10</td>
<td>S5, S7, S10, S4</td>
<td>S5, S7, S10, S4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean figure</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social power:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>S8, S1, S2, S6</td>
<td>S6, S1, S2, S4</td>
<td>S4, S6, S1, S2</td>
<td>S6, S4, S1, S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean figure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of offence:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>S11, S4, S10</td>
<td>S2, S4, S11</td>
<td>S4, S11, S12</td>
<td>S4, S12, S2, S3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>S7, S5, S9</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>S7, S5, S9</td>
<td>S5, S7, S9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean figure</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Evaluation of degree of ‘face-losing’|             |             |              |              |
| Most face-losing                   | S4, S11     | S2, S4, S12 | S11, S12, S4 | S4, S2, S6   |
| Least face-losing                  | S7, S9      | S5, S7, S9, S8 | S7, S9 | S5, S7, S9   |
| Mean figure                        | 4.56        | 3.63        | 3.52         | 3.58         |

| Evaluation of strategy use         |             |             |              |              |
| Most appropriate                   | S1, 177     | S1, 128     | S1, 127      | S1, 162      |
|                                   | S2, 101     | S2, 92      | S3, 50       | S2, 88       |
|                                   | S3, 65      | S3, 57      | S2, 41       | S4, 58       |
|                                   | S4, 57      | S4, 46      | S4, 35       | S3, 47       |
|                                   | S5, 13      | S5, 27      | S5, 20       | S5, 31       |
|                                   | S3, 66      | S5, 77      | S5, 95       | S5, 60       |
|                                   | S4, 42      | S3, 60      | S4, 48       | S3, 36       |
|                                   | S2, 18      | S4, 58      | S3, 54       | S2, 10       |
| S1, 17                            |             |             | S1, 9        |              |
| Least appropriate                 |             |             |              |              |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations among contextual variables</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SP</th>
<th>SP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social distance (SD)</td>
<td>face, SD</td>
<td>face, SO</td>
<td>face</td>
<td>face, SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social power (SP)</td>
<td>face</td>
<td>face, SO</td>
<td>face</td>
<td>face, Sp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of offence (SO)</td>
<td>face</td>
<td>face, SP</td>
<td>face</td>
<td>face, Sp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.13 A summary of the main findings of apology evaluation
Chapter 6  Findings: Interview Data

6.1  Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the interview data for the four research groups: native British speakers (NBs), native Chinese speakers (NCs), Chinese learners of English (CESLs) and British learners of Chinese (BCSLs). Firstly, the way that all participants conceptualised apology is demonstrated with a focus on the range of key words that they used to define apology. Next, cross-cultural differences observed by the participants are listed based on themes, such as frequency of apology used, body language and indirectness, etc. Thirdly, there is a discussion of factors mentioned by the participants that determined whether they would apologise or not. These factors are broadly categorised as: 1. fact-oriented; 2. relationship-oriented; 3. interaction-oriented; 4. apologiser-oriented; 5. apologisee-oriented and 6. context-oriented factors. Finally, there is a discussion of the native speaker participants' evaluation of the apology strategies used in role play situations. Due to time limitation, six out of twelve apology situations were used in the interviews with native participants of Chinese and English based on power difference (S<H, S=H and S>H) as well as severity of offence (a light and a severe situation within each power relationship). In each interview, participants were shown two performances of each situation. One clip was performed by a native speaker of their own language and the other by a learner of their language (also see Chapter 3). In terms of the language-learner participants, their reflections on cultural accommodation are also explored. Examples provided in this section are quoted from different participants with numbers unique to each of them.
6.2 Native Speakers of British English

6.2.1 Conceptualization of Apology

This section demonstrates how NBs define apology by exploring key words they used, with a general discussion of alternative pragmatic functions of ‘sorry’ identified by the NBs.

6.2.1.1 Key words used

When asked ‘What is an apology?’, NBs gave a range of answers which included the key words/phrases in Table 6.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words/phrases</th>
<th>Numbers of times mentioned by NBs</th>
<th>M=8</th>
<th>F=8</th>
<th>Total (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expression / ‘sorry’</td>
<td>10 (n=7 / 87.5%)</td>
<td>11  (n=7/87.5%)</td>
<td>21  (n=14/87.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong/mistake</td>
<td>10 (n= 8 / 100%)</td>
<td>7(n=4/50%)</td>
<td>17  (n= 12/75%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against norm/inappropriate</td>
<td>5 (n= 4 / 50%)</td>
<td>7(n=6/75%)</td>
<td>12  (n= 10/62.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regret/guilt</td>
<td>3 (n= 2 / 25%)</td>
<td>7(n=5/62.5%)</td>
<td>10  (n= 7/ 43.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>2 (n= 2 / 25%)</td>
<td>7(n=4/50%)</td>
<td>9   (n= 6/37.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amend</td>
<td>3 (n=2 / 25%)</td>
<td>3(n=2/25%)</td>
<td>6   (n=4/25%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Use of key words by NBs to define apology

The most frequent words were ‘expression’ and ‘sorry’. 87.5% of the participants (n=14) used both these words. There was a clear indication that NBs see apology as a verbal expression and using the actual word ‘sorry’ as important. Here are some examples:

Example 1 (NB/M1)

*Apology is an expression, to say ‘sorry’ for something you’ve done wrong.*

Example 2 (NB/F1)

*Apology is something you say to explain why you’re in the wrong. You’d always expect someone to say ‘sorry’.*
The next most frequently used words were 'wrong' or 'mistake'. 75% of the participants (n=12) used these two words in their definitions of apology. These words were more often used by males (n=8, 100%) than females (n=4, 50%).

Example 3 (NB/M2)

An apology should be, in my opinion, a recognition of being wrong, so coming to a realization that you are wrong or you've made a mistake, then making some gesture to make the other person know that you are aware of the mistake or whatever.

In addition to 'wrong' and 'mistake', more than half of the participants (62.5%) also associated apology with behaviour that is 'against the norm' or 'inappropriate'. The use of these two key phrases suggest that apology is indeed a culturally specific speech act, since social norms and what is considered to be appropriate are bound to be culturally determined.

Example 4 (NB/M3)

An apology is something you do, if you didn't follow a certain way and others might think it is against the norm. I think for example, if I am walking on the street and I accidentally walk into someone, or they walk into me and we normally both say sorry and then we just walk off. This is just like a habit.

For NBs, apology can be divided into different types. One significant distinction they made was between so-called 'real apology'/'serious apology' and 'humorous apology'/'ritual apology'. One criterion they used to distinguish the above two types of apology was to judge if a mistake was made as well as admitted. Consider the following examples:

Example 5 (NB/M4)

I define an apology as... well, in England, there are two different kinds of apology. There's apology where it's just 'sorry' because you're getting in someone's way. Or 'sorry can I interrupt you'. English people say sorry all the time. But a real apology, I suppose, is when someone does something specifically to you and they
are trying to seek an approval from you and they want you to say that’s ok, maybe. English people apologise when they are not necessarily sorry. Let’s for example say if you have an argument with your girlfriend and it’s about abortion. She believes in abortion and I am against abortion. We have a big fight and at the end of the argument, I say sorry. It doesn’t mean that now I’m not against abortion, it doesn’t mean that I’ve changed my opinion, it means I am sorry we had an argument but is this a real apology? I don’t know. But this is very often what the English do. But a real apology, I was wrong, you are right and that’s what an apology is.

Example 6 (NB/F2)

I certainly think a lot of people in Britain, people are over apologetic, and anyone from another country would say we apologise far too much in this country. I think the classic case is when you walk past someone in a street and you bump into him, automatically both people would turn around and say ‘sorry’, but you’re not really sorry if you didn’t even touch each other. That’s a funny ‘sorry’, that’s not a serious ‘sorry’! Other situations such as you’ve just stood there and done this little stupid dance with each other, you’ve got to say something but you don’t want to say ‘do you want to go for a drink?’, you say ‘sorry’. You’re not really apologising for standing in front of them so it’s not a real apology in that situation, you’re just sort of ‘sorry!’, just a routine formula we get used to using like ‘thank you’ and ‘please’, a way of sharing a bit of contact about that situation.

As these examples show, a ‘real apology’ has to be given where a mistake occurs and someone has to take on the responsibility for it; while a ‘funny apology’ might be needed when a social norm is broken yet not much culpability is involved.

Another criterion used by the NBs was associated with being polite. Similar to the breaking of a social norm, the person does not necessarily make a serious mistake or bear much guilt for the situation, yet still says ‘sorry’ out of politeness. The concept of ‘being polite’ was mentioned by mainly female participants (n=4, 50%) in their definition of apology, but only by two male participants.

Example 7 (NB/F3)

I think an apology is something you say to amend something when you’ve done something wrong or you’ve upset someone. I think you should apologise to them. I think sorry is not necessary where an apology is. It’s just a polite thing to say. Even if there’s nothing serious you’ve done wrong, but still it’s polite. It’s just polite.
Moving on to the emotional aspect of apology, the word ‘regret’ was used mainly by female participants (n=5, 62.5%). They also mentioned ‘feeling bad’ about what happened. It seems that females emphasised the emotional and psychological condition of the person who apologises. Apology is seen as a way to make one feel better in terms of releasing guilt. Two male participants also mentioned this concept.

Example 8 (NB/F4)

To show that you regret doing something is a way of showing somebody ... that you feel bad about it.

Finally, 25% of the participants, equally male and female, used ‘amend’ and ‘repair’ and suggested that apology was remedial behaviour.

Example 9 (NB/M5)

What an apology is, depends on what apology is for, but an apology is usually just admitting that you are wrong in a situation and offering an explanation and repair.

6.2.1.2 Alternative pragmatic functions of ‘sorry’

There were some interesting discussions of and different opinions towards the relationship between the word ‘sorry’ and the concept of ‘apology’. There were many situations referred to by NBs in which people could say ‘sorry’ without apologising. They stated that the word ‘sorry’ could be used in different contexts and served different purposes and functions. For example:

Example 10 (NB/F5)

When something bad happens, you say ‘I’m sorry to hear about this’, it’s just you feel bad for the other person’s misfortune. It shows sympathy not apology.
Sometimes you say sorry to get people's attention, like 'sorry, sorry, can I ask you something.'

Sometimes, 'sorry' was said to serve the function of 'being polite'. as in the following examples:

Example 12 (NB/F7)

In situations when people disagree and say 'sorry, but...', I don't think it is really an apology because they don't mean 'I'm sorry'. I suppose they don't want to offend others that much by saying this is my opinion. But they are pretty much saying sorry but you are wrong. I think it kind of lightens it if you say sorry at the beginning.

It seems that for British participants, an apology, or a so called 'real apology' would involve 1. a mistake, 2. regretful feelings and 3. admission of the offence. A real apology also requires an expression such as 'sorry'. If a person only says sorry but refuses to take on responsibility for the offence, the word 'sorry' would still not be considered an apology by most of the participants. On the other hand, 'sorry' cannot be seen as a serious apology or even an apology at all if the severity of the offence is very low or if it is used in contexts which do not satisfy the above three conditions. In such a case, we can conclude that the word 'sorry' is being used more in its function of expressing a certain level of politeness. This is very much related to social norms and what is considered to be inappropriate or rude. A lot of NBs commented that it was something automatic and a sort of habit.

The following examples were taken from a discussion in a group interview on situations which were not considered to be apology by the NBs.

Example 13 (NB/F2)

I think the actual word sorry is used for a lot of things, just a filler for lots of different things like everyone was saying the other day, somebody holds a door open all the way at the end of a corridor for you, you go through it and say 'sorry',

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it’s just a way of making contact with somebody, the word ‘sorry’ doesn’t really mean much I don’t think but an apology does. At the time the word ‘sorry’ comes out without even thinking about it, ‘sorry’ or ‘excuse me’, when you are not feeling sorry for anything.

Example 14 (NB/M3)

You feel like you have to say something and a lot of time would be ‘thank you’ but ‘sorry’ is also another thing if you want to start a little conversation, it would be strange if you then said ‘hello’ to the person you’d never met before, whereas ‘sorry for making you do that’, is a little bit more jokey, a bit more polite.

However, discussing issues related to politeness, NBs tended to hesitate and be uncertain of whether ‘sorry’ should be counted as an apology or not, and views differed from person to person. There was uncertainty as to whether ‘sorry’ could be defined as an apology or not when used to ask the speaker to repeat what he or she had just said.

Example 15 (NB/M1)

No, not really an apology. Maybe it’s kind of an apology. It’s a very polite way of saying, ‘can you repeat that’ or a bit like ‘pardon’ or something. It can interchange with that. It’s more apologetic than pardon, but it’s not an apology, if you know what I am saying. If you said something and I didn’t hear and I say sorry, it’s a kind of acknowledgement that I didn’t hear what you said, but kind of leaving the blame on me without apologising in a weird way. Do you know what I mean? All in one go, but without, in a way of politeness formula and with the expectation that you will repeat what you said to me so I can actually catch it this time. (Laugh) It’s semantic ‘sorry’ and ‘pardon’.

To conclude, the following diagram summarizes the conceptualization of apology by the native British participants:
In summary, NBs suggested there were two types of apology. One is an ‘error-driven apology’, which is essential to maintain the balance between hearer and speaker. This type of apology has to satisfy the following four conditions:

1. a wrong act, mistake or inappropriate behaviour has occurred,
2. the speaker who conducts the wrong act has regretful feelings about his/her behaviour,
3. this person is willing to take responsibility for his/her actions,
4. the speaker provides verbal expression of being ‘sorry’ and offers reparation according to the particular situation.

By apologising, the speaker regains his/her face and releases guilt or regret regarding his/her action.

The other type of apology can be defined as ‘socially-driven’. This kind of apology exists as a social norm and constitutes what is considered to be polite behaviour or good manners. It has developed as a kind of habit and automatic reaction in British society.
6.2.2 Judgement of Necessity to Apologise

Based on all NBs responses, six types of factors were identified:

1. **Fact-oriented.** This type of factor relates directly to the offence which impacts on the judgement of whether it is necessary to apologise. Things that were mentioned by the participants included severity of offence, offence type, whose fault it was and the result or impact of an apology.

2. **Relationship-oriented.** This refers to the existing relationship between the speaker and the hearer. NBs talked about closeness and familiarity with the other person as well as previous apology experiences with that particular person.

3. **Interaction-oriented.** These involve apology interactions between the speaker and hearer or other parties who were present. Reaction from the hearer as well as reaction from other parties was mentioned.

4. **Apologiser-oriented.** These factors are related to the cognitive and emotional or psychological state of the speaker. NBs mentioned awareness of the offence, as well as one's emotional state at the moment an offence occurs.

5. **Apologisee-oriented.** These refer to the apologisee’s age, gender, status and personality.

6. **Context-oriented.** This category includes cases where the setting or surroundings in which the offence takes place were mentioned, as well as the presence of other people.

The frequency of factors mentioned by NBs is shown in Table 6.2. Here, *fact-oriented* factors determined mostly whether they would apologise in a given situation. The most important factor was whose fault it was, and the next was the severity of the offence. Some gender differences could be noticed here. More NB males considered whose fault it was to be an influential factor, while more NB females considered the severity of the offence to be a key factor.
### Table 6.2 Factors affecting necessity to apologise mentioned by NBs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors mentioned by NBs</th>
<th>M (n=8)</th>
<th>F (n=8)</th>
<th>Total (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fact-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of offence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offence type</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose fault it was</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result/impact of the apology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness/familiarity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of apologisee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apologiser-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of offence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional state</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apologisee-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s gender</td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s status</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s personality</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s age</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal/informal setting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people who’re present</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most NBs agreed that if the severity of offence was high, one should apologise more, such as by repeatedly saying 'sorry'.

**Example 15 (NB/F4)**

> I suppose you can judge if you need to apologise by the seriousness of the situation. If it’s quite a serious situation, you probably apologise more. You say sorry and you try to make up for it and try to give consolation and you say 'sorry' more times. If it's something quite petty, you might just make up some excuses, such as 'sorry, I ripped your piece of paper. It was on the floor.'

The second most frequently mentioned factor was the **apologiser-oriented** factor. Mainly, the NBs suggested that one had to be aware of having committed an offence.
Example 16 (NB/M8)

*I don't think it's rude, if you haven't apologised to someone because you didn't realise that you'd caused the problem, because in an ideal world you would know and you would have apologised, but it's not your fault if you don't know, there's nothing you can do about it, I wouldn't get annoyed with someone who hadn't apologised to me because they'd just done something, which through another course of events, had caused something bad to happen to me.*

*Relationship-oriented* factors were the third most frequently mentioned. For NBs, these mainly focused on the degree of closeness between the speaker and the hearer. Most agreed that they would apologise more to strangers rather than to friends or close family members. The following example was given by a male NB on why he thought that it was more necessary to apologise to strangers.

Example 17 (NB/M3)

*Because you wouldn't feel that you needed to because you already had this sort of ... knowledge between each other and the other person knew you weren't a complete idiot, they'd know already that you were sorry because they know you, they know you wouldn't do something like that on purpose. I wouldn't feel as embarrassed, that's partly it as well, if you dropped somebody's phone and broke it, if it was a complete stranger, you'd probably think "I can't believe I've done that, that is absolutely terrible", whereas with a friend it's just "oh no, what an idiot, that's a really stupid thing to do", because of the embarrassment you feel when it's a stranger, I'd probably get a bit flustered and a bit "sorry, sorry, sorry" ... that must be part of it.*

In terms of interaction between the speaker and hearer, NBs indicated that reaction from the apologisee was very important. Females felt it would be necessary to apologise more if the other person was really angry.

The apologisee's status and personality were also mentioned by a few NBs.
6.2.3 Evaluation of apology strategies in use

This section moves on to discuss NB evaluations of the apology strategies used in the various situations. Here, comments made by NBs in interviews on particular apology strategies used in particular situations will be presented with a focus on the most salient features in each case. These data provided insights into the rationale for perceived (in)appropriateness, (in)sincerity and (im)politeness of responses by these participants.

6.2.3.1 Situation 1: Mobile phone in tutorial

Eye contact

In this situation, NBs pointed out that it was not appropriate if the student in the video did not look at the tutor. Eye contact was desirable in this context.

Example 18 (NB/M5)

When she's apologising, she didn't look at the tutor. She just looked at the phone. I don't think it's appropriate.

Example 19 (NB/F6)

I thought it was okay, the only thing I noticed was she didn't really make eye contact with the person who she was with. She'd have been better making eye contact rather than looking at the desk, maybe she was feeling ashamed but it's much better to face somebody ...

Speed of response

Another aspect that was considered appropriate for this situation was to apologise immediately.

Example 20 (NB/M2)
She didn't apologise immediately. She had to be told that she's not meant to have the phone on twice actually before she said sorry.

Example 21 (NB/M7)

Her apology wasn't that appropriate as it wasn't really an apology. Because when the tutor said that mobiles wouldn't be allowed in class, she said 'It's alright. I will call back later.' which wasn't really an apology. It was not saying 'Sorry. I left my phone on.' If there's any explanation, she should be saying that, 'I forgot to switch the phone off', rather than saying what she said.

According to NBs, saying 'sorry' immediately also increased the sincerity of the given apology.

Awareness of offence

Many NBs thought the CESL participant wasn't apologising sincerely because she did not seem to understand where the problem lay. They believed that one can only apologise sincerely when one is aware of one's mistakes.

Example 23 (NB/M8)

I think the interesting thing about that was that her second reaction was that 'I can speak to her later'. It seemed she didn't realize the issue was that the mobile phone shouldn't be ringing in that situation, not the urgency of responding to that call. So, there's a kind of misunderstanding of what the problem was. She started off a bit odd, but then possibly too overtly apologetic. Perhaps sort of an understanding that something was not right but not appreciating what it was, rather a kind of fearful apology rather than understanding what the issue was.

Body language

Smiling and relaxed body language were not judged to be sincere by the NBs. They indicated that one should look embarrassed.

Example 24 (NB/F)
I felt that at first the Chinese speaker probably didn’t realise that it wasn’t appropriate for her phone to be going off, but once it was pointed out to her, she seemed more apologetic after that. Because she seemed very flustered and she was like, “I’m sorry, I’m really sorry, it won’t happen again”, whereas the English speaker automatically, she said sorry but it was something that was automatic, it didn’t necessarily come across to me as being very sincere, she was smiling and relaxed and her body language wasn’t as flustered, she didn’t seem very embarrassed by what happened.

6.2.3.2 Situation 2: Didn’t turn up for tutorial

Rights to clarify situation

Since it was not made clear in the situation which of the participants had the wrong date for the tutorial, all the NBs considered it appropriate to clarify the situation. In other words, they thought it was necessary to identify who was wrong.

Example 25 (NB/M1)

The British speaker was clearly interested in actually trying to clarify who was wrong because if you think it is right and the other person thinks the contrary, you might not accept the blame necessarily automatically. So, I thought his response was reasonably appropriate, although he wasn’t necessarily apologising. He said if, and it’s conditional, fair enough. He was reluctant to accept it was his fault. So, it’s all conditional. I think he’s entitled to, because I think it’s unjust if it’s automatically the fault of the student. There should be some negotiation.

Explanation/extended apology

The majority of the male NBs perceived it to be more appropriate to offer an explanation of why the student did not turn up in the first place. They said this indicated the person was actually thinking about what they had done and thus made the apology more sincere.

Example 26 (NB/M6)

The Chinese speaker was more ready to accept it was his fault and didn’t seem to be particularly concerned about it. ‘Ok, sorry. When can I see you next?’ It’s a very short apology, seems to show a lack of awareness of the significance of what
he has done. I think in this situation it's worth giving some sort of explanation because you can see people being rude or inconsiderate and not taking it seriously. It deserves some explanation as to why it took place.

Offer repair

Female NBs thought it was important to initiate re-arrangement of the tutorial and for body language not to be too relaxed.

Example 27 (NB/F4)

I thought the British guy was very, like, he was sitting there, laid back, "oh yeah, I'm sorry", she was the one who I think said, "shall we schedule it for another time?", the Chinese guy went in and said, "yeah, I'm really, really sorry", he was the one who said "shall we make a date for the next one?", so he seemed a lot more apologetic and was like, "okay, I'm really sorry, let's make another date", whereas the English guy was really relaxed, was like "yeah, all right, okay", then she said, she had to initiate, "shall we set another date" and he was like "yeah, yeah, you know".

Awareness of responsibility

Again, NBs commented that sincerity was shown by whether the person took on responsibility for what they had done.

Example 28 (NB/M2)

He didn't really apologise. All he did was confirm he'd got it wrong. It didn't seem to be very sincere at the time because he wasn't sure he was in the wrong. So he wanted to double check with his emails to make sure. So, there wasn't really an apology there.

6.2.3.3 Situation 3: Forgot DVD

Relaxed about the situation

Because the situation was between two good friends and the offence was trivial, most of the NBs suggested that it was appropriate to be relaxed about the situation but it would still be polite to say 'sorry'.
Example 29 (NB/F6)

They're both acceptable amongst friends, I wouldn't make too much of a song and dance about apologising to a friend about something like that, something not very serious, if you went to a supervisor you’d be like “oh no, I’m really sorry”, if you went to a friend you’d be like “oh yeah I forgot, I’ll bring it round next time”. Yeah, I think it's always polite to say “I'm sorry”, but not make too much of a big deal, don’t punish yourself too much.

Offer repair

Some NBs thought it would be more effective if the British person in the video offered to go back to get the DVD as the CESL did.

Example 30 (NB/M4)

Maybe not effective because she didn’t offer to fetch it and she just said ‘should we go and buy one’, whereas the Chinese person, she offered to go back home and get the DVD. That’s what was needed for that situation.

Looking surprised

In this situation, looking surprised was viewed by NBs as an indication of sincerity.

Example 31 (NB/M1)

I think her apology was very sincere because of the fact that her body language ... showed surprise as she remembered when the Person told her and she offered to fetch the DVD from home even though she lived a long way away.

Offer repair

According to NBs, it would be acceptable to be more casual, however, it would sound more sincere if the speaker tried to offer more options in order to repair the situation.

Example 32 (NB/F2)

The Chinese one, she seemed a lot more sincere in that she offered quite a few explanations, she said “shall I go back and get it?”, she said “what shall we do
now, shall we do something else?” and the British girl was like “yeah, I’m really sorry I forgot it”, “shall we go rent another one?”, it didn’t seem as much ... but I think the same as X said, I’d be quite happy to receive either one, I’d be like “it’s not going to be a big deal”.

6.2.3.4 Situation 4: Damaged friend’s mobile

Offer repair

All the NBs agreed that it was crucial to offer a replacement.

Example 33 (NB/F1)

Yeah, I think it’s very important when you’ve just broken somebody’s brand new thing, that the first thing you do is say, “I’ll get you a new one, don’t worry about it, I’ll get you a new one”. I think that’s especially if it’s a phone or something that’s really useful and important to have, you offer straightaway to replace it. The first one, even just saying “sorry” ... I was waiting for the “sorry” to come out, I was like “go on, you can say it now” and there was no sorry I think almost to the very end, I think she might have actually said sorry.

Speed of response

They also judged that in this situation it was appropriate to say ‘sorry’ straight way.

Example 34 (NB/M4)

The British speaker offered a solution, which was good. She offered to go to the shop. I mean if she’d said ‘sorry’ first and then offered a solution, it would’ve been better.

Example 35 (NB/M5)

The first one could have been made better by saying sorry first and then maybe saying, “do you think you might be covered on your insurance?”, rather than “oh well, you’re probably covered on your insurance” as if “it’s not my problem”.

Repetition of ‘sorry’

In this particular situation, NBs judged the CESL speaker in the video to be more sincere because she apologised repeatedly.
Example 36 (NB/M3)

The Chinese speaker seems pretty sincere. Apologised quite a few times, so she seemed quite sincere.

6.2.3.5 Situation 5: Spilt soup on waitress

Body posture

The NBs, especially the females, pointed out that it was not appropriate for the speakers in the video to stay in their seats instead of standing up and helping.

Example 37 (NB/F6)

I'm surprised that they did actually stay in their seats though and they didn't sort of get up and offer [overtalking] I'm really surprised they didn't get up and at least help with something, I don't know, [inaudible].

Tone of voice

Tone of voice was used by NBs to judge if an apology was sincere or not.

Example 38 (NB/F2)

I think both young men were sorry and the British chap, I mean I found he was very sincerely sorry, you could hear the concern in his voice and he offered a suggestion straight away to go and do something about it.

Showing concern

The following female participant thought the CESL in the video was more sincere because she showed more concern by asking questions and suggesting taking the waitress to the hospital.
I think the Chinese one appeared more sincere than the English one, the English one did turn round and say, “I’m really sorry, are you okay?” and then when she walked off, he just went ..., and then sat back again. Whereas the Chinese one came a lot further out and even offered to take her to hospital, whereas the other one was like, “yeah, I think you should go and put some water on it” and then went like that, and she went “okay, where’s the rest of the soup?”.

6.2.3.6 Situation 6: Mistook stranger for friend

Significance of gender

Gender was considered by some NBs. They thought it was not appropriate for a male participant to insist on knowing the female role player, especially when the latter clearly said she didn’t know him.

Example 40 (NB/F)

The British one, I thought handled it quite well, apologised and explained himself and he seemed quite sincere, she seemed quite cool with it, she didn’t seem at all put out. The Chinese one is a bit difficult because he seemed to find it hard to believe that he’d mis-identified, I think in some situations that could be quite sinister, if someone is following you and saying that they’ve met you before and you know they haven’t! To explain she’d not been to any parties and he did kind of get the message, but there was something potentially very uncomfortable about it, I think they were happy in the end but I think it could have been quite nasty if the woman had been of a nervous disposition or something.

6.3 Native Speakers of Mandarin Chinese

6.3.1 Conceptualization of Apology

Table 6.3 lists key words used by NCs when asked to define what an apology was.

Similarly to the NBs, Chinese participants also used ‘做错’ (zuocuo, make a mistake) most frequently. In fact, all used this word in their definitions. In addition, they emphasized that the apology one gives in the Chinese context depends heavily on the type of mistake made.
They also mentioned that there were different types of apology: some were given because of ‘歉意’ (qianyi, regret) where the speaker realized their mistake and accepted responsibility for it; some were given because of concern for ‘面子’ (mianzi, face) regardless of whether a mistake was made or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words</th>
<th>Numbers of times mentioned by NCs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M=8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>做错 (zuocuo, make a mistake)</td>
<td>12 (n=8/100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>面子 (mianzi, face)</td>
<td>10 (n=7/87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>补偿 (buchang, repair)</td>
<td>9 (n=7/87.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>礼貌 (limao, polite)</td>
<td>3 (n=3/37.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真心诚意 (shenxinchengyi, sincere)</td>
<td>3 (n=3/37.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>对方 (duifang, the other person)</td>
<td>2 (n=2/25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>歉意 (qianyi, regret)</td>
<td>2 (n=2/25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3 Use of key words by NCs to define apology

Example 41 (NC/M1)

Apology can be classified into many types and it depends on the relationship between people as well as the severity of the situation. For example, if you are close to that person and the offence is small, you can joke with him/her and it can be more relaxing; but if it's not someone you know well then you have to be more formal. The main purpose of apology is to express one’s regret and also to see if you can offer repair, that’s it. Firstly you genuinely feel guilty, but sometimes it could be due to the need for good social relations so you have to be polite. Most of the time it's just because I know I've made a mistake and if I don't think I've done anything wrong, I won't be happy to apologise.

Example 42 (NC/F1)

Apology should be classified into many types and it depends on the relationship between people as well as the severity of the situation. For example, if you are close to that person and the offence is small, you can joke with him/her and it can be more relaxing; but if it's not someone you know well then you have to be more formal. The main purpose of apology is to express one’s regret and also to see if you can offer repair, that’s it. Firstly you genuinely feel guilty, but sometimes it could be due to the need for good social relations so you have to be polite. Most of the time it's just because I know I've made a mistake and if I don't think I've done anything wrong, I won't be happy to apologise.
Apology is a way to express your regret to someone, if you've done something wrong. I think in China, it is important to consider what mistake you have made when you apologise. This is a fundamental issue, because it relates to one's face.

The significant difference between the British and Chinese conceptualization of apology was the key word '面子' (mianzi, face). This word only appeared in the Chinese definitions of apology, for example by 87.5% of the NCs, equally divided between males and females. Two perspectives emerged from the NC results. Firstly, '面子' (mianzi, face) was a main concern while apologising, especially when threatening speakers’ positive face. Secondly, apology was used to conduct 'face-work' between two speakers, especially when the accusation was unfounded and there was a power-based relationship. In other words, apology was seen as an interpersonal communication strategy to maintain, give and return '面子' (mianzi, face). Consider the following examples:

**Example 43 (NC/F2)**

如果你真的做错了，比较严重，你会说对不起。说对不起实际上是一种有关面子，就是你的脸面，比较丢脸的感觉。中国人就讲究面子，你如果道歉，意思就是你做了错事，犯了错误，从两个人的关系来讲，就好像欠了别人一样，从心理上来讲，会有些内疚，从面子上来讲，一个是不好意思，另一个就是你丢了面子。

*If you've really done something wrong, something quite serious, you would apologise. Apology actually relates to face, your face and you feel you are losing face when you say sorry. Chinese people pay a lot of attention to face. If you apologise, it means you've done something wrong and you've made a mistake. In terms of two people's relationship, you would feel you owe the other person something. From a psychological perspective, you feel regret. From the perspective of face, you feel embarrassed and you feel you've lost face.*

**Example 44 (NC/M2)**

中国人比较在意小节，如果犯错误就觉得很在意，很不好意思。因为做错了事需要去赔礼道歉，需要承认这个错误。我往往觉得这很难，也许，我觉得我自己做错事很丢面子。可是，有的时候，集体形象大于个人形象，一个人丢面子比整个群体丢面子强。也有的时候，由于中国的传统，晚辈要给长辈留面子；下属要给上级留面子；他们的面子就比自己的优先照顾了。
The Chinese tend to pay attention to details. They also care a lot if they’ve made any mistakes and they would feel really embarrassed about it. It is because making mistakes means to apologise and to admit one’s fault. I usually find this very difficult. Maybe it is because I consider it to be face-losing to make mistakes. However, sometimes, group image comes first. One person’s face loss is much better than the group’s face loss. In addition, according to the Chinese tradition, younger generations are supposed to save face of elders and employees are supposed to save face of employers. You have to consider their face needs first, before your own.

The majority of the NCs (68.7%) perceived ‘补偿’ (buchang, repair) as an important part of apology. They pointed out that this kind of compensation was not purely linguistic, it often meant more than saying sorry. They mentioned the importance of offering both emotional and material remedy. It seemed apology had a broader significance than just linguistic function. The NCs mentioned many possible apologetic gestures such as paying a visit, sending gifts, and writing letters. Their reason was to show the other person the sincerity of their apology.

Different from the British definition of apology, 50% of the NCs used key words ‘真心诚意’ (zhenxinchengyi, sincere) (n=8) and 43.7% used ‘对方’ (duifang, the other person) (n=7). This indicated that great value was given to sincerity as well as to the other-oriented nature of apology from a Chinese perspective. Here are some examples:

Example 45 (NC/M3)

赔偿道歉就是让对方知道你的诚意，知道你不是故意的，是对对方的一种尊重。

Apology is to make the other person understand your sincerity and know you didn’t do what you’ve done on purpose. It is a way to show respect for others.

Example 46 (NC/F3)

道歉是要让对方原谅你所犯的错误，只有真心诚意才可以达到这个目的。道歉要让到对方心里，口头上的表示往往是不够的。然而，如果你很诚心的话，至少在精神上是对对方的一个补偿，部分的补偿。
To apologise is to ask for the other's forgiveness in relation to the mistake you've made. You cannot achieve this goal if you are not sincere. You need to touch the other person when you apologise. Sometimes it is not enough just to express it via words. However, if you are really sincere, you can at least compensate partially emotionally.

Many NCs considered apology to be achieved implicitly in Chinese culture. Not many associated apology with the word '对不起' (duibuqi, sorry) in the same way as the NBs did. The former viewed apology more as an action, a channel or a method, rather than a linguistic expression. This is not to conclude that NCs do not think verbal apology is important. It seems rather that the Chinese tend to emphasize more than just the verbal. '礼貌' (limao, polite) was also one of the key words they used. Half of the NCs (50%) linked apology with politeness and good manners.

To sum up, the following diagram demonstrates the conceptualization of apology by the NCs:

![Diagram showing conceptualization of apology by NCs]

**Figure 6.2 Conceptualization of apology by NCs**
Like the NBs, NCs also suggested that there were two types of apology. One is ‘error-driven apology’ which is also essential in keeping the balance between hearer and speaker. This type of apology also has to satisfy the following four conditions:

1. a wrong act, mistake or inappropriate behaviour has occurred,
2. the speaker who conducts the wrong act has regretful feelings about his/her behaviour,
3. this person is willing to take responsibility for his/her actions,
4. the speaker provides reparation according to the particular situation but does not necessarily verbally say ‘sorry’ (this slightly differs from the NB definitions).

Even though these NC felicity conditions are broadly similar to those of NBs, the psychological consequences are very different. By admitting fault, a Chinese speaker risks losing face, therefore tends to feel reluctant to apologise. The other type of apology can also be defined as ‘socially-driven’. This kind of apology occurs mostly in power-based relationships and is largely influenced by Confucianism and other Chinese traditions. It represents social and interpersonal strategies to give face to the hearer and maintain it, so that rapport can be built in Chinese social networks.

6.3.2 Judgement of Necessity to Apologise

As shown in Table 6.4, for NCs the most frequently mentioned factors were fact-oriented. Among these, the most significant was severity of offence. It was mentioned equally by male and female NCs. The more severe the offence was, the more necessary it was to apologise.
Factors mentioned by NCs  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors mentioned by NCs</th>
<th>M (n=8)</th>
<th>F (n=8)</th>
<th>T (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact-oriented factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of offence</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offence type</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose fault it was</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result/impact of the apology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship-oriented factors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness/familiarity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction-oriented factors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of apologisee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologiser-oriented factors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of offence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional state</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee-oriented factors</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s gender</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s status</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s personality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologisee’s age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-oriented factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal/informal setting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people who are present</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4 Factors affecting necessity to apologise mentioned by NCs

Example 47 (NC/M6)

If the severity is very high, it is definitely necessary to apologise and also to compensate in various ways. But if it is not so serious, it’d be ok just to express concerns.

One female participant pointed out that if the situation was really severe, silence could actually constitute an appropriate form of apology.

Example 48 (NC/F5)

特别严重的时候你再去说对不起也是没有什么用了 因为你这件事情给人家造成很大的严重后果 这个时候比如说你不哭了 低着头 甚至于你的眼泪都刷刷来了 那有可能对方也知道你有可能认识到自己的错误了.
It is useless regardless of how many times you say ‘sorry’, if the situation is really serious. You may cause severe consequences to others. At this time, if you are silent and you look down, or even your tears drop down, then perhaps the other person would actually know that you’ve realized your fault.

Equal consideration was given to whose fault it was in the situation as well as the impact of an apology.

For NCs, the second most commonly mentioned set of factors were apologisee-oriented. Importance was given firstly to the apologisee’s status, secondly to their gender, and then to age and personality. Status and age seemed to be closely linked with each other. It would be more necessary to apologise to people of higher status or of older age because of the need to show respect and consider their “face needs”.

In terms of gender, NCs pointed out differences in same-gender and cross-gender interaction. It seemed more necessary for males to apologise to females verbally, while it would be acceptable if no verbal apology was given to another male. Also, male NCs pointed out that it was more expected for males to apologise to females because females would be normally more sensitive towards their face-need, and it would be a face-earning action for males to acknowledge this. This indicated qualities such as tolerance and forgiveness, highly valued in Chinese society.

Example 49 (NC/M8)

如果产生误会好象一般都是男的道歉,大概传统意义上来说 就是男的应该让让女的

Generally speaking, men apologise to women if there’s any misunderstanding. Maybe it is due to some tradition that we believe men should be more tolerant.

The personality of the apologisee was also mentioned by one NC participant. According to her, one could be more casual when apologising to someone who is outgoing but might be more cautious and take more time when apologising to someone who is quiet and keeps things to themselves.
Relationship- and context-oriented factors were both widely commented on by NCs. Most drew differences between apologising to close friends and to strangers. With close friends, a smile or an invitation to a meal was typical apologetic behaviour. The word 'sorry' might not be necessary. However, if the situation was severe, one might consider various ways or actions to compensate for the offence so that the relationship could be maintained. It was clear that not much consideration was given when apologising to strangers. Most NCs thought a verbal ‘sorry’ should be easily accepted by a stranger. In other words, apology tended to be more action-based and more indirect with close friends but more direct and formal with strangers.

Example 50 (NC/M7)

It depends on whether I am close to this person or not. If I am not so close to them, I would apologise more formally such as say ‘sorry’ via language. But if this person is very close to me such as my friend or my brother, I wouldn't say sorry. I might just smile at them and I think it's enough. Sometimes, as long as it's not something serious, I will smile and try to compensate them, say invite them for dinner. This would be the way I express apology to someone who's close. I will use more direct ways to express apology to strangers, such as just saying ‘sorry’.

Previous experience and existing relationship was also mentioned by two male NCs. The main emphasis was given to situations in which one did not have a good relationship with the person one needed to apologise to. Both participants pointed out that it would be unnecessary or difficult to apologise to someone they did not like due to the feeling of losing face.

Context-oriented factors included the actual place where the offence occurred as well as whether other people were present.
Example 51 (NC/F5)

One needs to consider the context. For example, 'sorry' is not used at home. You don't need to say 'sorry' often at home but you might need to in public. In some places you will have to apologise, such as in the service industry. Since customers come first, you might have to apologise even if you haven't done anything wrong.

Example 52 (NC/M4)

It depends on the context and it is very important. If there are some unfamiliar people around, it might feel awkward to apologise when these people are there. I think this kind of situation does happen sometimes. Also if it’s something more private, and maybe this kind of offence is more personal, then maybe you wouldn’t apologise directly in front of outsiders, or even people who are close to you. Maybe you would find another time to do so.

NCs also mentioned the impact of the apologisee’s reaction, as well as reactions of other people present. Normally, one would apologise more if the apologisee did not seem to accept the apology. Some male participants pointed out that one might choose to apologise or not based on comments from people other than the apologisee. This would also depend on who these people were as well as their status, age and gender, etc.

Finally, NCs also mentioned apologiser-oriented factors. The main focus was on whether the apologiser recognized his or her fault. A few also pointed out that one’s emotional state might also influence judgment of whether to apologise or not.
6.3.3 Evaluation of Apology Strategies in Use

In this section, the NCs’ comments on apology strategies in use are presented. The rationale of their perception of appropriate apology behaviour is emphasised.

6.3.3.1 Situation 1: Mobile phone in tutorial

**Informing who was calling**

Most NCs indicated that it was appropriate to explain to the tutor who was calling in this situation. This could show respect towards the tutor and suggest that the student had no secrets from him/her. Therefore, an explicit explanation of who was calling was considered appropriate and even desirable. It was interesting to observe that NCs in role play situations tended to explain that a family member had called. They mentioned in the interview that using a family member would be an appropriate reason; otherwise it might sound like an excuse.

**Not picking up the phone**

NCs pointed out that one should not pick up the phone in this situation and this would show one’s sincerity. The following is an example:

Example 53 (NC/F2)

> 他态度诚恳，首先他没接手机，就表示对对方的尊重，然后解释了一下原因，是妈妈打来的，让对方了解清楚，然后再继续课程。

> *His attitude was very sincere since he didn’t pick up the phone. It shows his respect to the tutor. Then he explained that it was his mother who called so that the tutor knew what happened before they moved on to continue their tutorial.*
6.3.3.2 Situation 2: Didn’t turn up for tutorial

**Body language**

NCs placed more emphasis than NBs on body language in this situation. A few pointed out that the British participants’ apology was not appropriate because of their body language, including the way one sat and also the facial expression one had. The following are some examples.

**Example 54 (NC/M5)**

不过有一个不对，和老师道歉怎么能翘着二郎腿，好像自己还是老板一样。我觉得这个好像不太好。因为你在道歉的时候，本身就是在征求谅解，怎么能这样呢，好像很无所谓一样，我觉得这个不是很好。

*There is something not appropriate in his apology. He was sitting with his legs crossed in front of the teacher as if he was the boss. I don’t think this is appropriate because when you are apologising you are asking for forgiveness, thus you shouldn’t act as if you don’t care. I think this was not appropriate.*

**Example 55 (NC/F8)**

比如那个上课时间搞错，英国人说话时面无表情，好像没事一样，一直盯着老师看是不对的，应该有面部表情。

*The British speaker didn’t have any facial expression when he got the time wrong as if nothing had happened. He was looking at the teacher all the time and this was wrong. I think he should have more facial expression.*

**Offer compromise**

NCs thought it was more appropriate if the speaker was prepared to compromise his/her position in this situation in order to show respect and save the face of the tutor.

**Example 56 (NC/M2)**

既然是这样，学生即使知道了，那学生应该尊敬老师，学生能让一步还是让一步吧

*Since the tutor thought she was right and even if the student was sure that the tutor was wrong, the student should still respect the tutor. If the student can compromise, then the student should.*
Example 57 (NC/F4)

I think, even though it was the teacher's fault, it wasn't necessary to point it out, because if you do so, you will make the teacher feel as if she has lost face. The more you are sure it is the teacher's fault, the more important it is to apologise. This way, you can demonstrate your respect for the teacher. Perhaps, one day, if she discovered that it was her fault, she would have a good impression of you because she would realize you saved her face. Thus, it is nothing to do with whose mistake it was really. The key issue here is to show your respect to the teacher.

Offer explanation

Most NCs felt the Chinese speaker's apology was more sincere than the British speaker's. This was because the Chinese provided sufficient explanation and apologised repeatedly. In the following example, the NC participant mentioned that Chinese people would be more concerned about leaving a bad impression with others and would regard a mistake more seriously.

Example 58 (NC/F3)

The Chinese girl was more sincere because she tried her best to provide explanations and saying she genuinely forgot about it. She also apologised repeatedly. However, the English person just said 'Oh, I forgot'. It seemed that she didn't really care and this made me feel that the Chinese speaker was more concerned about leaving a bad impression of being too casual or irresponsible. This bad impression would surely impact on her face and therefore she would try very hard to explain and to compensate and try to repair this impression that she gave to others. But maybe the English person thought that if she forgot once it was ok, so she's more carefree and relaxed. But, for the Chinese person, she seemed to care even about one mistake, because this would impact on the way other people perceived her and therefore she would apologise by all means possible.
6.3.3.3 Situation 3: Forgot DVD

Evaluation of (in)appropriateness by NCs

For NCs, an apology was appropriate if it reflected a balance between maintaining the ‘face-need’ of the hearer and over-emphasising it, which would adversely affect the close relationship between the speakers. The Chinese speaker in the video didn’t use the word ‘sorry’ at all. However, the other strategies she used emphasized concern for the hearer which seems to be a desirable trait from the NCs’ point of view.

Example 59 (NC/F5)

'Actually they are good friends, it doesn’t really matter. But I think she handled the situation very well. Because she admitted she had forgotten, but she immediately asked her friend what she wanted to do instead, and then she suggested going out and renting another DVD. This shows she cares about how her friend feels and this will make her friend feel as if she is gaining face. However, she didn’t make it into a big deal. She asked her friend to prepare some nice food while waiting for her to come back with the DVD. This shows they are still close.'

Example 60 (NC/F6)

'It would be ok just to say ‘bu hao yi si’ (sorry in contrast to ‘dui bu qi’) as forgetting a DVD is a trivial thing. I don’t think it is necessary to apologise repeatedly. I think it is not necessary because friends are not supposed to mind about these kind of things, otherwise it is too artificial.

When discussing sincerity in this situation, NCs suggested showing respect and giving face to a friend could show sincerity. Showing respect would be action based.

Example 61 (NC/M3)
The Chinese speaker suggested going and renting a DVD when she forgot. This took more effort and showed more respect and therefore her friend would gain more face. This would count as being sincere.

6.3.3.4 Situation 4: Damaged friend’s mobile

Offer repair

NCs commented that it was more appropriate to offer repair straight away instead of asking questions about the mobile phone or insurance.

Example 62 (NC/F5)

The Chinese speaker’s apology was more acceptable. The British speaker asked where the phone was purchased and what model it was which seemed suspicious. If a friend said it was new, then it was new. The Chinese speaker did well. He said he would buy her a new one directly. Since it’s broken, it’s impossible to repair.

Example 63 (NC/M5)

When talking about real material compensation, the English speaker seemed to use too many explanations. It seemed to me was a way of avoiding responsibility.

Concern for others

It was also pointed out by a number of NCs that it was appropriate for the apologiser to find ways to justify her way of offering repair, so that the apologisee would feel more comfortable in accepting the compensation provided. This is a very other-oriented way of thinking.
Example 64 (NC/M6)

In the mobile situation, the Chinese speaker said that she's going to offer a new phone. In addition, she said she could give the broken phone to her younger sister to use and her sister wouldn't mind. This was to find an excuse to buy a new phone for her friend. If her sister is very young, she may not need a mobile. In other words, it is, in a way, thinking for the other person and finding a reasonable justification for her action of buying a new phone. In this way, you wouldn't make the other person think she was buying a mobile just for her and this could reduce the pressure on the other person having to ask you to pay. Therefore, the other person would feel more balanced in a way and wouldn't worry too much because of the fact that you have to pay the cost.

Many NCs believed that showing a concerned attitude was the key point in this particular situation. This could be done through providing promises and comforting the apologisee. It was also an important way to demonstrate one's sincerity.

Example 65 (NC/F2)

I think the most important thing is attitude as well as consideration for the other person's feeling. It would be ok to say sorry only if the offence is low. But in severe situations such as damaging a friend's phone, one has to understand how the other person would feel; especially if the mobile phone was newly bought. At this time, one has to provide promises and try to comfort the other person. It is very necessary to provide promises because this demonstrates a kind of understanding.

Example 66 (NC/M6)

是态度。我觉得态度决定一切，很多时候，特别是在道歉这个方面，比如像最后一个场景中的两个。外国人好像觉得这不是我存心的，不能怪我的态度。而那个中国人，态度非常诚恳。我想如果我是当事人，不管他是不是会真的买个手机给我，但是他这样子做，或者说他的行为已经让我觉得我的态度已经消了一半了。所以我觉得态度很重要。
I think attitude decides everything in many situations, especially when apologising. The English speaker seemed to believe that it wasn't her fault and showed an attitude that she shouldn't be blamed; whereas the Chinese person seemed to be very sincere. If I was the person in that situation, I wouldn't mind if the Chinese person would really buy a mobile phone for me. Her behaviour has already made me less upset. I believe attitude is really important.

6.3.3.5 Situation 5: Spilt soup on waitress

Offer help

Many NCs pointed out that it was important to offer help at least to clean up the mess. They found the apology behaviour by both the English and Chinese speakers in the videos unsatisfactory, due partly to the fact that the speakers' body language implied lack of willingness to help clean up. Some NCs thought it was more sincere to offer such kind of help.

Example 67 (NC/F4)

The English speaker didn't seem to have the right attitude. He didn't seem to care, as if nothing has happened. Neither of them was doing well. They should have got up and helped clean.

Example 68 (NC/M6)

I think both apologies were not appropriate. They were sitting there doing nothing and this was not acceptable. I think they should stand up first and apologise repeatedly. I think it's important that they have to take on the responsibility or go and find some tissue to clean.
However, a few participants thought it was more appropriate just to apologise without offering help in clearing up, because of gender sensitivity.

Example 69 (NC/M2)

When the soup was split on the waitress, the man seemed to say sorry sincerely and he looked as if he wanted to get something to clean. I don't think it is necessary. There is a gender issue here. Even if he helps to clean, she may not accept that. You have to keep a distance after all. The English person said 'sorry'. I think it is enough. I think an apology in this situation is sufficient as long as you make the other person comfortable.

Showing concern instead of material compensation

In this situation, the majority of NCs found the apology of the English speaker inappropriate because he offered to compensate the waitress with money. Some of the NCs even found it offensive. They pointed out that it was more appropriate and sincere to show concern instead of providing material compensation.

Example 70 (NC/M8)

I think the way to apologise is very important in this situation. I feel very uncomfortable that the foreigner said he would pay money for spilling the soup on the waitress. Does a waitress work in a restaurant just for money? I find it very offensive. I think the way to repair the situation is very important. To use money as a way to apologise could be an insult for some people. It might lead to different consequences.
The above participant further explained what he meant by ‘cultural difference’. He commented that politeness in China focuses on harmony whereas politeness in Britain focuses more on repair. He also pointed out that the Chinese apology process tends to be longer and indirect while it is more direct in Britain.

I think politeness in China puts more emphasis on harmony. Many times, the purposes are to maintain the harmony. However, for English people, politeness emphasises more on compensation. The aims are to repair the situation or to avoid the embarrassment. When Chinese people apologise, it feels like playing TaiChi because it involves several rounds. You indicate your regret and the other person would show their tolerance and understanding and thus forgive you. Therefore, after a few times, the misunderstanding would be resolved. Even if there’s a cost involved, it would be resolved in this kind of process. I think the British way is like boxing, which is more direct. It would be difficult to resolve the misunderstanding if the other person did not accept your apology straight away. Therefore, for Chinese, apology could be many rounds and for English, apology is one round. For them, the impact of a single apology is significant, whereas for the Chinese, if one apology wasn’t acceptable, one could think of other ideas and would always try to reach the harmony. Maybe British people wouldn’t be that patient.

6.3.3.6 Situation 6: Mistook stranger for friend

Not much comment was given on this particular situation. Most NCs felt it was more appropriate to keep apology simple and short. They didn’t consider sincerity would be relevant to this situation as it was a very light offence.

Example 71 (NC/F8)

就打错招呼那个来说，中国人做好些，英国人绕来绕去的，没必要，更加尴尬，要避免尴尬就说声对不起就可以了。
It seems that the Chinese person did better in this situation. The British person said too much and it didn't seem to be necessary. In order to avoid embarrassment, you just need to say 'sorry' and that's it.

6.4 Chinese Learners of English

6.4.1 Cross-cultural Differences Observed

6.4.1.1 Frequency of apology

All CESLs pointed out that British speakers apologised much more frequently than Chinese speakers. Most CESLs talked about how unnecessary apology would be in situations where no real offence has occurred, such as blocking each other's way accidentally, or opening and closing doors.

According to the following CESL, apologising often does not necessarily indicate sincerity. In addition, the way that British people apologise for minor issues made him feel quite restrained in his behaviour.

Example 72 (CESLM1)

British people apologise very frequently. They will apologise to you quite sincerely on many very small issues. They might not be sincere but they would apologise very frequently. I think this is very different from Chinese culture. Sometimes, for a simple example, if someone goes through a door and blocks you, he or she would apologise straight away. But I don't think it's going to be possible in China. There are many such minor differences. For another example, when people walk on the street and accidentally block each other's way, they would apologise. I feel that they really pay a lot of attention to the distance between people, something like that. So, this makes you feel quite restrained.
Many CESLs mentioned that British culture was too polite. They explained that the reason for feeling constrained and uncomfortable in the company of British people was that apologising for minor things could be perceived as being distant in Chinese culture. It was also pointed out by the NCs that it was not good to be too polite.

Not only did the CESLs consider apology to be more frequent in British culture, they also perceived that apology meant less in British culture. In other words, they felt apology was a rather serious matter in China compared with the UK.

Example 73 (CESL/F1)

I think it really matters a lot in terms of what you've done wrong in China. What you have done wrong is the most important thing when deciding whether to apologise or not. I mean, if you really did something wrong and it's quite serious, only then would you say sorry to the other person. Saying sorry actually is related to one's face and it would make you feel you're losing face. For a simple example, people apologise for surface matters in society and you hear people apologise to you at any time, such as if you walk on the street and you change your direction and someone thinks they have blocked your way, and they would say sorry. Or some other times, you open the door and would like to go in and at the same time someone else wants to go out, they would feel he or she has blocked your way and they would apologise. I feel apology seems to be so common here but in China, apology seems to be more serious. It is only when you realize there is some kind of problem, a real practical life problem that you would apologise for it.
First, the Chinese word ‘dui bu qi’ is a very serious and formal word when apologising, while ‘sorry’ and ‘excuse me’ seem to carry a relatively lighter weight as they are often used as daily common expressions. Sometimes, I think ‘excuse me’ and ‘sorry’ can substitute some request indicators such as ‘bu hao si yi’, or ‘mafan’ etc. Here, if British people want to express a more serious meaning, they would use some intensifiers in front of the word ‘sorry’ such as very sorry or really sorry, etc.

One possible explanation provided by CESLs on why British people apologise more was that British people were more aware of their behaviour in the public domain than Chinese people.

Example 75 (CESL/M2)

I feel British people are more caring about others and they think more for others. They tend to say ‘sorry’ much more. But Chinese people sometimes don’t pay such attention to others. Sometimes, you could say Chinese speak quite loudly, but sometimes foreigners do so too, but if they feel they have disturbed other people they would say sorry. Sometimes, Chinese people are too careless and they are not good at judging their own behaviour based on the context to see if their own behaviour is appropriate or not and they don’t say ‘sorry’ often. Westerns are more sensitive towards others and therefore they will say ‘sorry’.

Some CESLs also felt British people are more polite since they say ‘sorry’ more often than Chinese people.

Example 76 (CESL/F3)

Sometimes I feel British people are not his fault but he will also say sorry. Then I feel as if this is more gentlemanly than in China, it is more gentlemanly. Then it’s like saying you are near that cutting the vegetables, he will throw the
Sometimes, I think it's actually not their fault at all, yet they will still apologise. So, I feel people are more polite or act more like a gentleman here as compared with China. For another example, if you are cutting vegetables and someone wants to throw away the rubbish and the bin is next to your feet. They want you to move a bit to throw the rubbish and they would say 'sorry'. And if it was that person cutting vegetables, and you are the one who wants to throw the rubbish and if you ask them to move, they would also say 'sorry'. I think it's more polite.

6.4.1.2 Body language

The majority of the CESLs observed the following two differences: first, Chinese people very often use laughter when they apologise while British people do not; second, British people tend to apologise immediately while Chinese people tend to consider more. It was very interesting that the motivation for not apologising straight away was actually to promote an image of tolerance and forgiveness on behalf of the 'wronged' party.

Example 77 (CESL/M3)

It’s definitely different. I’ve noticed one thing that when foreigners apologise, they don’t laugh, but Chinese people do. This is because we have a saying ‘to company with smiling face’. According to the Chinese tradition, relatively respectful people don’t talk much or laugh much; however, relatively lower standard or cheaper people or people good at flattering would often laugh. Generally speaking, when Chinese people apologise they use laughter to diffuse the situation first and then express regret and apology. But when foreigners apologise, they are normally very serious because they feel it is an error, a sin. If I committed a sin and I have to talk to you about it, I have to be very serious. Another thing is that foreigners would apologise immediately, for example, if they didn’t pronounce a word properly. They
are not like the Chinese, who have to think for ages about if they should apologise or not. Sometimes you need to apologise to others and you feel quite embarrassed, this is because if you've done something wrong and you don't apologise or apologise in public, it is to show the other person is very forgiving so this is thinking on the other person's behalf. It's not like people here. People realize if they are wrong and then apologise straight away. Some Chinese people don't apologise in public in the first place but then do it later at a more appropriate time. You are actually thinking of the other person and trying to maintain the forgiving image of the other person.

Another CESL also commented on the differences she noticed in facial expression and body language. She felt British people acted in a more natural way and it was easy to tell whether they were being sincere or not; while on the other hand, Chinese people tended to react in a very reserved way. She thought this was related to 'face' and inner confidence.

Example 78 (CESL/F4)

Perhaps the biggest difference is consistency between one's language and one's appearance in these two cultures. I feel that in the British culture, you can tell from the way people apologise to you, and you can feel their admission of your existence and any inconvenience they have caused to you; in other words, you can tell this kind of regret from their apology. I can see the consistency between their rational language and their external body language or facial expression. However in Chinese culture, I think many people feel embarrassed to apologise or they don't have the confidence to apologise. Because they feel to apologise equals to lose one's face and then they have lost some personal value or have lost part of their self image.

Also, CESLs mentioned that, in Chinese culture, in many situations, people just moved if they realized they were in the way and there was no need to say 'sorry'. So, it seems that in Chinese culture, actions could replace words in many situations.
Example 79 (CESL/M4)

If this happens in China, you don’t need to apologise, you just act directly and that’s it. I think this is one of the biggest differences.

6.4.1.3 Directness vs Indirectness

Another difference mentioned by CESLs was the directness of British speakers and the indirectness of Chinese speakers when apologising. The participants emphasized that this latter approach was used more often in a relationship where the social statuses of the speakers were different. According to the participants, ‘face’ was the main reason for this.

Example 80 (CESL/M5)

Generally speaking, it is hard for Chinese people to get to the point straight away when they apologise. They normally have to talk around it for a while first, such as ‘the thing is like this and that,’ and at the very end they would say ‘it is my fault’. Maybe they are not like that in Western culture, people say sorry first and say I’ve done wrong and then explain what has happened. I think the order is reversed. The most important topic in apology is ‘I was wrong’. In English, a British person would say ‘I am sorry. I’ve done something wrong,’ and then other things. A Chinese person would say ‘Old Wang, the thing that has happened, how should I say’, and at the very end, ‘I am really sorry about what has happened, I didn’t mean to do it’, etc, etc. This is a kind of difference. And there is another kind of difference, that is to say foreigners would say I was wrong and then explain why they did it in the first place. But when the Chinese, are explaining why they have done wrong, they would start with ‘actually, I was thinking of doing such and such, but then such and such happened,’ and perhaps it’s more indirect to say it in that way.

Example 81 (CESL/M)

我还是相信国外比较直接一点听到的差不多就是你知道的意思 国内比较丰富一点 表现的方法 比方说道歉或者解释的时候不一定会把对不起讲出口 可能会讲很多暗示性的东西让你明白他在讲对不起 在国内一般说道歉用服软放低
I still believe it is a more direct abroad. What you hear is more or less the meaning you get. There are many richer ways to express things in China, for example, via action, or to explain with a hint to express regret instead of saying sorry. In China, to apologise carries the meaning of lowering one's status and maybe it's different here. To be honest, I think in the east, it is a culture of shame. Therefore, to judge if you are wrong or right is not whether you've committed a sin but if you feel shamed by it or not, while in the west to judge if you are right or wrong is not whether you feel shamed by it or not but whether you have committed a sin. That's the difference.

CESLs linked the indirectness of Chinese apology with social status in China and mentioned that it occurred mainly in hierarchical relationships.

Example 82 (CESL/F4)

可能一般在中国内 下辈和长辈会有这种关系 或者说比如学生和老师之间 就是这种 说是某种地位上的不一样吧 一般上级对下级都会采用一点委婉的方式吧 还是看性格了 一般来说不会直接道歉的话婉转一点的说

Maybe generally in China, older generations and younger generations would have this kind of relationship, or teachers and students. That is to say if there is certain difference in terms of status. So, the superiors would use indirect ways to apologise to subordinates. It might also depend on personality, but generally speaking, people don't apologise directly but rather in an indirect way.

6.2.4.4 Sensitivity towards ‘face’

The CESLs explained the above implicitness with the Chinese concept of ‘face’ and ‘politeness’.

Example 83 (CESL/M5)

可能就是 中国人一个是比较爱面子吧 而且第二个是为了表示我的错 因为他可能我们觉得错的是对的那种敌意 但是呢又不想跟你有敌意 结果那个东西呢 不是我敌意针对你的错 二是我也有这么一个的动机 而是不小心弄反了 这个不是我对你的敌意 其实我对你还是是善意的 但是某种很复杂的原因把他变成了错误 但是那个错误不是敌意 可能中国人想维持一种比较客气的关系
I think Chinese people have more concern for face. In addition, they need to address their fault but also to make it clear that they didn't mean to do it to offend the other person. So, it would end up like it's a mistake but with no bad intention, and I actually had a good motive and then the situation would turn around accidentally. So, actually, I am really on your side but due to a complex reason it came out as a mistake and this mistake isn't hostile. I think Chinese people like to maintain a kind of polite relationship.

Example 84 (CESL/F5)

Because Chinese people have the concept of face. If you apologise, it means you did something wrong and made a mistake and it would make you feel as if you were in debt to someone. From a psychological point of view, you feel like you owe something to other people and you feel guilty to a certain extent and you also feel embarrassed from the point of view of face. You feel you've lost your face.

Some CESLs commented that, since Chinese speakers consider apology to be ‘face-threatening’, they therefore perceive it to be more serious than British speakers. There was an internal struggle between admitting one's fault and protecting one's ‘face-need’.

Example 85 (CESL/F6)

I feel in China, sometimes many people consider apology to be very serious. If someone reaches the point where they sense they are going to lose face, they have to pretend to protect their face but yet also would like to apologise for what they have done. Because they are stuck in this kind of dilemma situation, it makes apology very embarrassing. They cannot unify what they feel inside and their external reaction. I don’t think this is an issue in the UK. If they really have done something wrong, even it's just a small mistake, they would make you feel they are genuinely apologising to you. They are genuine. But in China, people want to
protect their power or position, especially when it's superior. Moreover, even if they have done something wrong, they would look for excuses not to apologise, or maybe change it into a different way of apologising, such as minimizing the severity.

According to most CESLs, Chinese people are more sensitive towards 'face-need' and one's own status. Also, for Chinese people, it seems very difficult and rare to apologise to strangers, whereas in the UK, people of a 'higher status' would apologise if they made a mistake. Apology is much more common amongst strangers.

Example 86 (CESL/M6)

It is definitely true to say that Chinese people like the idea of 'face'. Adults do not apologise to children. Even if the superiors have done something wrong, they don't apologise to subordinates. It's different in the UK. For a simple example, when you are with your supervisor or people of higher status, if they were wrong, they would apologise. Maybe we are not still very much involved in their culture, I am not sure if this is totally true. But at least it is very common to apologise to a stranger. In China, it is very troublesome to apologise to strangers. Say if you hit someone's car and you don't apologise, you will get into a fight. Actually many times, if you compromise and apologise, things are much easier to solve.

Again, social hierarchy and harmony were mentioned by the participants when explaining why 'face' was important.

Example 87 (CESL/M7)

I think this is to do with culture and social habit. We probably are more used to harmony among people and do not damage each other's 'face'. But maybe it's not the same here. Just as I've mentioned early on, our interpersonal relationship is based on status, and a person with a higher status has more authority and more face, and you
will lower your status if you lose these things. Also, people with higher status tend to be quieter traditionally, and if you always say sorry it will lower your status.

One CESL mentioned that some people with higher status would act in a more relaxed way and perhaps would explain what had happened without actually apologising. This reflects an indirect communication style when a ‘superior’ person apologises. However, due to the fact that ‘face’ needs to be mutually maintained, it is interesting to note this participant’s comment that, as a subordinate, one would not try to clarify the problem or who was responsible, even if one knew the superior was wrong. By behaving in this way, the subordinate has saved or given ‘face’ to the superior.

Example 88 (CESL/F7)

It depends on each individual’s attitude. Some people I met, especially those who were in a superior position or a boss, they wouldn’t behave in the same way. They would normally be very serious. However, if they have done something wrong, they would smile at you and talk with you with a happy face. They would only briefly mention what had happened, for example saying, ‘what happened was because...’. They will not formally apologise to you but just mention the way that things were supposed to be and then that’s it. As far as a subordinate is concerned, he or she won’t go deeply into it.

‘Face’ could be ‘group-orientated’ and apology could be ‘other-orientated’. In the next example, the CESL described how ‘individual’ and ‘group’ functioned in Chinese culture, and their inter-relationships.

Example 89 (CESL/M8)
In China, situations in which you say sorry but haven’t done anything wrong certainly happen. Sometimes it is not your fault but other people force you to admit this fault and to apologise for it and then everybody would be ok. So, you have to sacrifice this ‘small’ self. For example, if a group of people go out and one of them offends someone else in another group with higher status. It is not that person’s fault but the other person is causing trouble. But still, you would persuade your friend to apologise. If you don’t apologise to the other person, everybody would have a hard time; but if you apologise, you would have a hard time but we will all support you. So, like this, this person would have to do this. He would generally have to say ‘sorry, it was my fault. It has nothing to do with the other people’. Afterwards, people would comfort him and say ‘It’s ok. Let’s go get a drink’. People just need a scapegoat, a person who would make a sacrifice for everybody. The apology given at this time could count as an apology but there wasn’t any real fault.

6.4.1.5 Tradition and Confucianism

Family values and hierarchy were mentioned by many CESLs to explain the cross-cultural differences they observed both in terms of the indirectness of Chinese culture as well as its concern with ‘face’. Parents do not apologise to children because of ‘face’ concern. For children, it was difficult to apologise to parents too.

Example 90 (CESL/M3)

对我说来说会是有 的会 shame 的但是其实他们很多时候 他们会很......已经很明显地告诉你他们做得不好了 且他会用其他方式来弥补 但是不会很....不会说一定要很正式地说'我们做得不好' 因为你知道中国家庭是那种情况的嘛 因为他们会做件事情来告诉你 那就足够了 我也觉得很窝心了这样 也知道...那种 我觉得那种感觉更温馨了 可能没有很直白地告诉你 说'我犯错了',像我爸的话 就会比如说 刚才有些矛盾 然后大家偏在那儿了 很明显的一个举动就是他来主动找我 我主动做一些事情 比如说我们出去吃个饭吧 就是打开话题 就表示 对了 我们就之间不计较了 恩......那个时候 如果我觉得我错了的话 那就会我主动来 open the(?) 就是不会说 正式道歉 说'我刚才错了' 哎......其实有时候这个事情真的很严重要 有导致谁离开又走什么的 回家大家会很认真谈论这个话题 那时候就会说 哦 我有不好的地方 这样子 但我是觉得很少说 对不起 我刚才错了' 这种情况我跟我爸妈还真没说过这句话 我不知道是不是讲得...对我爸...对爸妈来说...我也不知道怎么讲......他们也会觉得不恰当吧 大人跟小孩道歉 对 这是一种很传统的观念 对他们来说是丢脸
Apologising to me would be shameful for my parents. But many times actually, they have already shown me that they knew they have done wrong and they would repair the situation in other ways. However, they won’t say ‘we’ve done it wrong’ to you explicitly. Because you know the situation of the Chinese family, if they would do something to let you know that’s more than enough and I will feel very happy. I understand this. I think maybe it makes me feel even warmer even if they didn’t tell you directly ‘I made a mistake’. Take my dad as an example, if we’d just had some confrontation and then we started this kind of cold war, a very obvious action from him to apologise would be that he took the initiative to come to speak to me or do something. By saying ‘let’s go for a meal’ to open a conversation, it means that everything was over and we wouldn’t go over what had happened. If I felt I was wrong, then I would also take the initiative to open the conversation without apologising formally saying ‘I was wrong’. Sometimes the situation was really bad and it led to someone leaving the house. Then afterwards, we would seriously talk about what happened and by then, I would say ‘Ok, I’ve done something not quite right but I rarely say ‘Sorry, I was wrong.’ I have never said this to my parents in that situation. I don’t know if I would ever say so. I think my parents would also feel this was inappropriate. Based on a very traditional point of view, it would be face-losing for parents to apologise to children.

The following example was given by a CESL participant talking about the difference between Chinese and British teachers.

**Example 91 (CESL/F8)**

前两天我去找我的导师，他本来约了我2点，但是我等了很久，他都没有来，我就走了。后来我就发了一个信说，我说等了你很久没有等到你，我们在约时间吧。然后我觉得如果在国内，老师错了也不会说错了，也不会道歉的，但在这边老师会直接道歉。

I went to see my supervisor several days ago. He made an appointment with me at 2pm. But I waited for him for ages and he didn’t turn up, so I left. Later on, I emailed him and told him I waited for him for a long time but didn’t see him and perhaps we could re-arrange a time. I think if this happens in China, even if the teacher was wrong, he or she won’t admit it and won’t apologise. But the tutor here, he apologised straight away.

Another participant mentioned that the reason that Chinese people are not willing to apologise is due to the fact that committing an error is also perceived to be quite serious and people are not so tolerant of mistakes.

**Example 92 (CI/SL/F4)**
I think people try to not to make mistakes according to Chinese tradition. Therefore, apology becomes a very big deal based on this tradition. It seems people would not apologise unless it is extremely necessary. For Chinese people, we see mistakes as a fatal problem instead of realizing they are part of a process of life experience. I don't think Chinese tradition helps people to develop the right attitude towards making mistakes. It always tend to judge mistakes as really bad and people are not willing to admit making a mistake in order to avoid this bad impression. With this kind of attitude, people tend to apologise less. It is to say that in Chinese society, mistakes are not allowed or tolerated. The whole society tends to be very harsh on it. So, when the parents try to educate children, they will be really strict in terms of not letting children make mistakes. It's very different from here.

6.4.2.6 Social division and social system

Broader societal explanations were also provided by the CESLs. One pointed out that, apart from the concern for 'face', Chinese people are reluctant to apologise explicitly because of the consequence, for example that one might end up taking full responsibility or even be held responsible for other things as well. The Chinese legal system and current insurance practices in China could perhaps be influencing this way of thinking.

Example 93 (CESL-M2)

危险 特别是在有些事情里面 比如说你车把人撞了你说对不起 完了 老太太有问 题都是你的罪了 国内害怕道歉是害怕道歉的后果 不可预测 特别是有些错误有很多种失误有很多种 稍微中立一点的中间一点的你看不清楚 比如说单位里你 说这件事情是我的不对 那好连带的责任都推到了你头上 这也是一个很重要的 原因不愿说对不起 而是百般找理由为自己解脱 这是我 当时我怎么怎么样 千万 不能说对不起一说对不起完了 这件事情就是你背黑锅 这也是一个原因 国内限 制不说对不起 责任不明确分工不明确 社会分工 还有一个是整个社会有些东西
It is dangerous to apologise under certain circumstances. For example, if your car hit an old lady and you said 'sorry' then you are 'done' because anything wrong with the old lady would be entirely your fault. The reason people are scared to apologise is actually because they are scared of the consequences of apologising. It is very hard to predict what would happen, especially as there are many different kinds of errors and different kinds of mistakes. With some kinds of mistakes it is not clear how to identify responsibility. For example, if in the place you work you say you are wrong in one particular matter, then all the related responsibilities would be all yours and this is one very important reason that people are reluctant to say sorry. Instead, they look for all kinds of excuses to get themselves out of the situation. They would explain what they've done at that particular time but can never say sorry. Once they say sorry, they would be doomed to be the scapegoat. I think this is one of reasons people don't say 'sorry' in China. In Chinese society there are many things that are not very clear, such as roles and duties, job division etc. When you look at the society here, if there is a car accident, you say 'sorry' and it is solved since the insurance company would pay for the damages. But in China, if you said 'sorry' you would pay for everything.

Some CESLs claimed that social structures were different in China and the UK, therefore the social relationships were also defined differently.

Example 94 (CESL/M1)

If you are with close people such as family or good friends, then you don't need to apologise. It is certainly the case in China. Since we are so close, why is it necessary to apologise? Yours is mine and mine is yours. This is a reflection of Chinese culture. But I think here, as Marx says, the condition of a capitalist society is to create distance among people. Only when people get more distant, can law and contract be established in a Capitalist society. If we are relatives, we don't consider this and we don't consider personal feelings. It is a relationship between two individuals and a relationship between you and me and it is based on law instead of on a work relationship or family feelings. At the end of the day, people look to the law for solutions rather than relationships. Only in this way, can a contract-based society be built. But in China, the relationship network is very complicated. The more complicated it gets, the harder it is to control the consequences and there are many phenomena that also become more complicated.
6.4.1.7 Individualism and collectivism

Example 95 (CESL/M5)

Their principle maybe is that each person has a small space. Maybe in the UK, each person has his/her own personal space and it is clearly divided and you work within each other’s own space if you across the line then you would apologise for it. People very much respect each other’s space. However in China, people like to gather together and like to integrate with each other. I can enjoy yours and you can enjoy mine. If you take more or you get less, there is no need to say ‘sorry’. You can give some back or make up for it some other time. People give and take to maintain interpersonal relationship and there are no clear dividing lines. Sometimes people would like to maintain a guideline but this line keeps changing. You can’t really make it too clear because, for example, if someone takes more from you and you talk explicitly about this, it would be impossible to take more from the other person. He or she would say you have complained about this and our relationship would end here. But here, since it is clear in terms of each other’s space, so it is better not to interfere in each other’s and apologise straight away if you do interfere. But in China, you can’t expect to take a favour back immediately and maybe the surroundings may not support it either. If you ask for it and then you set a limit in the relationship and you won’t be able to get anything in return and you can’t expect to get back what you have given either. This is the networking that goes on between people in the society.

6.4.1.8 Education

CESLs also considered how differences in British and Chinese apology behaviour were influenced by education, especially education related to public behaviour.

Example 96 (CESL/M6)
One reason is due to public education. I remember when I went to banks in China to take some cash before, some customers' children would tear the deposit slips in the bank or waste the plastic cups that were for everybody to use or scream and yell at each other in the hall. But the parents didn’t really try to educate them to behave. Maybe here parents educate children better, such as to be careful in public situations. It develops as a habit since one was little. The other point about details during conversations, I think we Chinese place more emphasis on inference and interpretation. As long as you understand what I wanted to say and I understand what you wanted to say, that’s ok. But they may focus on speaking clearly and explicitly. If there’s any bad body language, they would apologise. Take the example you gave such as sneezing or coughing, they would say ‘sorry, sorry’. Sometimes, we Chinese speak with more joy if we sneeze. People don’t think this has a negative impact on other people and it seems people think it is more correct if we don’t mind about sneezing. To be honest, it is mainly because the education on behaviour and habits is so different from a young age. Also, maybe they have more public awareness while we don’t.

6.4.1.9 Politeness

Some CESLs thought differences only existed in those situations where the word ‘sorry’ could be omitted in Chinese culture, an omission which would be considered rude in British culture.

Example 97 (CESL/M7)

或者说他们的文化或者说社交习惯里面 可能他们认为先说 sorry 代表某种礼貌的方式 就好像这边很多不认识的人走在对面会跟你打招呼 但是如果你去伦敦的话人太多了可能没人跟你到招呼 这就是每个地方的文化氛围就是一个样子 没有什么特别意思你多说 sorry 你的待人接物比较礼貌 你的谈吐比较礼貌 谈吐比较更高雅一点 你如果不讲 当然也不是什么情况下都不说 我认为很多情况下可以不说 但是 中国人和英国人的差距就是在这些可说可不说的地方 就是两个文化背景都要说的 就是在一些可说可不说的才表现出来
Maybe in their culture or based on their social habits, they think saying 'sorry' first shows a certain kind of way to be polite. For example, many people you don't know here would say hello to you on the street. But if you go to London, there are too many people and no one says hello to you. Maybe different places have their own cultural atmosphere and there is no wrong or right to it. If you say 'sorry' more often, maybe you are more polite and you are more elegant. If you don't say it, of course it's not to say you never say sorry under any circumstances, it's still ok. I think there are many situations we don't need to say sorry. The differences between Chinese and British focus on these situations when you could say sorry or could not say sorry. I think people from both these cultural backgrounds apologise. But they differ in situations where sorry is not essential.

In summary, several cross-cultural differences between the UK and China in terms of apology were identified by the CESLs. These differences mainly focused on:

1. frequency of apology, especially in terms of using the word 'sorry';
2. indirectness and directness in terms of the ways people apologise, especially in power-structured relationships;
3. the psychological status of the person who apologises, both with close members of the family and strangers;
4. certain kinds of body language, such as laughter and eye contact.

Participants also tried to explain the above differences based on their prior knowledge and personal experiences. The reasons that were provided included differences in: sensitivity regarding 'face', communication styles, tradition, social system, education, etc. All the CESLs had clearly developed a certain level of cross-cultural awareness and were able to identify and discuss these differences.

6.4.2 Judgement of Necessity to Apologise

The frequency of factors mentioned by CESLs is listed in Table 6.5.
Factors mentioned by CESLs | In Chinese context Total (n=16) | In UK context Total (n=16)
---|---|---
**Fact-oriented factors**
Severity of offence | 16 | 15
Offence type | 9 | 8
Whose fault it was | 2 | 5
Result/impact of the apology | 1 | 1
**Relationship-oriented factors**
Closeness/familiarity | 10 | 6
Previous experience | 8 | 6
**Interaction-oriented factors**
Reaction of apologisee | 7 | 9
Reaction of others | 4 | 6
**Apologiser-oriented factors**
Awareness of offence | 2 | 3
Emotional state | 1 | 2
**Apologisee-oriented factors**
Apologisee's gender | 13 | 11
Apologisee's status | 2 | 3
Apologisee's personality | 5 | 4
Apologisee's age | 1 | 1
**Context-oriented factors**
Formal/informal setting | 10 | 8
The people who are present | 5 | 4

Table 6.5 Factors affecting necessity to apologise mentioned by CESLs

As shown here, CESLs rated fact-oriented factors as most important when considering if it was necessary to apologise. Among these, severity of the offence and offence type were dominant. Some CESLs pointed out that, if the severity of the offence was extremely high, silence might be the most appropriate form of apology. They felt this was because language could not really express one's regret in such extreme circumstances.

A few CESLs felt that one would need to apologise as long as the offence was likely to have a negative impact on one's self image.

**Example 98 (CESL/M)**

如果这件事会让你对你产生一个不好的印象的话 我觉得这个是必须要道歉了否则对你的印象就不好了

*If this is something that will leave someone a bad impression of you, there will be a need to apologise. Otherwise, you wouldn't have a good image in others' eyes.*
Many CESLs gave importance to *apologise-oriented* factors. According to the following participant, it would always be necessary to apologise to someone older. It was interesting that she pointed out that, not only was it necessary to apologise to one’s own elder relatives, but even more so to someone else’s. Otherwise, a negative impression of one’s own family would result.

**Example 99 (CESL/F)**

I think it depends on the relationship and age difference. Age will always have a certain effect on whether you will need to apologise or not. For example, if you make a mistake in front of your parents’ or your grandparents’ generation in your family, you have to apologise no matter what happens. You will have to apologise and, if not, it wouldn’t be acceptable. This is especially the case to other person’s parents or older relatives, otherwise, they would think you are very impolite and maybe you had a very bad family education. It would be much more relaxed among friends and you can laugh about it and then it would be ok.

When talking about gender differences, one female CESL pointed out that it would be more necessary to apologise to females because they might be less forgiving than males. However, this did not seem to be a negative comment from her. Instead, she believed that women had a right to be less forgiving. From one male CESL’s point of view, it would be better to apologise to females because they had different ways of thinking and they would require more attention and care. It is worth mentioning that these CESLs were clearly talking about gender differences based on their own age group.

One male participant talked about the psychological difference between apologising on behalf of oneself or for a whole group.
Example 100 (CESL/M8)

It depends on who you are apologising to! Sometimes, you might be apologising for yourself and it is your own business. It is different if you need to apologise for a group of people. If you make a mistake on your own, and you apologise for it then you are apologising for yourself. Sometimes, a group of people are involved but you end up having to apologise for everybody, then the nature of the apology changes here. Generally speaking, you are more serious and sincere when you are apologising for yourself. I would apologise for a group, but this would represent the group not just myself.

The next set of factors that most frequently mentioned by CESLs were interaction-oriented. They felt that the need to apologise further would depend greatly on the reaction from the apologisee. If the apologisee was relatively tolerant, there would be less need to apologise. However, if the apologisee was still upset, additional apology strategies should be used. Moreover, CESLs also pointed out the effect the presence of a third party might have.

Example 101 (CESL/M7)

It depends on whether you have a friendly environment. It means that after you apologise you won’t get negative comments from other people. For example, if you’ve done something wrong and you apologise by saying ‘I was too careless’, afterwards, other people commented ‘young man, you don’t seem to be so competent, and you were so careless in this matter’. If so, this person won’t apologise ever in the future because he apologised for his mistake but outsiders jumped in and criticized him. It might be better if you apologise and others tell you ‘yes, you were a bit careless in this matter but we believe you can do better in the future’.
This related closely to the *context-oriented* factors which CESLs also mentioned quite frequently. It would be more face losing for them to apologise if in public rather than in private.

**Example 102 (CESL/M3)**

还是看具体场景不同的场合你会有意想不到的有些如果旁边人很多都看着你的话你有可能会不好意思不好意思讲对不起如果就是你们两个或者很少人注意到的话可能就会说对不起人多了就会尴尬觉得失面子

*It still depends on the context and you would think differently in different contexts. If there are many people there looking at you, you may feel very embarrassed and too embarrassed to say 'sorry'. If it's just two of you or few people noticed you, maybe you will say 'sorry'. The more people there are, the more you feel embarrassed and face-losing.*

In terms of *relationship-oriented* factors, closeness was a key consideration for CESLs. Some pointed out that closeness would initially determine the type of offence as well as its degree. Closeness also had an effect on the way the apologisee might respond.

**Example 103 (CESL/F2)**

我觉得有可能如果是关系太远的人 你很少情况下会做出真的是很对不起他的事情 因为没有太多接触的机会吧 然后关系很亲密的情况之下 一般来说你就对他有很大的容忍性 相对而言 你也觉得他在很大程度上会容忍你 相对而言就放纵一点 反而是不远不近的关系那种关系可能相对而言需要维持

*I think you don’t really have much chance to do something which would hurt someone if it’s someone who’s not close to you because you don’t have much chance to interact. Whereas if you are very close to each other, you would both have more tolerance towards each other and thus you could be yourself more. It is actually more necessary to maintain that kind of relationship that is in the middle.*

### 6.4.3 Reflections on Cultural Accommodation

Overall, CESLs demonstrated a positive attitude towards adapting to British politeness. They found it more and more automatic over time to use the word ‘sorry’.
They emphasized that they could say 'sorry' in English without any psychological difficulties concerning face, especially in situations where the offence was light; however, if they had to say the word ‘sorry’ in Chinese, it still tended to be more difficult.

On whether to apologise for a minor offence, most CESLs regarded this as unnecessary or uncomfortable initially, but with time, they felt it had become a habit representative of politeness.

Example 104 (CESL/M4)

At the beginning, I felt a bit restricted because British people made me feel that if I accidentally block someone's way that is very rude behaviour. I became very cautious when I was talking. Later, I realized that it was their habit. I can just get used to it slowly and it is a kind of politeness.

Example 105 (CESL/F5)

When I first came here, I felt people were a bit too polite. I felt it was not necessary to apologise for such trivial matters. This is really a big difference. I think no one would care if it's in China since there are so many people and it is unavoidable that you may bump into someone. So, there's no need to apologise at all but you will have to here. Later, I think I've settled down here and I think their way of apologising is sensible, that is, it is necessary to have a verbal apology.

Example 106 (CESL/M3)

I think that the word I said the most frequently in the first two weeks that I was in England was 'sorry'. I was saying 'sorry' everyday, sorry for this and sorry for that. Maybe because I was speaking in a foreign language, I didn't think much
about it. It was ok for me to say 'sorry'. But then you know, if you keep saying 'sorry' all day long in China, people will surely think you are mentally ill.

However, most participants still thought they would not apologise to close family members or friends despite having lived in the UK for a long time.

Example 107 (CESL/F4)

I think I still wouldn't apologise to my family. I think the influence of Chinese culture is too deep and I won't be able to change easily. No matter what we are family and there's no need to say sorry all the time. Unless it's really serious and we can still talk about it, but I am still not too convinced about that. I might say 'sorry, I was wrong' and this would be my limit. It's already very hard to say 'I was wrong' even to my parents. I may say it to friends and this could happen more often. But if it's very close friends then we wouldn't apologise or say thank you and things like that.

The CESLs’ expectations changed due to their living experiences in the UK. What they had previously considered acceptable behaviour was not considered to be acceptable any more, and they would therefore now expect an apology for it.

Example 108 (CESL/F5)

It's quite strange. I think, after this year being in England and if I go back to China now, I would feel that there are many situations where people should apologise. I guess this is because of comparison with here. For example, I would expect someone to apologise to me if they bumped into me on the street. That's to say that I've been affected by the British culture. Maybe I wouldn't even care previously
and now I will feel uncomfortable if I go back home. For another example, if the service isn’t good enough when you are shopping, you would definitely receive an apology in most cases. But this does not apply in China and now I think people should apologise in this situation. If the shop assistant keeps the customer waiting for a while to check the stock, then they need to apologise for the wait when they return. It would be in situations like this now that I would expect apologies.

However, CESLs recognised a need to react differently when they were in different cultural contexts. They felt they would need to adapt according to their surroundings.

Example 109 (CESL/M1)
我想是应该跟大环境吧 回国的话 我会试图让自己适应国内的那种交往的方式 就不要太在意这些 然后 在这边的话又在改变自己了 要不然会很另类吧
I think it still depends on the environment you are in. If I go back to China, I will make myself get used to the communication and social style in China and I don't care too much about details. But on the other hand, I try to change myself when I am here. Otherwise, I might be out of order.

It seemed very common for CESLs to ‘go with the flow’ in the UK, and they became more comfortable using the word ‘sorry’ because they felt it was the way the majority of British people apologise. However, they still felt less comfortable about using the equivalent expression for ‘sorry’ in Chinese, because they knew not many people do so in China.

6.5 British Learners of Mandarin Chinese

6.5.1 Cross-cultural Differences Observed

6.5.1.1 Frequency of apology

Frequency of apology was mentioned as the main difference between Chinese and British culture by BCSLs. Similarly to NBs, all the BCSLs acknowledged that British people apologise frequently and say sorry for numerous minor things. Many expected a ‘sorry’ in various contexts but didn’t receive one in China. Some perceived this to be rather rude; others just perceived it as reflecting a different culture.
Example 110 (BCSL/M1)

I guess in Britain, you apologise more often than the other cultures. You almost apologise before doing anything, like in the role play there, I could have chosen to deny some of the situations, but like when I was meant to miss the meeting yesterday, I could say sorry, I didn't, maybe you try to apologise more often I think. Like yesterday, I can't remember where we were, somebody stepped on Jane's foot and didn't apologise, but in England, everyone would apologise, sometimes they almost do it too much, you know like 'God, I'm so sorry'.

Example 111 (BCSL/M2)

The most obvious one is cycling to school. If you are cycling in London, if someone hits you, you have to stop and say sorry or excuse me, while here you hit someone's bike, they just look at you and they walk off, as if nothing has happened. I don't think it's impolite, I think it's just the culture here. I think it's just different between England and China. In China, people just get on with their lives. I know a lot of people have similar experience. Maybe they deal with it by saying sorry. The first few days for any foreigners in China, they feel everyone's so rude. Then you realize it's just the way it appears, it's not so rude. They don't mean to be rude.

In the next example, the BCSL was not pleased with the way that the Chinese behaved in apparent crowds, and with the lack of social order and personal space he experienced in China. He clearly expected apologies in such situations.

Example 112 (BCSL/M3)

What I've noticed is that often people don't apologise. I mean, people push past and stand in front you, it's basically because there isn't enough space to give each other personal space, but it's often that people push in and ... I often think people should apologise when they don't.

Most BCSLs, however, seemed to be tolerant with personal space situations in which they would normally expect an apology. They did not judge Chinese people to be less polite or rude.

Example 113 (BCSL/F1)

I think occasionally it still strikes me that the Chinese don't apologise quite as much as people in Britain. Partly it's the silly situations in the shops or on the street when people bump into each other, in England you'd say "excuse me" or "sorry", in China people just walk on. I don't see it as something rude, I just think
“oh there’s overcrowding here”. It’s such a commonplace event so it doesn’t strike me as a negative phenomenon here.

Example 114 (BCSL/M4)

In England, people are very very polite. Everything is sorry, everything is thank you. You can just, even if you just want to ask a question, a lot of people say sorry first and they don’t notice it. While in China, if you say ‘well done’ to someone, or say ‘you are pretty’, they say ‘I’m not’, ‘I am not pretty’, ‘I am not good’. They excuse themselves, almost. In China, they say you are being too kind whereas in England, they excuse themselves and say sorry. They are more polite in their own minds because they are always thinking about how to excuse themselves. Even people always, when you have a situation, people always try to explain or go about your action in the most polite way. So you overly use thank you and sorry a lot of times and they don’t mean it, you know, it’s the way you say it that it counts, if they say ‘sorry’ but they just said it a lot and this doesn’t necessary mean they are more polite than Chinese people. It’s just different.

Differences in apology frequency were also identified by participants regarding customer service. BCSLs suggested Chinese people apologise much less in service situations.

Example 115 (BCSL/F2)

I mean the obvious difference is that British people, I am not sure about other foreign groups, but certainly for British people, we almost apologise too much, certainly in customer service. I think that is where you probably notice the differences the most. If you receive bad service in China, traditionally you don’t necessarily receive an apology. You might receive an indication of embarrassment or regret, but not verbally, you know, you don’t actually verbally get an apology. The main difference is whereas in the UK, even if it’s kind of nonsense, I mean even if it doesn’t really mean anything when people are saying it to you, they try to say ‘sorry, sorry, sorry’. So, it’s a word we use a lot.

This BCSL went on to provide her own explanation of the differences in the way Chinese and British people perceive ‘self’ and ‘group’. She felt that Chinese people tend to take blame on behalf of the collective, whereas British people would distinguish, for example, between personal responsibility and company policy. But she also pointed out that changes had occurred due to China’s economic growth.

Example 116 (BCSL/F3)

I think there’s a culture association. I guess it’s to do with blame and it being a personal thing in China. Whereas in customer service in the UK, people probably
feel more like they are working for the organization and they are a representative for the organization. Then obviously it's not their own fault, but they are apologising on behalf of the company. In terms of customer service, I think actually things are starting to change. I think Chinese people are becoming more like the west, maybe because so many foreign companies are doing business here and so on. The Chinese firms are trying to compete. But I think there are definitely differences.

6.5.1.2 Different communication styles

Some BCSLs noticed that a direct communication style led to misunderstanding and discomfort among Chinese people.

Example 117 (BCSL/F4)

I guess when I think that I've pretty straightforwardly told someone about a problem that I have, I expect them to deal with it but I don't necessarily expect them to apologise for it. I perhaps should have put it more gently to people but I ended up saying it more straightforwardly and people got scared and they thought it's something they needed to apologise for and they apologised for it. It occurs to me that it is definitely my mistake.

6.5.1.3 Use of 'sorry' to friends or family members

BCSLs discovered that, while using polite words with close friends or family members in the UK was common, it was not that welcomed in Chinese culture. Therefore, saying 'sorry' to their Chinese friends caused misunderstanding.

Example 118 (BCSL/F5)

I guess the use of polite words is not generally removed from the English language when you are with close friends, but I have this problem with my Chinese friends all the time. They think we are friends. Every time I say thank you or apologise to them for some reason, even if in my mind it is right to apologise or say thank you to them, they get very worried and they said 'I thought we were friends'. Obviously, my apologising or being polite is indicating to them that we are actually not that good friends. So we have this strange situation and I always try to explain that, because I am English, the words just came out.

Some BCSLs commented that it was common to expect parents to apologise in the UK, while this was not the case in China.
I would expect my parents to apologise and I would apologise to them. If I promised my mum that I'd call her on Saturday and I called her after, I would say, 'I am really sorry, mum, I didn't call you.' But I guess this kind of thing does not happen in a Chinese family. This relates to familiarity. I think for Chinese people, as soon as you talk about family members and close friends, they think people understand anyway, there's less need for people to use these polite forms of phrasing.

6.5.1.4 Teacher and student relationships

Another difference mentioned was in the relationship between teachers and students. One BCSL doing some English language teaching in China found Chinese students apologised to their teachers much more often, and apparently more sincerely, than British students.

Example 120 (BCSL/M4)

I guess my main experience would be with students. Maybe this is not a good example, but even the things like homework, I mean I taught in England maybe not as much as I taught in China, but if someone didn't do their homework, you know it would be just, you know go around the class and someone didn't do it, you just whatever, maybe just a sarcastic apology. But from Chinese students, you get really sincere apologies, explanations; you would be told that you would have their stuff the next day or the next week or something. So that would be something initially I wouldn't have expected from my experience in England, and I would just expect people be more casual. But in China people apologise more frequently, I think.

He explained that the role of a teacher has more respect in China than in England. While students in England do not necessary feel they owe an apology to anyone, those in China might care about offending the teacher and/or about their reputation as a student.

6.5.2 Judgement of Necessity to Apologise

Table 6.6 demonstrates the frequency of different factors mentioned by BCSLs in terms of the need to apologise. Fact-oriented factors were most significant to BCSLs, with a particularly high frequency of reference to severity of offence.
Relationship with as well as status of the apologisee was also emphasized by BCSLs, who often linked status closely with power.

Example 122 (BCSL/F7)

Who they are in terms of how close they are to you, and who they are in terms of power, what they can do affects you. I am not going to be rude to my boss because he can fire me and I will lose my job. I may hate him. I may think he’s the worst person in the world but I will still apologise and say sorry to keep the relationship. But he doesn’t want to know why I apologise, because it’s just a standard, right? He doesn’t need to know, he just needs an apology.

Example 123 (BCSL/M8)

Depends on who it is right? If it’s your girlfriend, you send flowers, taking them to dinner, show them that you love them. If it is your mother, maybe you spend more time with her, you talk about it. If it is someone who means a lot to you, then you talk about it. That’s the most important thing and then you come to a conclusion. If it’s just someone random who doesn’t mean a lot to you, you can just move on. But if it’s someone who does mean a lot to you, then you would say I am so sorry and it’s in your intonation, your action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors mentioned by BCSLs</th>
<th>In Chinese context Total (n=16)</th>
<th>In UK context Total (n=16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fact-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of offence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offence type</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose fault it was</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result/impact of the apology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness/familiarity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of apologisee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apologiser-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of offence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional state</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apologisee-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologisee’s gender</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologisee’s status</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologisee’s personality</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologisee’s age</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context-oriented factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal/informal setting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people who are present</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6 Factors affecting necessity to apologise mentioned by BCSLs
Previous experience was also mentioned by BCSLs as a factor in deciding whether to apologize or not. According to the following participant, whether one needed to apologize or not depended on established expectations between two speakers as well as their established communication patterns.

Example 124 (BCSL/M6)

*The kind of person who you are, the person who you are in a situation with, probably your knowledge of their expectations regarding the need to apologize or not. Maybe it’s not the kind of thing that upsets either of you and then you don’t need to apologize. The extent of the thing you think you’ve done wrong or the extent the other person considers it to be, how serious it is. Whether or not you’ve apologized in the past, you know you set a pattern I guess, if you apologize for everything and you’ve got to carry on doing it or you realize no one expects it.*

*Apologiser-oriented* was the next most frequently mentioned category of factors.

Predominantly, BCSLs focused on awareness of fault. It was important for them to recognize their mistake in order to apologize. According to som, it was not correct to apologize for having different opinions, whether with close family members or people with higher status.

Example 125 (BCSL/M1)

*Even to someone close to me I think it’s wrong to apologize. Unless you change your point of view, it doesn’t matter who they are, it’s wrong to apologize. Where you would apologize is if it is your boss, or your mother or father. If you know this going to cause trouble, you shouldn’t start it in the first place. You wouldn’t initiate it, unless they start it, or you tell them at the beginning I am not going to apologize because this is how I feel. So, no, I think there’s no situation that would affect the way I feel.*

*Interaction-oriented* factors were mentioned briefly by the BCSLs. More females commented on these than males. Only one female BCSL talked about *contextual* factors.
6.5.3 Reflections on Cultural Accommodation

BCSLs experienced difficulties in adjusting to Chinese culture as well as feelings of frustration in situations where they would expect an apology but failed to obtain one. They also mentioned difficulties in positioning themselves within Chinese hierarchies, and they could not fully understand the concept of ‘face’.

In general, BCSLs showed a willingness to adapt to these differences and modify the ways they would expect situations to transpire. The following examples show how some of their expectations changed with time.

Example 126 (BCSL/M2)

I think it’s a strange situation, you know sometimes someone knocks into you on the street, like I guess, in my mind, I expect an apology, but it’s a very subjective thing. If I didn’t do that, I’m apologising even if it wasn’t necessarily my fault, but it’s just a way of ending the interaction. Sometimes, in China, someone would really knock into you and not say anything. But, at first, I think oh god, they should apologise, and now it’s just the way it is. It’s not right or wrong or anything. But yeah, initially, I would expect an apology or that kind of thing.

Example 127 (BCSL/M3)

The first few days for any foreigners in China, they feel everyone’s so rude. Then you realize it’s just the way it appears, it’s not so rude. They don’t mean to be rude.

A few BCSLs talked about how they developed ways of doing things in certain ways in China. For example, one mentioned what he did to make people move out of the way.

Example 128 (BCSL/M4)

Yeah, I actually say “excuse me” in a loud voice here now just because it actually makes people get out of the way! Saying "duibuqi" as I did when I first got here, just has no effect whatsoever. I still think it’s appropriate if you’re asking someone to kindly move out of the way then “excuse me” is an appropriate thing to say. I do it because no-one, it’s so noisy on the streets anyway, you can’t hear yourself think, so you have to assert yourself a little bit.
Mentioned more frequently by BCSLs was their awareness of what more appropriate behaviour would be in China. Two particular aspects here were avoiding contradiction and being indirect.

**Example 129 (BCSL/F7)**

Whereas here, I'm gradually waking up to the fact that it is potentially extremely rude to contradict someone, you are possibly better off expressing interest in what they're saying and wondering "maybe there's another way of looking at it", or something like that. I think possibly the Chinese are more subtle, they wouldn't be too sarcastic but they would turn it round and end up saying the opposite, with you sort of going "mmmm, that's interesting", not allowing the other person to feel offence at the contradiction maybe, I think there's a greater tact in Chinese possibly.

BCSLs seemed to maintain their British perception that it was necessary to apologise in family settings. Despite recognising differences, BCSLs still believed it was not face-losing for parents to apologise; instead, most felt that their own parents would gain more respect if they apologised when they had done something very wrong as parents.

### 6.6 Conclusion

The interview data show that the British and Chinese participants conceptualized apology differently. This observation is differentiated in the way that socially-driven apology operates in these two cultures. In British culture, socially-driven apology emphasizes social norms and politeness; whereas Chinese culture focuses on face-work influenced by power relationships and group orientation. The British participants put the emphasis on factual aspects of the apology event as well as on their own social rights; whereas Chinese participants attached more importance to the face-need of others and long term harmony in relationships. The above differences resulted in different perceptions of the necessity to
apologise. Both language groups demonstrated cross-cultural awareness through their observations and understanding of cultural differences. A great degree of cultural accommodation was found in both learner groups. The next chapter contains a discussion of all the major findings from open role-plays, evaluative questionnaires and interviews.
Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this study, I have attempted to explore cross-cultural differences between native speakers of British English and Mandarin Chinese (NBs & NCs respectively), as well as between learners of each targeted language (CESLs & BCSLs respectively). These differences were examined by analyzing both the production and the evaluation of apology strategies by the four groups of participants. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, detailed findings have been presented from three types of data collection, respectively role-play, evaluative questionnaire and interview.

The main purpose of this study was to shed light on deep socio-cultural values which impact on the way Chinese and British people apologise. Therefore, the main part of the discussion focuses on comparisons between the native groups speaking their own languages in their own cultures. Five dimensions of potential cultural differences based on the research questions and literature review (see Chapter 2) are discussed along with the qualitative and quantitative data. These dimensions are:

- Apology conceptualization
- Apology realization
- Individualism versus collectivism
- Perception of face, politeness and rapport
- Perception of contextual factors

The study thus provides insights into native participants' cultural norms and values as possible explanations for apology performance and judgements. While the discussion of cultural norms and values affecting apology realization and expectations in this study does not claim to be exhaustive, participants' interpretations of their behaviours along with
those of existing literature are relevant sources of information in helping to build an understanding of British and Chinese apology behaviour and interactions.

The secondary aim of this study was to explore pedagogical implications for language learners of its two target languages. This is achieved via discussion of learners' performance and of potential sources of misunderstanding and intercultural communication breakdown.

7.2 Cross-cultural comparison: NCs vs. NBs

7.2.1 Apology conceptualisation

Apologies are remedial actions by which the speaker attempts to re-establish social harmony after an offence costly to the hearer has been committed. While apologies can be regarded as a pragmatic universal, the conditions which call for an apology have been found to vary cross-culturally (see Chapter 2). Cultural differences define what constitutes an offence, the severity of the offence and the appropriate apology strategy or strategies. Having said this, this study does not ignore individual differences, nor does it claim that the participants in this study provide a valid measure for all levels of Chinese and British cultures.

During the interview, the participants were asked to define apology individually. By examining the key words they used, it seemed that NBs and NCs considered different dimensions of apology in different ways. The NBs associated apology with expressions of regret (ie saying 'sorry'); whereas the NCs associated apology with 'mianzi' (face) and 'zhenxinchengyi' (sincerity). The choice of 'I'm sorry' by NBs remains in accordance with the general assumption that contemporary British English displays features of avoidance-based negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987, Fukushima 2000, Suszucynska 1999). On the other hand, apology seems to be a 'mianzi-driven' act for NCs, such as
would not count as an apology unless it sounded sincere. It is interesting to point out, that although both groups indicated the importance of being aware of an offence, the sincerity stressed by NCs referred to the way an apology was presented to the apologisee, rather than to inner awareness of guilt on the part of the apologizer.

Both groups indicated two types of apology: error-driven and socially-driven. Error-driven apology is essential for restoring equilibrium between the hearer and speaker. Both groups concluded that error-driven apology would relate to wrongdoing, regretful feelings, taking on responsibility and offering repair. However, the NCs pointed out that the negative consequence of this type of apology was loss of face for the hearer. It was face-losing for the apologiser not only in terms of verbalizing apology but also as a consequence of the fact that an error had occurred. This finding was consistent with the fact that NCs assessed most offences as more severe than NBs. This kind of sensitivity towards one’s positive face, which makes it more difficult to admit one’s fault explicitly, is in line with studies on Chinese psychology in terms of sense of shame and blame (Yang, 1981).

Socially driven apology, on the other hand, operates differently in the two cultures. In the British culture, this type of apology is based on social norms and polite manners, and while not essential, is considered desirable. In the NBs’ own words, it becomes a kind of habit and is semi-automatic. However, in Chinese society, socially driven apology is essential in maintaining social harmony and order, especially in power relationships. Socially driven apology has four features:

1. it is enhanced in power-based relationships;
2. it is other-oriented;
3. it represents face work and rapport management;
4. it is influenced by traditions and cultural values.

The purpose in using a socially driven apology is to ensure social harmony, independent of the actual offence or facts. In other words, the apologiser might not necessarily feel he or
she is wrong, but they still offer an apology in order to save the 'face' of the hearer or of
the social group they belong to. It is an interpersonal and communicative strategy. Chinese
communication emphasises relationships rather than individual persons, and the
interpretations and perceptions of others often define the meaning of an event. Yang (1981:
161) points out the importance of others in defining the Chinese self:

The Chinese self represents a tendency for a person to act in accordance with
external expectations or social norms, rather than with internal wishes or
personal integrity, so that he/she would be able to protect his/her social self
and function as an integral part of the social network.

Therefore, in a power relationship, it would be expected that a person with lower status
should orientate his/her needs to the needs of the person with higher status. An apology
may be used in order to 顾全大局 (take the interests of the whole into account), which is a
concept that Chinese are brought up on. Yang (1981:161) further lists some specific
consequences of this other-orientation:

submission to social expectations, social conformity, worry about external
opinions, and non-offensive strategy in an attempt to achieve one or more of
the purposes of reward attainment, harmony maintenance, impression
management, face protection, social acceptance, and avoidances of
punishment, embarrassment, conflict, rejection, ridicule, and retaliation in a
social situation.

In summary, the NBs and NCs in this study conceptualised apology behaviour differently
in terms of the type of apology a given situation calls for. Both groups considered that a
'real' apology involved faults, regretful feelings, awareness of responsibility and repair.
However, apology functioned differently in social settings where both cultural groups used
it to achieve different social and interpersonal success in communication with others. The
NBs aimed to present a polite self-image in public; whereas the NCs aimed to fit into an
existing hierarchy and role relationship and thus maintain social harmony.
7.2.2 Apology realisation

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) has so far been the biggest to examine apology and request strategies. However, the languages and cultures it studied were mainly western. Therefore, this study assumed that the CCSARP coding manual might not accurately characterize apology strategies used in Mandarin Chinese. Though that manual was adopted as a starting point for data analysis (see Chapter 3), a range of previously uncoded ‘other’ sub-strategies in the Chinese data emerged here (see 4.3.1). These were listed separately from the CCSARP-derived strategies as reflecting three characteristics of Chinese apology realization:

1. in-group focused;
2. hearer-oriented;
3. face-driven.

The findings here therefore challenge the claims for universality of the classification of apology strategies by CCSARP.

As we can observe in 4.3.1, all ‘other’ strategies were used in in-group situations. For example, in RS8 (cancelled cinema date), the speaker was in a higher status in terms of age; however, it was also a close family relationship. The NCs used ‘giving priority to the hearer’ to reinforce the closeness between the speaker and hearer; but at the same time, they also used ‘foregrounding social relationship’ to highlight their social status, so that the hearer would need also to show concern for the speaker’s face need and thus reach social harmony. Similarly in RS9 (forgot DVD) and RS11 (damaged mobile), both involving close friends, the NCs showed their face concern for the hearer by ‘verifying hearer’s position’ and ‘reducing pressure on hearer’. At the same time, they also sought to bring the apology to a close and to offer moral justification in the name of friendship. If the hearer would like to be considered as a ‘good friend’, he/she would have to accept the apology and minimize the offence. Such kind of role expectation has been also confirmed in NCs’ interview data (see Example 59, 60). It indicates the importance of behavioural
expectations in forming the basis of politeness or impoliteness judgement (Spencer-Oatey, 2005), especially the value attached to the role specification in Chinese culture.

It is worth considering Bulge’s theory (Wolfson, 1988) in this context as it is the first pragmatic theory in the field of sociolinguistics which could clearly account for the phenomenon of social distance in relationships. According to Wolfson (1988), both strangers and intimates share a relative certainty in their relationships. However, this theory does not apply to the Chinese data. To a certain extent, the NCs used IFIDs less frequently than the NBs with both strangers and intimates, and for different socio-cultural reasons. For the Chinese, maintaining an insider relationship requires more attention and effort, and thus a greater variety of implicit apology strategies will be used to compensate for the lack of IFIDs. As for the NBs, they seemed to express a greater degree of agreeability with strangers than with intimates. This was in line with Boxer’s finding in her study of complaints (1993).

Pan (2000) pointed out the importance of identifying the type of social relationship determining the choice of linguistic politeness strategies in Chinese culture. Distinguishing and measuring the social distance between two participants involves judgement of whether it is an insider or an outsider relationship. Identifying the type of social relationship means recognising the hierarchical order and power source which governs the way in which face work can be used to draw attention to relative social status. The fact that ‘other’ sub-strategies were only used in in-group relationships confirms that, for an outside relationship, such face concerns are irrelevant (Pan, 2000). This is because participants do not know each other’s relative position in the social hierarchy. Information about the addressee’s social attributes of rank, age and social status is not available to the participants in an outside relationship. It is, therefore, impossible for them to place each other in the hierarchical social structure and use face strategies accordingly. Significantly,
face strategies in Chinese face-to-face interaction are used to address power differences and the addressee's social attributes as well as to maintain a long-term harmonious personal network, but are not necessarily used to reduce the imposition of a face-threatening act. It is also important to realize that 'face-work' is a dynamic process associated with both parties. Depending on social status, face strategy would be used differently in order to maintain one's own and the other's face needs. If one has lower status, priority would be given to maintaining the other's face, since that party would expect a certain level of respect. In this way, social order and harmony can be maintained. On the other hand, if one has higher status, accepting an apology demonstrates forgiveness and tolerance and therefore maintains one's own face as well as the social order and harmony. In the case of an equal status relationship, the speaker and hearer would both constantly negotiate throughout the apology process to seek a balance between their own and the other's face needs.

The realization of these 'other' sub-strategies in Chinese language and culture indicated differences in choice of apology strategy in in-group and out-group situations. While NBs selected conventionally explicit apology strategies in most situations, NCs selected explicit apology strategies and other implicit strategies, depending on whether the given situation was in-group or out-group. This indicates that NCs make greater distinctions than NBs between insiders or outsiders, which confirms the results of previous studies in which it has been concluded that collectivists make greater group membership distinctions than do individualists, as noted in Chapter 2. In the next section, cross-cultural differences in terms of individualism and collectivism, as revealed in apology behaviour by the NCs and NBs, are discussed in more detail.
7.2.3 Individualism versus collectivism

7.2.3.1 Insider and outsider effect

According to Scollon and Scollon (1995), people in collectivist cultures tend to show more variability in their choices of politeness strategies than do people in individualist cultures. That is, in the latter, groups do not form with the same degree of permanence as they do in the former, so that the ways of speaking to others are much more similar from situation to situation; whereas in a collectivist culture, many relationships are established more permanently than in an individualist culture. Consequently, forms of discourse used with others who are inside one’s social in-group differ from those used with others who are not. The data in this study confirms cross-cultural differences in apology strategies employed by NCs and NBs in situations involving in-group and out-group relationships.

In terms of preference for IFIDs, significant differences existed in situations involving good friends as exemplified by RS9 and RS11, in which fewer NCs used this strategy than NBs. In Chinese culture, good friends are considered to be ‘insiders’ as opposed to ‘outsiders’. In other words, the relationship between friends is supposed to be close and trusting. Saying ‘sorry’ explicitly to close friends is considered to be over-polite, thus increasing social distance. The apologies given by NBs in these situations also tended to be shorter and more casual; however, NBs still preferred to express ‘sorry’ explicitly. It is important to note that being friends is seen as an equal power relationship, therefore closeness is very much desired. However, if the relationship is not an equal power relationship, one party of the conversation may want to keep their distance so that the social status can be highlighted. This could be desirable for both parties. For the speaker with lower status, keeping distance may show respect for the person with higher status; whereas for the latter, keeping distance may demonstrate an honourable public image that he/she would like others to perceive. For example, in another in-group relationship
situation (RS8 - cancelled cinema date), NBs used IFIDs three times more frequently than NCs. However, it is interesting to note that in RS8, where the apologiser actually had higher status in terms of age, not only the NBs but also the NCs opted for IFIDs. As the participants were asked to cancel a cinema date with a younger cousin, there almost seems to be an obligation from the older side to take care of the younger, according to the Chinese system of hierarchy.

Another cultural difference in terms of the insider and outsider distinction could be observed via the use of ‘lack of intent’ by the two groups. The NBs used this sub-strategy in more severe situations regardless of the in-group (e.g. RS8, RS11) or out-group (e.g. RS4) distinction. However, the NCs mainly used this sub-strategy in out-group relationships (e.g. RS4 and RS10). As mentioned in the literature (see Chapter 2), it is difficult for the Chinese to associate with strangers; therefore, it becomes more important to clarify that the offence is not deliberate especially when it is severe. In addition, according to the interview data, the NCs believed that, if a situation involved an in-group relationship, the offended party would understand that the apologiser had not acted on purpose and therefore there was no need to use this sub-strategy. Instead, in RS8, the NCs used the sub-strategy ‘agreeing/creating common ground’ more, to further bond with the apologisee and show sincerity in their apology.

In RS8, both NBs and NCs offered explanation, but NCs used the sub-strategy ‘elicit empathy’ more frequently. This was because it made it easier to achieve the purpose of explaining the situation and getting understanding from a member of their insider group.

In terms of ‘offering explanation or account’, one significant difference was found in RS1 (mobile in tutorial), in which the majority of the NCs used the excuse that the call was from a close member of the family. Family values are seen as among the most important in
Chinese culture (Smith, 1991; Tseng & Wu, 1985; Whyte, 1991). Using the family as an excuse, the NCs intended to indicate that the phone call was important and the offence was not committed on purpose.

More cross-cultural differences emerged in preferences for certain apology strategies in certain situations due to insider and outsider effect. For example, 'refuse to repair' was not used much by either group. The NCs only used this sub-strategy in RS7 (wrong payment) and the NBs mainly in RS8. The NBs used 'negotiating' more in RS2 and 4, while the NCs used it more in RS4 (late for interview), 7 and 8. In RS7, which involved an out-group relationship, it would not be so 'face-threatening' for the NCs to refuse to repair as in an in-group situation, such as RS8; however the NBs did not consider it inappropriate to 'refuse to repair' in such in-group relationships. The NBs used 'distracting from the offence' more often than the NCs in RS5 (mistook stranger), RS9 (forgot DVD) and RS10 (spilt soup). RS5 and 10, as discussed previously, were out-group situations. The NBs showed more skills in communicating with strangers by using sub-strategies such as 'switch the topic', 'invitation for hearer for suggestion' and 'humour'. The only out-group situation in which the NCs used 'distracting from the offence' more was RS7, where they mainly used the sub-strategy 'acting innocently'. In RS9, involving an in-group relationship between friends, NCs used 'acting innocently' less than did NBs.

Another difference was in RS8, in which the NCs exhibited a high occurrence of 'appeasing' compared to NBs. It was interesting to note that NCs used 'appeasing' in an in-group relationship, while commenting in the interview that they found material compensation to the waitress in RS10 insulting. Mostly in RS8, the NCs would offer a meal or a treat as 'appeasing' whereas in RS10, they would offer to clean up the mess or take the waitress to the hospital as 'repair'. It seems that showing concern and offering help is considered to be a more appropriate apology strategy with strangers for NCs than is
merely offering material compensation. It is useful to note that Chinese people develop interpersonal relationships via ‘mutual care’ and that the emphasis is on long-term harmony. By suggesting a meal while apologizing, the NC apologiser creates further an opportunity to re-build and enhance the relationship.

7.2.3.2 Implicit and explicit communication styles

Another cross-cultural difference recorded in the literature on individualist and collectivist culture relates to implicit and explicit communication styles. As mentioned in Chapter 2, a contained, reserved, implicit and indirect mode of communication is considered a social rule in Chinese culture (Yu & Gu 1990). Communication in Chinese culture is inherently negotiable and the roles of speaker and listener are equally important in an ongoing communication process. In this section, the extent to which this aspect is reflected in the apology behaviour data is discussed.

Differences were evident in NB and NC use and perception of IFIDs. The NBs used more explicit apology strategies than the NCs. In terms of frequency of IFIDs, the NBs used them almost 70% more than the NCs (see Table 4.2 and Table 4.21) across all the situations. In addition, NB and NC attitudes towards and perceptions of the use of IFIDs were found to be very different based on the interview data. The findings indicated that the NBs emphasised not only the necessity of using IFIDs in a wide range of contexts, as already suggested by many researchers (such as Borkin & Reinhart 1978, House 1988, Bergman & Kasper 1993), but also the numbers of times that ‘sorry’ should be used in severe situations as well as the importance of saying ‘sorry’ before anything else. IFIDs was the strategy most frequently used by the NBs in the first, second and third places (see Table 4.12). In severe situations, IFIDs were used more frequently by the NBs. This
finding was in line with previous studies (such as Bergman & Kasper 1993, Holmes 1990; Olshtain 1989). The NBs pointed out that it was important to use IFIDs because:

1. people need to hear the word ‘sorry’ and like to hear it;
2. explicit apology indicates one’s awareness of responsibility and fault.

Relevant here is Wierzbicka’s (1985:156) observation that, “in Anglo-Saxon culture, distance is a positive culture value, associated with respect for the autonomy of the individual.” On the contrary, in Chinese culture, distance is associated with indifference and alienation which is not expected in in-group relationships. Not surprisingly therefore, the NCs did not seem to regard the use of IFIDs as fundamentally essential. Although NCs did use IFIDs in severe situations, this strategy was not the main strategy they applied, apart from in RS10 (spilt soup on waitress). This was because, in this study, ‘concern for hearer’ was categorized as a sub-strategy of IFIDs according to CCSARP; and the majority of the NCs used it in RS10. This raises a question about whether ‘concern for hearer’ should be included as a sub-strategy of IFIDs. If it were not, this difference between the NBs and NCs would be more significant in terms of the latter not using IFIDs. In situations involving minor offences, IFIDs were not selected by the majority of NCs until the 5th used strategy, or toward the end of their apology choices. In addition, when the offence was severe, such as in RS2 and RS12, NCs focused on other strategies such as ‘taking on responsibility’ and ‘managing the problem’ rather than on IFIDs. In other words, the NCs did not seem to consider IFIDs to be the most effective apology strategy in severe situations. This was also reinforced by the fact that the most commonly used apology patterns by the NC were ‘Explicit strategies + Implicit strategies’ (n = 70), ‘Explicit strategy + Implicit strategies’ (n = 53) and ‘Implicit strategies’ (n = 43); whereas the most commonly used apology pattern by the NBs was predominantly ‘Explicit strategies + Implicit strategies’ (n=126) (see Table 4.34 and 4.17). It was clear that the NCs attached greater importance to a combination of implicit strategies than did the NBs. As Obeng
(1999) points out, the use of more than one implicit apology act within the same apology event reinforces the apology.

In addition, in situations involving strangers (e.g. RS5, RS7 and RS10), the NCs used mainly explicit apology strategies only. As mentioned in 7.2.3.1, interactions with strangers being considered as out-group situations which do not require much face work (Pan, 2000; Ho, 1976), the findings indicated that explicit strategies were not seen as so powerful as implicit ones by NCs. It could be argued that both RS5 and RS7 were low severity situations, thus a more articulated apology strategy was needed. In RS10, in which the offence was severe, NCs did somewhat exceptionally use IFIDs but mainly with the sub-strategy ‘concern for hearer’ rather than explicit expression of ‘对不起 duibuqi’ (sorry). As mentioned above, it is possible to question whether ‘concern for hearer’ should be a sub-strategy of IFIDs here.

Interesting contrast is found between NB and NC choice of the CCSARP strategy ‘taking on responsibility’. The NBs favoured ‘implicit self-blame’ significantly over other sub-strategies here; whereas the NCs considered ‘explicit self-blame’, ‘creating common ground’ and ‘lack of intent’ as also important (see Tables 4.6 and 4.23). The fact that NCs used more ‘explicit self-blame’ than NBs seems to be against the implicit communication style of Chinese collectivist culture. NCs were more sensitive about using ‘IFIDs’ but comfortable with ‘explicit self-blame’, whereas the NBs were more comfortable using ‘IFIDs’ but not ‘explicit self-blame’. It could be explained that, in an individualistic culture such as the UK’s, people value fairness and the individual self; therefore, admitting one's fault explicitly is face-threatening. However, in China, the face-need of the group and others is usually more important than one's own face-need, therefore people tend to be more willing to shoulder the blame.
These explanations aside, it may be that the findings which here contrast with the main trends in the results, as well as with expectations based on earlier research, are to some extent a further measure of problems with the CCSARP coding, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The contrast between IFIDs and 'explicit self-blame' suggests that the CCSARP-based research does not conceptualise IFIDs (e.g. 'sorry') as explicit forms of admitting one's responsibility; whereas perhaps some of the participants in this study did (see 6.2.1, 6.3.1, 6.4.1 and 6.5.1). This discrepancy demonstrates the importance of complementing pure production data with qualitative perception data in establishing analytical frameworks for cross-cultural comparison, as this study has done.

In terms of apology sequences and patterns, the NBs again attached great importance to IFIDs and they appeared as the most selected strategy at the beginning of their apology events. IFIDs also featured prominently in the middle and end of NB apology events; whereas for NCs, 'taking on responsibility' appeared much earlier. The main body of Chinese apology was dominated by 'managing the problem'. In terms of explicit and implicit apology patterns, the NCs attached greater importance to implicit strategies.

Another factor influencing implicit apology strategy choice by the NCs is 'face' work; this is most significant in situations involving social power difference between the speaker and hearer. If the apologiser has a higher social status, he/she will be more likely to want to maintain his/her positive face by not apologising explicitly, because in Chinese culture errors are seen as a sign of incompetence (Bond & Hwang, 1986). The apologisee, on the other hand, would be more likely to accept an implicit apology from a person with higher status in order to show respect and make a good impression. If the apologiser has a lower social status, he/she will also want to maintain his/her own positive face. However, it will be more important for the apologiser to maintain not only the apologisee's negative face but also his/her positive face. Apologising, but not explicitly, one could project the image
of being a forgiving person, especially in public. Implicit communication style and face are strongly associated factors, since avoiding direct confrontation means self control and self restraint in order to save face (liu mainzi 面子). The NCs used more compliance strategies to give other face. Since public disagreement is a face-losing act, it can be argued that engaging in face-saving and face-negotiating behaviour is considered more important by the Chinese than honest and truthful communication. More detailed discussion of cross-cultural differences in terms of face and rapport is undertaken in section 7.2.4.

7.2.3.3 The group- and other-oriented aspect

Another distinctive difference between individualist and collectivist cultures is in their focus on individual versus group needs.

This is partly confirmed in native participants' judgements of factors determining their decision whether to apologise or not. As shown in Tables 6.2 and 6.4, the NBs mentioned more apologiser-oriented factors, such as one's awareness of the offence; and less apologisee-oriented factors. However, the NCs focused much more on the apologisee-oriented factors, especially in terms of status; and less on apologiser-oriented ones. In addition, the NCs identified context-oriented factors (such as whether the setting was formal or informal and how many people were present) to be important in deciding whether an apology is required. These kinds of factors were not mentioned by the NBs at all. A number of other comments in the interviews also support these observations (cf Examples 44, 45, 46, 53, and 58).
7.2.4 Perception of face, politeness and rapport

The debate on the universality of 'face' and 'facework' has been the key to politeness theory and rapport management. Many East Asian scholars (Gu 1990, Mao 1994, Matsumoto 1988) challenge Brown and Levinson's definition of negative face as being irrelevant in some East Asian cultures. This researcher is of the opinion that negative face does exist in China and could still be face-threatening, but not as significantly as in individualist cultures such as that of the UK. The framework for examining face, politeness and rapport management in this study is based on Spencer-Oatey's (2000) modification of negative face, which she proposes be interpreted in terms of sociality rights instead (also see Chapter 2).

First, cross-cultural differences are evidenced in terms of different sensitivities towards 'face'. The participants evaluated the degree to which it was 'face-losing' to apologise in each situation from the apologiser's point of view. The mean figures on each of these Likert scales for the degree of 'face-losing', averaged across the six situations, were shown in Table 5.2 and 5.5. As can be seen across all situations, most NBs did not consider apologizing to be 'face-losing' at all. However, there was a clear tendency for the NCs to evaluate apology as 'face-losing' in all situations. The NBs' rating of the degree of 'face-losing' was significantly lower than that of NCs. A strong correlation was found between group relationship and the degree to which participants found it face-losing to apologise.

During the interviews, the NBs commented on their judgements in terms of whether it was 'face-losing' or not to the apologiser. In line with the quantitative results, NBs pointed out that there was almost no association between 'face-losing' and 'apologizing'. In addition, little importance was attached to the concept of 'face' in the first place. Rather, NBs seemed to associate 'apologizing' with 'fact' rather than 'face'. In other words, their key concern when apologizing was with who was wrong and whose fault it was. However, for
NCs, ‘face-losing’ appeared to be an inevitable concern when apologizing. The interview data indicated great awareness of the importance of maintaining one’s own face under social pressure from others. ‘Face’ for Chinese people seems to be ‘other-oriented’.

It can be argued that, the NBs and NCs in this study interpreted ‘face’ differently with regard to apology strategies. It seems that the NBs were considering ‘face’ as the Chinese ‘脸 lian’; that is, fundamental or ‘quality’ face in Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) terminology, while the NCs were treating it as the Chinese ‘面子 mianzi’; that is, desirable or ‘identity’ face in Spencer-Oatey’s (2000) terminology. Therefore, most NBs didn’t feel they would diminish their moral standing by ‘apologizing’ if they were in the wrong, because this is what they were expected to do. However, for the NCs, apologizing is ‘mianzi’-losing because the acknowledgement that a mistake was made indicates an imbalance between the way one perceives oneself and the way one would like to be perceived by others. These social expectations are so strong that, even without the presence of a third person, their awareness has already been established in one’s self-consciousness. However, this does not seem to apply, at least not to the same extent, in individualist cultures. Because both terms ‘lian’ and ‘mianzi’ have been used so frequently in Chinese culture, people may sometimes tend to use them interchangeably without being aware of doing so. Nevertheless, even though the underlying concept of ‘mianzi’ does also exist in British culture, it does not seem to have as significant an impact as in Chinese culture on the way people perceive themselves. This could be due to the collectivist nature of Chinese culture. Therefore, NCs are more likely to be sensitive towards the concept of ‘mianzi’ when they evaluate apology situations and behaviours.

Secondly, cross-cultural differences are found in terms of different sensitivities towards social rights. The NBs seemed to attach more importance to their social rights than the NCs. In situations with high power difference (e.g. RS2 didn’t turn up in tutorial), the
occurrence of 'explicit self-blame' was high and no 'refusal to acknowledge guilt' was manifest in the NC data. However, NBs used very few 'explicit self-blame' strategies but more 'refusal to acknowledge guilt'. In RS2, all the NCs accepted their responsibility once the tutor said she had the right time; however, the NBs would justify their position further with the tutor. As revealed from the interview data, the NCs aimed to save the tutor’s face whereas the NBs aimed to clarify the situation. Therefore, the interactional goal seemed to be different. The NB and NCs seemed to have different perceptions of their rights and expectations. For the NBs, the tutor could not be right just because she was the tutor; they considered it their right to challenge her view. But the NCs seemed to expect the tutor to be seen to be right and, even if they thought she was wrong, they felt no need to challenge her due to ‘face’ concerns. In other words, the British seemed to value equity rights more than the Chinese; whereas the Chinese valued identity face more: by not challenging the tutor’s identity face, they also managed to preserve their own identity face as respectful.

Thirdly, cross-cultural differences were found in the ways participants addressed face sensitivities via different apology strategies. For example, in RS7 (paid incorrect amount), NBs did not consider it necessary to offer an explanation, as this was just a minor mistake. However, the NCs apparently considered paying less money as 'face-losing', since this was associated with their economic status, or again their identify face. Therefore, it seemed more important for them to offer explanation of why they had paid less money. Another interesting difference was noted in terms of NC and NB use of ‘reassurance’ in RS12 (gave wrong deadline). The NCs used this strategy more often than the NBs, mainly to reassure the apologisee that the tutor would not mark down their final mark, and would not blame them or have a bad impression of them. This again indicated the importance of ‘identity face’ in Chinese culture. The NBs on the other hand tended to emphasise that the essay was not difficult, indicating more concern with the apologisee’s ‘quality face’. This reflects how native speakers in different cultures select apology strategies to maintain various
components of the face need of the apologisee, based on the priority in their particular culture.

In summary, this study supports a broader framework for analysis of cross-cultural differences, especially when an East Asian culture is involved. The concept of negative politeness seems to fit well with the British data but does not carry the same meaning and function in the Chinese data. The alternative framework of rapport management proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2000) offers more explanatory power to this study. The differences in perceptions of 'face-loss' as well as choice of apology strategies in given situations indicate that different cultures place different emphases on various components of rapport management (Spener-Oatey, 2000). NBs seem to attach greater value to quality face and equity rights, NCs to identity face and association rights.

7.2.5 Perception of contextual factors

Many studies show that contextual variables have a crucial influence on people’s choice of apology strategies (Holmes 1990, Otshtain 1989). Cross-cultural differences in British and Chinese apology behaviour might be due to different weights being attached to each contextual factor. These differences are closely associated with deep socio-cultural values. In this section, discussion focuses on NC and NB evaluation of contextual factors and socio-cultural values as revealed via the data.

7.2.5.1 Social distance

The NB and NCs were asked to assess social distance (closeness), severity of offence and social power (status) in the twelve given situations. The NCs rated social distance similarly to the NBs (see Tables 5.1 and 5.4 respectively). Both groups considered speakers to have
close relationships in RS8 (cousin), RS9 (friend) and RS11 (friend), and distant relationships in RS4 (interviewer), RS5 (stranger), RS7 (shop assistant) and RS10 (waitress). However, overall, the NCs rated relationships in most situations as less close than the NBs, apart from in RS1 (tutor) and RS8 (cousin). It was found that the NC’s evaluation of social distance correlated significantly with their evaluation of the severity of the offence (see Table 5.6). The NCs considered the offence in RS2 (didn’t turn up in tutorial) higher than that in RS1 (mobile phone in tutorial). Therefore, although both RS1 and RS2 occurred between a tutor and a student, NCs rated the relationship in RS1 closer due to the lower severity of the offence. As to RS8, the situation happened between kin. According to Chu & Ju (1993), a warm and close family remains the most important goal in life and therefore kinship rises above all other feelings. ‘骨肉亲情 gurouqingqing’ (family relationship is as tight as bond and flesh) is a Chinese saying indicating that one’s family is the only constant in a shifting world, and should therefore be constantly emphasised and nourished throughout one’s lifetime. It seems that this strong family value results in a much higher rating of social distance in RS8 by the NCs.

Traditional family values lead to significant differences in terms of whether parents need to apologise to children in Chinese and British culture. Most NBs found it reasonable and acceptable for parents to apologise to their children; whereas in the case of NCs, not only did they not expect their parents to apologise, but, as children, they would feel uncomfortable if parents did so. It seems very common in Chinese families for parents to use non-verbal gestures, such as cooking a nice meal or buying a small gift, in place of an actual apology. In some cases, even by starting off a conversation, the parents make a gesture which serves as an apology. This phenomenon is influenced by ‘孝xiao’ (‘filial piety’), an indigenous Chinese notion that encapsulates the ‘proper’ relationship between children and parents. In Chinese culture, a child who observes filial piety is expected to obey its parents and provide for them the needed financial support, this obligation being
based also on the principle of reciprocity. According to Sun (1991), a person is already in debt before they are born: they owe a debt to parents who conceive them and who will raise them in the future. Consequently, it is inconceivable for a Chinese person not to feel indebted to his/her parents. Therefore, even if parents are in the wrong, for the sake of filial piety, children should not expect them to apologise, and would feel embarrassed if they did.

In situations involving strangers, NCs considered that IFIDs would be sufficient by way of apology. In other words, there was no need for a more elaborate transaction using implicit apology strategies. In some situations, such as blocking each other on the street, a non-verbal strategy would be sufficient, such as a nod, a smile or simply moving out of the way. As mentioned above (see Chapter 2), it is difficult for Chinese people to assess the status of strangers and, as they are unlikely to come across each other in the future, there is almost no need for them to consider face-saving strategies. In these situations, to apologise is seen as a way of being polite. The NCs in this study tended to associate this kind of politeness with one’s educational background. The NBs also considered it important to use IFIDs with strangers. Some pointed out that it was more important to explain to strangers, as they did not know what kind of person you were.

### 7.2.5.2 Severity of offence

The NCs in general rated offences as more severe than did NBs across all the situations (see Tables 5.1 and 5.4). In interview, the NCs pointed out that it was not acceptable to make mistakes in Chinese culture. Confucian philosophy puts great emphasis on the concept of ‘shame’ as well as that of ‘humility’ (Yang 1957). In other words, one should not praise one’s own achievements, but be more aware of one’s limitations and flaws through self discipline. This might explain why NCs overall judged offences to be more
severe than NBs. The main differences were manifest in those situations involving different social status, such as RS1 (tutor), RS2 (tutor) and RS10 (waitress). In RS1, the NBs did not judge the fact that a student's mobile phone went off in a tutorial to be a severe offence; however, the NCs considered it to be severe. As to RS2 (didn't turn up for a tutorial), both groups considered the offence as severe, but the NCs more so than the NBs. In RS10, on the other hand, the NBs rated spilt soup a more severe offence than the NCs did. In both RS1 and RS2, NCs rated the tutor's status higher than did the NBs. In China, zunshizhongjiao (respect the teacher and emphasise education) is seen as an important tradition and moral code. According to Lau (1979), learning self-restraint involves studying and mastering 题 li (politeness), the ritual forms and rules of propriety through which one expresses respect for superiors and enacts one's role in society in a way that is worthy of respect and admiration. An offence towards a tutor is therefore seen as severe, and as such should be avoided in the first place. However, in RS10, NCs rated the offence less severely than did NBs. This could be explained by the insider and outsider effect. As Scollon and Scollon (1991) argue, the clear distinction between insider and outsider influences behaviour in every aspect of Chinese culture. Thus, in interpersonal interaction, the Chinese focus on family, friends and established relationships. There is no affective response towards strangers, for they are outside one's established groups.

7.2.5.3 Social status

Overall, the NCs' evaluation of the apologiser's status was lower than that of the NBs. Compared to Nbs, the NCs considered a student to have a much lower status than a tutor. The NCs also rated the customer as having higher status than the waitress and the shop assistant; whereas the NBs rated their status as equal. Both groups judged the apologiser to have a higher status in RS8 (older cousin), and a lower status in RS1 (tutor), RS2 (tutor), RS6 (professor) and RS4 (interviewer). According to Fukushima (2000), status is
considered to be important in collectivist cultures, and this kind of social cultural background may have influenced the assessment of power differences by NCs. Moreover, the conceptions of the Chinese self are situated in, explained and governed by complex hierarchical and role relationships (Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998:17). That is to say, in Chinese culture, the position one occupies and the role one plays define not only how one should perceive oneself in relation to others, but also how one should engage in communication with them. The way NCs evaluated social status thus determined that they would apply different apology strategies.

Significant differences were found in participants’ decision-making processes in RS2 (interview), in which an unfounded accusation was made in a hierarchical relationship between a tutor and a student. This highlighted the assumption that ‘face’ is emphasised in a hierarchical relationship. It is worth mentioning that some NCs did question or challenge whether it was right just to accept the blame in the situation with the tutor, or indeed in any hierarchical relationship. They commented that other considerations such as national, generational or educational differences were relevant. Nonetheless, most NCs still perceived the hierarchical aspect of the relationship as the determining factor when it comes to apology.

7.2.6 Body language

Non-verbal aspects also need to be handled appropriately if harmonious relationships are to be maintained (Spencer-Oatey 2000). Due to the scope of this study, non-verbal aspects of apology cannot be fully accounted for. However, the current study did elicit some comments on appropriate or inappropriate use of non-verbal apology. The responses from NCs were in line with their evaluation of language use. They pointed out that if the
apologisee was standing, then the apologiser should stand up rather than remain sitting, because this would show more sincerity and concern.

The NBs considered consistency of both body language and verbal language important. In other words, one should not apologise whilst looking relaxed or indifferent.

Differences were found in the way NCs and NBs interpreted similar body language, especially in terms of direct eye contact and laughter. Direct eye contact was perceived to be desirable when apologizing by NBs, while NCs considered it rude. The latter suggested the apologiser should look down instead. Another difference was in the interpretation of laughter. For NBs, laughing when apologizing was not appropriate, because this behaviour was inconsistent with seriousness of the situation or the apologizing language. But for the NCs, laughter or smiling served to display embarrassment as well as comforting the hearer. However, it is important to point out that this kind of laughter must look innocent as well as genuine.

7.3 Language learners' performance

Interlanguage pragmatics researchers have shown interest in non-native speakers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds when analysing their production of speech acts (Kasper 1992). As discussed in Chapter 2, there are two types of transfer: sociopragmatic transfer and pragmalinguistic transfer (Thomas 1983). The former deals with the learners' perception of social variables, the latter with the learners' choice of linguistic expressions. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) advanced the positive correlation hypothesis, predicting that second language proficiency would positively correlate with pragmatics transfer. Lower-proficiency learners, according to this hypothesis, are less likely to display pragmatics transfer in their L2 production that higher-proficiency learners, because the latter lack the
necessary linguistic resources. Higher proficiency learners, on the other hand, do have such resources, so their L2 production will tend to reveal more pragmatic transfer. Takahashi (1996) outlines two criteria for pragmatic transferability: learner assessment of the contextual appropriateness of a given strategy, and assessment of the equivalence of strategies in the first and target languages in terms of contextual appropriateness. In this section, both apology production and perception of contextual variables by the CESLs (Chinese ESL learners) and BCSLs (British CSL learners) are compared with those of the native groups.

7.3.1 Apology realization

Overall, both learner groups used fewer types and numbers of apology strategies than native speakers. Both learner groups chose to use the 'taking on responsibility' and 'distracting from offence' strategies significantly less frequently than the native groups. Influence from both L1 and L2 was evident in participants' choices of apology strategies.

One of the observations that have been made in relation to the apology strategies of non-native speakers is that learners tended to 'waffle' (House, 1999, Edmondson & House, 1991). In other words, they tend to oversupply apologies. However, House (1991) points out that all the studies in which waffling is evident are written discourse completion test (DCTs), whereas this behaviour was not present in the interactional, negotiated discourse elicited by open role-plays in this study. The findings here therefore support the methodological argument that learners require different cognitive skills in discourse production for face-to-face interaction (role play) than for written questionnaires.

7.3.1.1 Illocutionary Force Indicative Devices
In terms of IFIDs, the CESLs did not use ‘double intensifier’ and ‘please’ at all. They also produced less apology formulae compared to NBs. However, the CESLs used more ‘concern for hearer’ than NBs. This may be due to other-oriented Chinese cultural values, referred to previously in section 7.2. The CESL participants chose to use IFIDs more frequently than the NCs. It was pointed out by the participants that they felt it less face-threatening to apologise in English. The CESLs’ choice of IFIDs was found to correlate with the perceived severity of the offence (see Table 5.9).

As to the BCSLs, they used the least IFIDs sub-strategies. They used ‘intensifying’, ‘emotional expression’ and ‘concern for hearer’ less frequently than both NBs and NCs. The BCSLs only produced three types of apology formulae (dui bu qi, bu hao yi si, baoqian), whereas seven appeared in the NC data. The BCSLs also failed to use the Chinese terms of polite address (e.g. teacher, cousin) to show respect or shorten distance between the speaker and the hearer.

### 7.3.1.2 Taking on responsibility

As far as ‘taking on responsibility’ was concerned, similarly to the NCs, the CESLs used a high frequency of ‘explicit self-blame’. However, the CESLs did not produce sub-strategies such as ‘justify hearer’, ‘indication of effort to avoid offence’ and ‘expression of self-deficiency’. Compared to NBs and NCs, CESLs did not use ‘lack of intent’ in severe offence situations as such as RS11 and 12, or in the close relationship situation RS8. The BCSLs were able to use all the sub-strategies. Similarly to the NCs, they used a high frequency of ‘agreeing/creating common ground’. The BCSLs used ‘refusal to acknowledge guilt’ with a frequency similar to that of the NBs. This, however, was mainly in RS9, whereas NBs used it more often in RS2. The BCSLs might have felt it was acceptable to deny responsibility with close friends in RS9. This is partly supported by the
interview data that the BCSLs developed awareness of a different kind of role expectations towards close friends (e.g. Example 118).

7.3.1.3 Explanation or Account

The CESLs did not provide much explanation, and were particularly reluctant to use the strategy 'eliciting sympathy'. The BCSLs used 'eliciting sympathy' in RS8, in line with the NBs and NCs. A possible explanation for the CESLs not using 'eliciting sympathy' might be that their linguistic level did not allow them to express such utterances in English. It could also be that the native British assistant tended to accept the apology relatively quickly and thus the CESLs did not feel the need to use this sub-strategy.

7.3.1.4 Managing the problem

In terms of 'managing the problem', the CESLs showed less skill in 'negotiating'. They tended to use 'offering repair' and 'being co-operative', consistent with the NCs. On the other hand, the BCSLs used this strategy very frequently, the extent to which each sub-strategy used by them being very similar to that of the NBs. However, in terms of the distribution of sub-strategies across the situations, the BCSLs' choices were more similar to those of the NCs.

7.3.1.5 Distracting from the offence

The CESLs produced the least instances of 'distracting from the offence'. They mainly used the sub-strategy 'acting innocently', which requires less linguistic proficiency. The BCSLs also frequently used 'acting innocently'; however they also used 'switching the topic' with a frequency comparable to that of the native speaker groups.
7.3.2 Contextual assessment

In terms of their assessment of the three contextual variables, the CESLs rated closeness between the speaker and the hearer along with social status in similar ways to the NCs. They attached very little importance to the social status of the speaker. In RS1 (mobile in tutorial), the CESLs considered the closeness between student and tutor to be less compared to the NBs. The CESLs rated closeness between the strangers, such as RS5, 7 and 10, as greater compared with the NCs. Overall, the CESLs evaluated the above situations to be the least severe of all. In RS1, 2 and 6, the CESLs rated the offences as much less severe as did the NCs. It seemed that the CESLs felt more relaxed about the offence against the tutor. Through studying and living in the UK, the CESLs were experiencing different role relationships with their lecturers and tutors, finding them more approachable and casual. This could be the reason why they regarded an offence towards a tutor as less severe than they might have done in China. In RS3 (noise complaint), the CESLs rated the offence as more severe compared to the native groups. This was also to do with the accommodation arrangements in the UK. These CESLs were living in international accommodation. As mentioned previously (see Chapter 2), for the Chinese, face is a group concept, relating to one’s family, society and even nation. The Chinese students in this study stated in interview that the way they behaved in the UK would influence the way British people perceive the Chinese, and in general there was a strong sense of ‘不要给中国人丢脸’ (do not lose the face of Chinese people). It seemed important for them to maintain harmony in their place of accommodation, especially in such an international environment.

On the other hand, the BCSLs in general rated the speakers’ social status to be relatively higher and social distance to be closer across the apology situations. In terms of the closeness between the speaker and the hearer, similarly to the native NBs, the BCSLs rated strangers closer than did the native NCs. This could be a transfer from their native
perception of relationships between strangers. It also could be that Chinese people were usually friendlier towards foreigners in China than towards Chinese strangers, again reflecting their concern with ‘不要给中国人丢脸’ (do not lose the face of Chinese people). In addition, the Chinese traditional view of politeness is that locals should demonstrate ‘主人之仪’ (politeness and manner of the owners of the land) and treat visitors as guests. Thus, the BCSLs might have felt closer to Chinese strangers in China.

In terms of the degree of ‘face-losing’, both learner groups considered apologising across the situations to be face-losing in general. This was more similar to the NCs’ response. The CESLs’ evaluation of the degree of ‘face-losing’ was found to correlate with their evaluation of ‘severity of offence’; whereas the BCSLs’ evaluation was found to correlate not only with ‘severity of offence’ but also with ‘relative status of speaker and hearer’.

7.3.3 Some potential sources of cross-cultural miscommunication

When L1-based pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge has been transferred into target language contexts, learners and their interlocutors are likely to experience miscommunication and, moreover, communication breakdown (Kapser & Rose 2002). In this section, some potential sources of cross-cultural miscommunication are discussed, based on the performances of the learners as well as native participants’ responses to the videos of them.

7.3.3.1 CESLs vs. NBs

The CESLs tended to use strategies that shorten the social distance between the speaker and the hearer. This could be explained by the importance attached to identifying in-group and out-group relationships, as mentioned previously (see 7.3 and 7.4). However, this was
considered inappropriate by the NBs, to whom the key to apologising was to show one's awareness of the offence and one's responsibility for it. In RS1 (mobile phone went off in a tutorial), a response like 'It's my mum and I will call her back later' was not considered appropriate by the NBs. However, for the NCs, this strategy emphasised that the tutorial was more important to the student than family matters, thus showing respect for the tutor. The NBs, on the other hand, considered that the student calling her mother back had nothing to do with the fact that she was not supposed to have the mobile phone on. This lack of awareness of the offence was seen as very rude.

Promptness in saying 'sorry' was considered very important by the NBs in various situations. However, as IFIDs are not the dominant means of redress in Chinese culture, the CESLs did not necessarily use 'sorry' at the beginning of their apologies. Sometimes, they used 'sorry' after offering explanation or repair. Most NBs found the apology from the CESLs to be sincere, but they were not satisfied if the word 'sorry' appeared toward the end of an apology event.

Body language was another key issue which could potentially cause misunderstanding. The CESLs laughed rather frequently when they apologised, even if the offence was severe. In Chinese apology, laughter is used to shorten the distance between the speaker and the hearer, as well as to break the ice and release the tension between the two. It also indicates the apologiser's embarrassment. However, according to the NBs, body language needs to be consistent with the apology event. In other words, one should look sorrowful and serious, rather than laughing, especially in severe situations. Another difference was that the CESLs tended to look away or look down at the floor when apologising, to show their embarrassment and regret; whereas the NBs found it more desirable for the apologiser to make direct eye contact with the apologisee.
7.3.3.2 BCSLs vs. NCs

The main potential for misunderstanding between the BCSLs and NCs may lie in their different expectations and perceptions of social rights, and their varying sensitivity towards face in hierarchical relationships. The majority of the BCSLs challenged the tutor in RS2, which was considered by the NCs as very face-threatening for the tutor. In addition, the BCSLs tended to offer suggestions to reschedule the meeting instead of waiting for the tutor to propose a re-arrangement. Although the transactional goal was to have a meeting, this strategy was not considered to be appropriate by the NCs, as the fact that the student had missed the previous meeting had already caused face damage to the tutor. According to the NCs, it should have been the tutor’s right to decide when and whether to have another meeting, so they tended to use ‘being co-operative’ more frequently than the BCSLs in this situation.

In RS3 (noise complaint), a few male BCSLs used ‘refuse to repair’ when the hearer asked them to turn the volume down. They pointed out that it was their birthday and emphasised that they were the senior residents. This was considered to be egocentric by the NCs. In RS6, the BCSLs also tended to negotiate more with the professor in terms of when to return the book. Again the NCs tended to prefer ‘being co-operative’ in this situation. It may seem reasonable for the student to achieve the transactional goal by returning the book to the professor at a time convenient for both. However, in Chinese culture, students would not consider themselves to have the right to do this. The NCs therefore believed that the tutor had every right to demand the book’s return at a time convenient to him/herself, and the only and most appropriate thing for the student to do would be to show cooperation.

Body language also caused misunderstanding here. In RS1, some of the BCSLs walked away from the tutor to answer the phone when the mobile rang in the tutorial. The majority of NBs did not pick up the phone. It is suspected by the researcher that the BCSLs had
learned from Chinese TV that it was acceptable to answer the phone in a meeting. However, this was very much dependant on the context. In a group meeting, if one person’s phone rang, this person would walk away to answer the phone and indicate that the rest of the group should continue without him/her. This was to show that he/she did not want to interrupt the meeting. However, this could prove very face-threatening in a one-to-one tutorial, as in the role-play situation. Some of the NCs answered the phone, but right in front of the tutor to show there was no privacy or distance between them. They would also explain who was calling. In their view, when the BCSL participants walked away to answer, this did not show respect and closeness to the tutor.

7.3.4 Cross-cultural accommodation

Through the interview data, it was clear that both groups had developed awareness of the target language culture by living in the target language country. Both groups of learners were able to compare and analyse differences they had observed and were learning about in their daily life. Both also displayed accommodation to the target language culture. Several CESLs mentioned how uncomfortable they felt when they realised how frequently they were expected to say ‘sorry’ in the UK; however, with time, they started to appreciate it as a matter of good manners. It was interesting that the CESLs pointed out that they didn’t think much before saying ‘sorry’ in English; however, they felt they would behave differently if they were in China. Similarly, the BCSLs reported frustrating experiences with Chinese people in the first few months of their year abroad. It seemed normal for people to step on each other on the street or jump a queue without saying sorry. On the other hand, the BCSLs were told they were too polite by their Chinese friends, and that saying ‘对不起’ (sorry) was not necessary between friends. Thus the BCSLs established more tolerance and understanding of the way Chinese people behave in public and adapted the ways they behaved among the Chinese people they knew.
However, the BCSLs didn’t seem to change their expectations of apology behaviour or choice of apology strategies as willingly as the CESLs. It was also interesting to observe that the CESLs noted more cross-cultural differences in apology behaviour between China and the UK than the BCSLs. The former seemed to be more analytical about those differences and many comments they made were in line with previous research in terms of the collectivism of Chinese culture. They also indicated some factors other than the three focused on in this study which might influence people’s choices of apology strategies, such as legal implications, age differences, educational background, social division etc (cf. Examples 93, 94, 95, 96). However, on the down side, they tended to make more assumptions about the British culture based on superficial observations.

7.3.5 Pedagogical implications

By examining ways the CESLs and BCSLs produced and evaluated apology strategies, this study has confirmed the importance of the cultural and interactional dimensions of communicative competence. It identifies some potential difficulties and sources of misunderstanding when learners of British English and Mandarin Chinese communicate with native speakers of these two target languages. Based on the findings and discussion in the study, the following suggestions are made for developing pragmatic competence:

- *Increasing cultural awareness through focus groups*

Evidence of the learners’ accommodation in this study supports the theory that the learning environment is particularly helpful in establishing awareness of cultural differences and developing pragmalinguistic knowledge (Klein, Dietrich & Noyau 1995). However, exposure to a foreign culture alone does not seem to be sufficient. Given insufficient input and interaction inside and outside the classroom, more training to develop learners’ sociopragmatic knowledge would seem to be required (Kim 2000, Kasper 1989, Carroll 2000). It would be useful for members of the groups involved to be informed about each
other's similarities and differences, so that they may understand each other better, and learn to respect and tolerate one another's differences. This study thus provides information in the area of applied sociolinguistics relevant to teachers working with foreign learners of Mandarin Chinese in China and British English in the UK. Group discussion with native speakers was found particularly useful by the participants in this study for enhancing their cultural understanding. It is suggested that various kinds of focus group discussion could be included as part of a language teaching course in either of the two cultural contexts. Understanding cultural values and attitudes is essential to understanding language use.

- **Providing situation-based instructions with visual support**

For developing pragmatic competence, all the teaching and learning materials should be situational-contextual. Students should be trained to choose their apology strategy for a given situation based on consideration of the contextual factors involved. It is important for students to understand why the contextual factors in different situations might be interpreted differently in the British and Chinese cultures, as well as how these interpretations might differ. It is recommended that teaching materials should visualise situations-contexts, using DVD or other multi-media resources. Via these, students can pay attention not only to the verbal aspects of an apology, but also to its non-verbal aspects. It is worth rendering explicit the importance of non-verbal behaviours and the common misunderstandings they might be sources of.

- **Integrating teacher instruction and learner observation**

A number of studies (Kasper, 1989; Lörshcer & Schulze, 1988) show that, compared to interaction outside the classroom, L2 pragmatic input in instructional discourse is functionally and formally limited. This is particularly the case as the teaching of Mandarin
Chinese to non-native speakers is still in its early stages. Not much research has focused on instructional settings in the Mandarin Chinese as a Foreign Language classroom. Since Chinese apology strategies tend to be implicit, further study is required to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of explicit instructional input from teacher to student. It is very important to provide opportunities for both teacher and learners to discuss their cross-cultural experiences, including cultural differences that the learners observe outside the classroom. This helps to identify levels of learner intercultural awareness, as well as facilitating the process of cross-cultural accommodation. It also helps to prevent any potential socio-cultural psychological stresses on the part of overseas learners, and misinterpretations by them of the behaviours of native speakers.

- Introducing pragmatic knowledge in text books and teaching materials

This study has clear implications for the design of textbook materials for the development of pragmatic competence. Input for learning has too often been limited to a focus on grammatical competence, without the concomitant pragmatic functions which grammatical structures may carry in communication. At their worst, textbook materials not only provide limited input for learning but are also misleading in their attempts to delimit and categorise the linguistic structures used in communicative speech acts. Here is an example from a bestselling textbook for non-native learners of Mandarin Chinese (Scurfield & Song, 2003). In Unit 1 on ‘how to make a simple apology’, an example is presented of a student going to an office to look for his teacher and asking another teacher there ‘Zhang Laoshi zai me?’ (Is teacher Zhang in?). The teacher replies “Duibuqi, la bu zai.” It seems to make sense, when thinking in English, that one would say “I’m sorry, she’s not in.” However, a Chinese person will not apologise in this context with ‘duibuqi’. This kind of direct translation is obviously misleading and does not take pragmatic meaning into account. Pragmatic knowledge should both inform and be featured in such teaching materials, in order to develop learners’ socio-pragmatic awareness from beginner level upwards.
**Consideration of cross-cultural accommodation and learner identity**

Based on the data in this study, CESLs seem to find it easier to adapt to UK apology strategies than BCSLs do to those in China. In particular, CESLs were able to adapt to the more explicit apology style in British English, whereas BCSLs found the implicit recognitions of social status and face needs in Chinese apology behaviour more difficult to manage. These observations raise interesting questions regarding the balance between accommodation to a foreign language culture and maintenance of individual identity. For example, the CESLs in this study tended to pay more attention to their group identity as overseas students than the BCSLs. Consideration of such differences in the cultural backgrounds of students should be featured in language teacher training, as teachers must help overseas learners accommodate to local culture. For example, this study indicates that more consideration of cross-cultural pragmatics, including the differences between individualist and collectivist cultures, is needed in training British learners' of Mandarin Chinese.

**7.4 Conclusion**

The main cross-cultural differences between Chinese and British apology behaviour have been discussed in a broad analytical framework for rapport management via five dimensions: apology conceptualization; apology realization, individualism vs. collectivism; perception of face and perception of contextual factors. It is suggested that apology behaviour has strong associations with politeness and 'face' for all groups; however, NBs and NCs have demonstrated different sensitivities regarding 'face' and 'social rights'. Cultural dimensions such as individualism and collectivism as well as socio-psychological aspects such as expectations and values have been helpful in interpreting the findings. This chapter has also examined learner groups’ performances and identified potential resources
for miscommunication between them and native speakers. Pedagogical implications have also been suggested. The next chapter concludes and evaluates the current study.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Apology is an important act of politeness whose function of maintaining, restoring and enhancing interpersonal relationships has been highlighted by previous researchers. Successful performance and interpretation of apology requires both linguistic and cultural pragmatic knowledge. Most of the existing studies of apology in different languages and cultures focus on production data with discourse completion tests (DCTs), while the scope of languages which have been studied is still limited. This study has investigated the evaluation and interpretation of apology strategies by native speakers from British and Chinese cultural backgrounds in conjunction with an examination of their cultural concepts of apology. It has demonstrated significant differences in the conceptualization of apology in the two cultures and how these are reflected in their respective evaluations of social and contextual variables, as well as in their apology behaviours. Different preferences for apology strategies were also found in the responses of non-native learners of British English and Mandarin Chinese.

The major goal in carrying out this study was to shed light on some aspects of interactions within and between British and Chinese groups, so that better understanding of differences in deep socio-cultural values, sources of potential conflict and hence successful communication between the two groups could be established. For this purpose, a cross-cultural approach within the context of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques, was selected; with the focus on British and Chinese apology performance and its interpretation by native speaker and non-native language learner groups.
With the rapid growth of the Chinese economy and its rising role as a world player, ever more cross-cultural communication between China and the UK is required in various settings such as business, study and personal relationships. The findings of this study provide information with implications for politicians, businessmen, language teachers and students who are involved in such cross-cultural exchanges.

In this chapter, a summary of the main findings is listed (8.2). There follows an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of this study (8.3). Finally, suggestions for future research are made (8.4).

8.2 Summary of main findings

This research attempted to elicit, describe, compare and explain the perception and production of apology behaviour by native British English and Mandarin Chinese participants, as well as by learners of these two languages. The participants were also interviewed for a deeper understanding of their choices of apology strategies and the ways in which they conceptualise and interpret apology. It is found that British and Chinese apology behaviours present different features. Their characteristics are listed as follows.

8.2.1 Characteristics of British apology

Based on the findings from three types of data sources, the following characteristics of British apology can be summarized:

- *Manner and social norm driven*

The ways in which British participants conceptualised apology was very much focused on social norms and manner. To apologise for minor offences was considered to be polite and well mannered. It was semi-automatic.
• **Importance of 'explicit apology'**

IFIDs were the most frequently used strategy by the British participants. They were used to start as well as to end an apology event. It seemed that it was essential for the apologiser to say the word ‘sorry’ and for the apologisee to hear it. Explicit apology was seen as a way of acknowledging one’s fault, and demonstrating awareness of an offence was considered a key element in determining the sincerity as well as the effectiveness of an apology. Consistent with apology speech act theory (Owen, 1983; Searle, 1975), the British apologies in this study were highly patterned and routinized remedial interchanges.

• **Sensitive to severity of offence**

Another characteristic of British apologies is that they are sensitive to contextual factors, such as offence type and severity. There was a relationship between frequency of strategies selected and offence-contextual factors: the higher the severity, the more likely the apology was to be realized as a speech act set with intensified IFIDs.

• **Social rights-oriented**

For the British participants, the key driver in whether to apologise or not was whose fault the offence was. This was not so strongly influenced by social status or closeness between the speakers. Individual social rights and obligations were highly valued by the British participants, and this was reflected in their choice of whether to apologise as well as in the type of strategy they would use.

• **Consistent with Bulge theory**

The production of apology strategies as well as interviews with the participants suggested that Bulge theory (Wolfson 1988) applies to the British participants in this study. They tended to apologize more explicitly both to strangers and to close family members than did the Chinese participants in this study.
• Non-verbal aspects

The British participants emphasized the importance of consistency between verbal and non-verbal apology behaviour. It was believed one should look sorrowful and serious when apologizing. It was also recommended to look into the eyes of the hearer to show sincerity.

8.2.2 Characteristics of Chinese apology

Some characteristics of Chinese apology manifest in this study can be summarized as follows:

• Long-term harmony driven

Apologising in Chinese culture serves the purpose of maintaining long-term social harmony within one's social network. The choices of apology strategy reflected the type of relationship the apology was aiming to maintain, as well as the degree of closeness between the apologiser and the apologisee. Usually, the Chinese participants attached less importance to interactions with strangers, so their chosen apology strategies there tended to be explicit and short. To close family members, on the other hand, Chinese participants tended to apologise using a wider range of often implicit strategies. In these cases, explicit apology was usually avoided due to the insider and outsider effect (see 7.2.3.1) and the fact that one does not want to appear to increase social distance in interactions with close family members.

• Importance of implicit apology

Implicit apology plays an important role in Chinese culture for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, explicit apology tends to be seen as inappropriate with close in-group members; therefore, a combination of implicit apology strategies is essential to fulfil the function of remedying the situation. Second, explicit apology threatens one's 'face' in
Chinese culture. Errors were regarded as directly associated with one’s competence and thus as affecting one’s positive face (cf. examples 44, 92 in Chapter 6). This was especially the case where a person of higher status was concerned. Thus, for the purpose of saving one’s face, implicit apology was more desirable than explicit apology.

- **Sensitivity to power relationships**

The Chinese participants showed great sensitivity to power relationships. Traditional Confucian values seemed to continue (cf. examples 82, 90 in Chapter 6) shaping participants’ attitudes towards the hierarchical structure of society as well as to relationships within the family. Such influences determine that one’s individual rights be overridden and effort made to maintain the status quo in a given power relationship.

- **Face-oriented and other-oriented**

Chinese apology is face-oriented as well as other-oriented. In order to achieve and maintain long-term harmony in one’s social network, it is necessary to respect the existing social order as well as to strike a balance between one’s own and others’ face needs. Chinese culture is a collectivist culture (cf. 7.2.3). One’s face is therefore constantly evaluated and judged by others. Face loss to one member of the group has a negative influence on all the other members.

- **Non-verbal aspects**

Chinese participants used laughter to break the ice and create a more relaxed atmosphere when apologising. Laughter also indicated a great level of embarrassment. It was also considered to be insincere to look into the eyes of the apologisee directly. Instead, participants often felt they should look down to show embarrassment (cf. example 48 in Chapter 6).
8.2.3 The pragmatic success and failure of language learners' apologies

In semantic content and syntactic formulae, most of the language learners' apologies approximated to those of the native speakers, as summarised above. This indicated that the learners of both languages had enough pragmatic communicative competence to apologise with a reasonable degree of success in the twelve situations presented in this study. The discussion here will focus on their limitations.

Overall, the learners did not produce as many apology strategies either quantitatively or in variety of strategy type. Notably, they produced far fewer IFIDs and intensifiers. Their apologies also demonstrated a tendency to merge features of both cultures, to possible miscommunicative effect. Notable here were limitations in the use of intensifiers of apology by both groups (cf. 4.4.1 and 4.5.1). Some of the BCSLs failed to use polite address terms in situations where social status was different and Chinese pragmatics would thus require them (cf 8.2.1). Furthermore, the importance attached to individual social rights imported from their own culture by the BCSLs might also cause conflicts in relationships where power difference between individuals of higher and lower Chinese social status were involved. Reciprocally, the lack of explicit strategy use demonstrated by some CESLs (cf. 4.4.1) might cause problems in terms of conveying the necessary recognition of who is at fault, an essential characteristic of British apology summarised above (cf. 8.2.1).

Regarding these limitations, both groups demonstrated a degree of developing cross-cultural awareness through the interview data. However, while some CESLs did seem willing to accommodate the more explicit apology style of the UK (cf. example 105 in Chapter 6), most BCSLs appeared reluctant to adapt their imported norms and values to the more implicit Chinese communicative ways. Going beyond the current scope of this study,
it might be useful to investigate why individualists living in or learning a foreign culture (e.g. the BCSLs here) might tend to accommodate less than collectivists (e.g. CESLs) (cf 8.4.6).

8.3 Strengths and limitations of the current study

Inevitably, a study such as this has both strengths and limitations. These are outlined below.

8.3.1 Strengths

- **Combination of production and evaluation data**

  Few empirical studies have been carried out which have compared both production and evaluation differences amongst native and non-native speakers. Moreover, there have been no studies looking at how British learners performed in Mandarin Chinese. The empirical research amassed here addresses this gap, providing a significant body of data informative with regard to:
  1. the pragmalinguistic choices made by NB & NC speakers and BCSL & CESL students in a variety of authentic apology contexts;
  2. the sociopragmatic influences which may direct those choices.

  A number of apology strategies not previously coded in the predominantly western language-based CCSARP studies are identified in this study. It therefore contributes to a reevaluation of the existing CCSARP coding manual, with a view to increasing its applicability in studies of Mandarin Chinese and other non-western language cultures.

- **Authenticity, validity and reliability in the design of the study**

  Occupation, level of education and age of participants were all taken into consideration, to ensure that, as far as possible, any differences in choices of apology strategies were not attributable to personal characteristics. Since the participants were all university students,
the situations used in this study were selected so as to reflect student life in the UK and China. This means that the subjects did not have to project themselves into a world totally different from their actual environment. In other words, they could easily imagine the given situations, even those not within their own experience. This ensured that the situations had credibility for all groups of subjects.

Also, the situations were based on observations in natural settings, followed by pilot studies to examine whether such situations were likely to happen in both cultures. This enhanced authenticity of the elicitation tool and also provided the equivalence essential to any cross-cultural study. The choice of open role-play rather than DCT enabled apology strategies to be elicited in a more spontaneous way, as well as replicating the interactional and negotiational nature of real life apology behaviour. Moreover, triangulation was used in the research design, maximizing the validity and reliability of the findings. The combination of different sources of data (open role play, evaluative questionnaire, individual interviews and focus groups) added to the methodological strength of this study both in terms of the validity of its design, and in the way that perspectives on participants' pragmatic knowledge were obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data.

- **The consistency and comparability of the data collection instruments**

The apology situations used in this study were built on observation and corpus data reflecting real life situations. The construction of the variables in situation was not based on the researcher's subjective judgment but on measured assessment by native speakers in a pre-study. All the data collection instruments were piloted. Great attention was paid to the translation process in preparing the above instruments for consistent, comparative use across both British English and Mandarin Chinese apology contexts.
- **Video recording**

Video camera was used to record the participants' performances. This enabled consideration of non-verbal aspects of apology behaviour and provided a more accurate and complete picture of the participants' apology production. Use of video enhanced the interview data, enabling differences in participant interpretations of laughter and eye contact to be revealed. However, detailed analysis of these aspects would require a more analytical paralinguistic framework to be developed in future studies.

### 8.2.2 Limitations

- **Representativeness of participants**

With only 64 participants in all, the scale of this study was relatively small. For example, it was difficult to define or generalize about Mandarin Chinese culture with reference to data from only 16 participants, however carefully these were confined to a sample representative of university students from Mainland China (excluding, for example, the variant cultures of Hong Kong or Taiwan). Even within the same national student culture, variance exists between participants from different regional, social class, age and ethnic backgrounds. Thus the findings here cannot claim to represent the whole of Mainland China, not even with regard to its student culture. The same limitations apply to its representativeness of Britain. Had the data been taken from a greater sample, including people outside the education sector of different backgrounds, the results might have been significantly different.

- **Effects of feasibility**

Because the research was conducted in both the UK and China, two different research assistants were needed for the role plays in the two countries. While it would have been better for one bilingual person to conduct all the role plays, the feasibility and the financial
constraints of this had to be considered. Consequently, it was deemed acceptable to have two native speakers to carry out the role plays in their respective home countries, provided they followed clear instructions designed to minimise their different effects on the participants. This may have affected the responses produced by the participants.

- **Number of variables**

In this study, three variables were investigated: power difference, social distance between speaker and hearer (apologiser and apologisee), and degree of imposition of the apology act in terms of severity of the offence. These were suggested by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as most influential in determining choice of politeness strategies. However, there are variables other than these three which may have influenced the different choices of apology strategy by the British and Chinese participants in this study. Although the focus was not on identifying these, it is important to keep in mind that complex individual and socioeconomic variables beyond the scope of the measurement tools here may also have influenced the participants’ strategies of apology behaviour.

### 8.4 Suggestions for Further Research

#### 8.4.1 Investigate the variables which influence politeness strategies

As noted previously, some variables other than the three investigated here may have significantly influenced the differences between British and Chinese subjects in their production and evaluation of apology strategies in some of the given situations. It would be useful to design further research to identify and investigate other variables which might influence apology and other politeness strategies in intercultural contexts such as that of the present study. In apology situations with possible legal consequences, for example, one of the Chinese participants suggested the face-driven, collectivist concerns of Chinese apology behaviour may be overridden by awareness of the punitive cost to the individual
of acknowledging fault (cf. example 93 in Chapter 6). According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), contractual/legal agreements and requirements form particular behavioural expectations. Although for the purposes of this study it could be assumed that legal consequences are just another measure of severity of offence, further research might reveal significant contradictions between participants' views of moral as opposed to legal severity. It would also be interesting to investigate cross-cultural differences in apology strategies when the cause of an offence is not individual but collective, a dimension raised by some participants in the interview data (cf. example 89).

8.4.2 Reconsider the coding manual

Limitations have been identified in previous categorisations of apology behaviours, such as the western language based CCSARP coding manual, which proved difficult to adapt to the Mandarin Chinese data in this study. Given that apology strategies were found here which had to be classified as 'other', the universality of the CCSARP coding (Olshtain, 1989) must be doubted. With this arises the further question of whether its existing strategies and sub-strategies also need reconsideration. For example, the CCSARP classification of 'concern for hearer' as a sub-strategy of IFIDs skews the otherwise clear indication in this study that NCs don't tend to use IFIDs (cf. 4.3.1 and 7.2.3.2). It could be suggested that 'concern for hearer', along with some of the 'other' strategies evidenced in this study's Mandarin Chinese data, demands one or more new sub-strategy sets, not previously identified in any western language-based coding. If so, this study shows the value of including qualitative feedback in any such research design. In cross-cultural studies, the definition and classification of apology strategies should not only come from applying theory to production-based data, but also from participants' evaluations of the categories being imposed on them. This is particularly important when the researchers do not share the same culture as the participants.
8.4.3 Test the rapport management framework with more languages and cultures

Brown and Levinsons’ (1978, 1987) analytical framework is still the mostly widely used one in examining cross-cultural politeness behaviours. However, their concept of negative politeness, which seems to fit well with the British data, does not carry the same meaning and function in the Chinese. Instead, the rapport management framework proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2005) has been helpful to some degree in interpreting the cultural differences between Chinese and British speakers. More future studies of a wider range of languages and cultures are needed to test the validity and reliability of the rapport management framework in understanding interaction and communication beyond the individual- and western-based views of politeness which predominate in the research so far.

8.4.4 Explore non-verbal aspects

The differences found in this study proved that non-verbal aspects are an important part of cross-cultural communication. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to explore and analyze these differences in a systematic way. Since not many studies have considered the effects of non-verbal aspects in terms of cross-cultural pragmatics, further investigation in this area would be of merit.

8.4.5 Further studies on development of pragmatic competence

This study has provided valuable data on interlanguage apology from BCSLs and CESLs. However, as the main focus was on socio-pragmatic aspects and deep cultural values, it has not been able to explore these pragmalinguistic aspects in great detail. A starting point has been offered in the use of video to elicit evaluative feedback from participants on paralinguistic features of which they might otherwise have remained unaware. Future
research could develop more sophisticated multimedia tools for elicitation of both qualitative and quantitative data, in order to identify difficulties and issues that learners encounter in developing their pragmatic competence. Beyond these pedagogical implications, any insights gained would also prove informative to other interested parties in cross-cultural communications (cf 8.1).

8.4.6 Examine accommodation process and learner identity

Future research is needed to explore the inter-relationship between accommodation processes and individualist vs. collectivist cultural identity (cf 8.2.3). In most general terms, the question is: what significance does the degree of individualism or collectivism of a target language culture have on learners from both individualist and collectivist backgrounds? This might lead to specific studies in bilingual contexts other than that of the present study. Such research has important implications for all groups and individuals involved in any cross-cultural exchange where the risk of pragmalinguistic failure carries cost, and may result in the need to apologise.
Appendix A The CCSARP Coding Manual


1. Segmentation

Apologies can be performed by any one of the following strategies, or any combination or sequence thereof:

- Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)
- Taking on Responsibility
- Explanation or Account
- Offer of Repair
- Promise of Forbearance

The general import of these five major strategies is fairly transparent, when we remark that IFIDs explicitly clarify that an apology is being carried out (see below for glosses of these strategies). In the following example, all five strategies are used, in the sequence given above:

Example:

IFID Responsibility Explanation Repair
I’m sorry. I missed the bus, and there was a terrible traffic. Let’s make another Forbearance appointment. I will make sure that I’m here on time.

2. Coding Categories

Alerter.
This category is identical to the category of the same name used with Requests.

Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDS).
IFIDs are formulaic, routinized expressions in which the speaker’s apology is made explicit. Notice the hierarchy in the following examples:

- Sorry/ Excuse me/ I apologize for/ Pardon me/ I regret that./ I’m afraid...

  Intensifiers of the apology
  IFID internal:
  Intensifying Adverbials
  I’m very/ terribly/ so/ really/ awfully sorry

  Emotional expressions/exclamations
  Oh/ Oh no/ oh Lord/ God
  Expressions marked for register
  I do apologize...

  Double intensifier or repetition of intensifying adverbial
  I’m really intensively sorry/ I’m very, very sorry

  Please
  Please forgive me.

Other:

Concern for the hearer. The speaker takes explicit cognizance of the hearer's feelings, which he or she may have offended.
I hope I didn’t upset you.
Combination of the above may occur.

Taking on responsibility
In an attempt to placate the hearer, the speaker choose to express responsibility for the offence which created the need to apologize.

Explicit self-blame. The speaker explicitly acknowledges the fact that he or she has been at fault.
My mistake.

Lack of intent. The speaker explicitly states that he or she had not intended to hurt the hearer through his or her offence.
Justify hearer. The speaker communicates to his or her hearer that he or she fully understands the hearer's reactions to the offence inflicted upon him or her.
You're right to be angry.

Expression of embarrassment.
I feel awful about it.

Admission of facts but not of responsibility. The speaker does not deny his or her involvement in the offensive act but abstains from openly accepting responsibility.
I haven't read it/I missed the bus/I forgot about it/I haven't had time to mark it yet.

Refusal to acknowledge guilt. The speaker completely rejects responsibility for the offence, in one or more of the following ways.

Denial of responsibility
It wasn't my fault.
Blame the hearer.
It's your own fault.

Pretend to be offended
I'm the one to be offended!

Explanation or account
This category covers any extend (+/- human) mitigating circumstances offered by the speaker, i.e. "objective" reasons for the violation at hand. Whenever, First person is used, e.g. "I missed the bus," however, the expression should be coded as one of the sub strategies of "taking on responsibility."
The traffic was terrible/My tutor kept me late.

Offer of repair
If the damage or inconvenience which affected the hearer can be compensated for, the speakers may choose to offer repair, this offer must be directly related to the offence perpetrated; in other words, you can only repair a reparable.
I'll pay for the damage/I'll go and enquire in the kitchen.

Promise of forbearance.
Whenever the speaker's sense of guilt is strong enough, he or she may feel the need to promise that the offensive act will never occur again.
This won't happen again.

Distracting from the offence. (Downgrading)
Tactical moves by which the speaker tries to divert the hearer's attention from his or her own responsibility for the offence include the following:

Query precondition. The speaker attempts to throw doubt on the modalities of a previous arrangement which he or she broke.
Are you sure we were supposed to meet at 10?

Act innocently/pretend not to notice the offence
Am I late?

Future/task-oriented remark. The speaker tries to make light of his or her offence by diverting the hearer's attention from the past (his or her offence) to the future (what needs to be done now).
Let's get to work, then!

Humor. Used as a strategy to pacify the hearer.
If you think that's a mistake, you ought to see our fried chicken!

Appeaser. As opposed to the "offer of repair" (see above), compensatory offers which form the content of "appeasers" are not directly connected with the speaker's offence.
I'll buy you a cup of coffee.

Lexical and phrasal downgrades listed above as means of mitigating Requests can, of course, also be used to modify an Apology.
This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted on 18\textsuperscript{th} May 2004, is approved by the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethical Committee. In due course, the Committee would like to receive an update on the progress of this project, any ethical issues that have arisen and how they have been dealt with.

John Oates  
Chair, OU HPMEC
Appendix C Informed Consent for Participation in Research Project

This study considers the cultural impact on speech act production by native British and Chinese speakers as well as learners of both languages. It is performed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the researcher’s Ph.D. in cross-cultural communication at the Open University.

There are no foreseeable risks with this research. The main potential benefit is in contributing to intercultural communication and language teaching implication on this topic. If any discomfort should arise regarding material addressed in the study, participants can call the number listed on this letter to ask questions or discuss their feelings. A more complete statement of the nature and purpose of the research will be available when the data collection is completed.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that:

1. The time required for this study is about 90 minutes and is allocated in two separate sessions.
2. The nature of my participation includes complete sixteen role-play situations and a background information questionnaire (first session), and a face-to-face interview or group discussion (second session).
3. My participation is entirely voluntary.
4. All my data are confidential and anonymous. All data will be kept securely for 5 years and will be kept separately from personal information which might identify me as the participant.
5. All data are for research purposes only.
6. If I have questions about the research, or if I would like to receive a copy of the aggregate findings of the study when it is complete, I can contact the researcher by calling (01908-858487) or writing to:

Name of researcher: Hua Xiang (Catherine)
Address of research: Room 133, Briggs Building, FELS/CLAC, Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA

Signed____________________________________ Date____________________ (participant)

Signed____________________________________ Date____________________ (researcher)
# Appendix D  
**Field work record form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Relationship between the speakers</th>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Non-verbal aspects</th>
</tr>
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Appendix E  Pre-study apology situation assessment

Personal Information
Age: Place of birth: Gender: Nationality:

**Instruction:** You are asked to read 20 apology situations and assess all the situations based on a 5-point scale on the following 5 aspects:

A. Do you think the situation is likely to happen?
Very likely 1 2 3 4 5 Not likely at all

B. What do you think of the status of X and Y? Compared to Y, X's status is
Very high 1 2 3 4 5 very low

C. What do you think of the closeness between X and Y?
Very close 1 2 3 4 5 very far

D. What do you think of the severity of the offence in the situation?
Very high 1 2 3 4 5 very low

E. To what extent do you think it is necessary to apologize in this situation?
Very high 1 2 3 4 5 very low

Please write the number of your choice below each situation.

**Situation 1**
X is a university student. X goes to see tutor Y for a tutorial and forgets to turn his/her mobile off and the phone rings in the middle of the session.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 2**
X is a university student. X thinks the person walking at the front is a friend and goes to say hello and finds out it's a stranger Y.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 3**
X is a university student. X has arranged to meet his/her good friend Y for badminton but the class runs late. X is 10 min late when he/she gets there.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 4**
X borrows the new bike of a good friend Y and promise to return on the day. However, X has an accident on the way and breaks the new bike.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 5**
X arranges a business dinner for some clients. Only after all the food have been served does X remember that client Y is a vegetarian but all the food contains meat.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 6**
X and Y are flat mates and suppose clear the kitchen in turn. However, X is busy with exam and has not cleared kitchen as arranged.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 7**
X is a university student returning a book in the library. The librarian Y complains that the book is over due for months and there are marks on the book.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______

**Situation 8**
X is a university student. X should submit an assignment to tutor Y. X cannot complete the assignment no time because he/she cannot get the book he/she needs from the library.
A. _______ B. _______ C. _______ D. _______ E. _______
Situation 9
X has arranged to have an interview with a department manager Y. There is a traffic jam on the way and X cannot inform Y and is late for 2 hours.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 10
X agrees to go home for dinner for his/her mum Y’s birthday. Y has prepared many dishes. But X’s boss holds an urgent meeting and X misses the dinner.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 11
X promises Y, a good friend, to bring a DVD when visits but forgets about it.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 12
Y, the father has asked X (the child) to buy some stamps. But the post office has closed when X gets off work and X has not brought any stamps home.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 13
X has an appointment with a clinic. The clinic provides a wrong address and X arrives an hour late due to the difficulties of finding the place. The on duty nurse Y accuses X for being late.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 14
X breaks his/her mother Y’s favorite antique vase by accident. This vase is very expensive and valuable.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 15
X’s mother Y asks X to bring home some milk. X forgets about it and brings nothing home.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 16
X is a university student. X gets a seat in the library and later another student Y comes and says that this seat belongs to him/her. He/she is just away to the toilet.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 17
X works in a hotel at the reception and is on an evening shift. Guest Y complains the heating is not working but X cannot find someone to fix it until the next day. Y only stays for one night and no other room is free.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 18
X steps on Y’s foot in a crowded bus by accident.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 19
X feels too tired after work and decides to cancel the date with a good friend to the concert the last minute.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________

Situation 20
X goes traveling with his/her father Y’s camera without Y’s permission. Y needs the camera for work but cannot find it because of this.
A. ___________ B. ___________ C. ___________ D. ___________ E. ___________
Appendix F Role play Situation cards

Situation 1

A:
You are a university student. You and your personal tutor meet everyday and get on with each other very well.
You are in your regular one-to-one session with your personal tutor. Suddenly your mobile phone rings and interrupts the tutorial.

Situation 2

A:
You are a university student.
You meet your personal tutor frequently and you know each other for long.
It's a busy time of the year for your tutor.
You are scheduled to have a meeting with your tutor.
You are now going to her office.

Situation 3

A:
You are a student warden of your shared student accommodation.
You are having your birthday party with your friends and having a great time. One of your fellow residents comes to talk to you. Respond to her.

Situation 4

A:
You are having a job interview with a manager at a company you applied to. The traffic was terribly bad and you are seriously

Situation 1

B:
You are a lecturer. You are in a one-to-one session with one of your Tutees. His/her mobile phone rings during your discussion and you get a bit annoyed.

Situation 2

B:
You are a lecturer. You were supposed to meet your tutee yesterday but he/she didn't turn up. It's a busy time of the year.
You are upset as your time was wasted. Now you are working in your office.

Situation 3

B:
You live in a shared student hall. You have an exam tomorrow and need to get to sleep early. The student warden of the house is having a birthday party and it's mid night already and the music is still very loud and you cannot sleep at all. Go and talk to your student warden.

Situation 4

B:
You are the manager of a company and you are expecting to interview an applicant this afternoon. However, this applicant
late for the interview. You have just arrived at the company and are already 2 hours' late.

Situation 5

A:
You are walking down the street. You think the girl walking ahead of you is a girl called Jenny who you met at a party last weekend. Go and say hello to her.

Situation 6

A:
You are a university student. You have borrowed a book from a well-known professor in your field. You meet her on the campus and she starts to talk to you.

Situation 7

A:
You are in a local supermarket and have put several items in a basket. You are about to pay for these at the till.

Situation 8

A:
You have a young cousin. You have promised to take her to the cinema tonight. But you have a lot of work to do and cannot go. Call her and tell her.

is already tow hours' late. It's been a long day. You are tired and feeling a bit impatient.

Situation 5

B:
You are walking down the street. Someone stops you and calls you Jenny. You don't know this person. Respond to him/her.

Situation 6

B:
You are a well-known professor. You lent a book to one of your students. He/she promised to give it back last Monday but didn't do so. You need this book yourself rather urgently. Go and find the student and ask for the book.

Situation 7

B:
You are a supermarket cashier. One of the customers pays for his/her shopping but has not offered enough money. Tell him/her.

Situation 8

B:
Your older cousin promised to take you to the cinema tonight. You are ready to go out and the phone rings. Answer the phone.
Situation 9

A:
You have a very good friend. You go to visit her at her house this afternoon as previously arranged.

Situation 10

A:
You are eating out in a restaurant. The waitress brings you the soup you have ordered. You want to help by taking the soup from her. But the bowl is too hot for you to hold and you accidentally spill the soup on waitress' clothes.

Situation 11

A:
You are with your good friend. You want to make a quick phone call home. You ask your friend to lend you her mobile phone. When she passes it to you, you accidentally drop it on the floor. The screen breaks.

Situation 12

A:
There is a new student joined your course last week. She asked you about the deadline of essay A. You gave her the deadline of essay B by mistake which was due 2 weeks later than essay A. You suddenly realized your mistake and remember that tomorrow is the actual deadline for essay A. You call this student urgently to tell her.

Situation 9

B:
You are expecting your good friend to come over and bring a nice film to watch as he/she promised. When you see him/her, ask about the DVD.

Situation 10

B:
You are a waitress and serving a bowl of soup to a customer. The customer takes the bowl from you and accidentally spill some of the soup on you.

Situation 11

B:
You are with your good friend. You give your mobile to him/her to make a quick call home. He/she drops the phone on the floor and the screen breaks.

Situation 12

B:
You are a new student in your course. You were told by another student that essay A was due in three weeks' time. You have not prepared for it yet. This student now rings you. Respond to him/her.
Chinese version

情景一

A:
你是大学生, 你和你的导师每天都会遇见, 并且相处的不错。你正在和你的导师一对一的辅导课中, 突然你的手机响了, 打断了上课进程。

情景二

A:
你是大学生, 你和你的导师经常见面, 并且认识了很久。这个时期对你的导师来说很忙碌, 你与她约好了这个时候要见面做辅导。你现在去她的办公室找她做辅导。

情景三

A:
你是大学寝室的楼长, 今天是你的生日, 你正与你的朋友们在你的房间内庆祝, 玩的很开心。你隔壁房的一个楼友来找你, 回应她。

情景四

A:
你与某公司的经理约好了要面试, 但是路上交通堵塞, 等你赶到时, 已经过了约好的面试的时间整整两小时。

情景五

A:
你走在马路上, 你以为走在你前面的女孩是你上个周末聚会时认识的叫张婷的女孩。你走上前去和她打招呼。

情景六

A:

情景一

B:
你是大学讲师, 你正在与学生一对一的辅导课中, 他/她的手机响了, 打断了上课进程。

情景二

B:
你是大学讲师, 你和你的学生约好了昨天见面, 可是他/她却没来。这个时期对你来说很忙碌, 你很生气, 因为你的课时都被耽误了。你现在正在办公室里工作。

情景三

B:
你住在大学宿舍。你明天有门考试, 你需要早点睡觉休息。但是住在你隔壁楼的楼长在搞聚会。现在已经快12点了, 他们的音乐还是很大声, 你根本没法睡着。你去向该楼长提意见。

情景四

B:
你是某公司经理, 你准备好今天下午面试一个应聘人员。然而, 这个人过了近两个小时都还没出现。你今天日程繁忙, 你已经感觉很累, 很不耐烦了。

情景五

B:
你走在马路上, 有一个人停住你, 把你叫作张敏。你不认识这个人。

情景六

B:
情景七
A：
你在超市购物，选购完毕后，你去柜台结帐。

情景八
A：
你有小表妹。你说好了今天晚上带你去看电影。可是，你现在有很多工作要赶，没有时间去看电影。打电话告诉她。

情景九
A：
你有一个好朋友。按照事先约好的，你今天下午到她的家里去玩。

情景十
A：
你在某饭店里用餐，一位服务员端来了你点的汤，你想帮他接过汤，没想到汤太烫了，结果你不小心松手把热汤洒在了服务员身上。

情景十一
A：
你和你的好朋友在一起，你借她的手机给家里打个电话。当她将手机给你的时候，你却不小心把她的手机摔在了地上。结果，手机屏幕被摔坏了。

情景十二
A：
你是一位有名望的教授。你借给一个学生一本书，他/她说好上个星期一还给你的。可是到现在还是没还回来。你现在自己急需这本书。你去找这个学生要书。

情景七
B：
你是超市收银员。一位顾客来付钱时，没有给足钱。告诉他/她。

情景八
B：
你的表哥/表姐说好了今天晚上带你去看电影。你已经准备要出门了，突然电话响了，你去接电话。

情景九
B：
你在等你的好朋友来你家玩。他/她说好了会带一部好片子来看。当你见到他/她时，问他/她带了什么DVD。

情景十
B：
你是某饭店服务员。你为一位客人上他/她点的汤。当客人试图从你手中接过碗时，他/她却把汤洒在了你的身上。

情景十一
B：
你和你的好朋友在一起，你借你的手机给他/她打个电话。当你将手机递给他/她的时候，他/她却不小心把你的手机摔在了地上。结果，手机屏幕被摔坏了。

情景十二
B：
Appendix G  Evaluative questionnaire

In this questionnaire, you will be asked some short questions related to the role play you just undertook. This will take you about 20 minutes to fill in. Thanks very much for your participation!

Q1. What's your overall feeling about the situations in the role plays? Do you think they are likely to happen in UK? Do you think they are likely to happen in China? Have any of the situations (or similar ones) ever happened to you before? If so, which ones?

Q2. Was the description on the card clear to you? Did you understand the situations fully?

Q3. Did you feel comfortable with the video? How do you think it affected your behavior, if at all?

Q4. Do you have any suggestions for improving the wording of the situations, and the overall setting of the role play?
Q5 Please put the number(s) of the 12 situations in the following six boxes as appropriate. More than one situation can be put in one box.

1. The authenticity/naturalness of the situations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very likely to happen</th>
<th>Unlikely to happen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. The closeness between the speakers in the situations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very close</th>
<th>Not close at all</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The severity of the offence in the situations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very serious/severe</th>
<th>Very light</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. The status of the speakers in the situations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker A has higher status</th>
<th>Speaker A has lower status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

5. The degree of 'face-losing' of person A when he/she apologizes to person B?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>Not 'face-losing' at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Q6 If you find it difficult to judge a particular situation based on the above chart, please specify your difficulties/problems here.
Q7 Consider the following five apology strategies:

1. **Explicit apology**: e.g. 'I'm sorry', 'I apologize'
2. **Take on responsibility**: e.g. 'It's my fault', 'I got confused'
3. **Offer explanation**: e.g. 'The bus was late', 'I need to go to a meeting'
4. **Offer repair**: e.g. 'I will pay for it', 'Can we make another appointment?'
5. **Future forbearance**: e.g. 'I will definitely remember next time', 'This won't happen again'.

Which one or ones is/are the most appropriate for each situation; please put the number of the strategy (or strategies) in the box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Strategy (or strategies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which one or ones is/are the least appropriate for each situation; please put the number of the strategy (or strategies) in the box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Strategy (or strategies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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Appendix H  Participant background questionnaire

**Personal information (for research and payment purpose only)**

Name:  
Age:  
Gender:  
Address:  
E-mail address:  
Contact phone number:  

Highest previous qualification (e.g. degree, subject area):

Current course of study (e.g. degree, subject area):

**Language skills**

First Language(s):  
Nationality:  
(Please specify if you are bilingual or speak any local dialects)

Where are you from in your country?  
Where are your parents from?

Do you speak any other languages? If so, what are they? At what level?

Have you taken any language exams?  
If so, what kind of exams? When and where did you take them? What was your result?

Have you ever lived in other countries? If so, where, for how long and for what purpose?

Have you had any contact with other cultures in your own country? Please specify the context.
Based on where you are living now, how often do you use your first language(s) or any other language(s) you speak? (Please fill in the percentage in terms of your total speech)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of language(s) (or dialect(s))</th>
<th>At home or your accommodation</th>
<th>At university or work</th>
<th>Other occasions (please specify, e.g. have a foreign friend)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>=100%</td>
<td>=100%</td>
<td>=100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Questions

1. Based on your own experience, have you noticed any distinctive differences in which people from different culture apologize?

2. Can you think of any situations in which you have either:
   a) expected an apology but not receive one?
   b) received an apology but not expect it?

3. Is it possible to
   a) apologize without saying ‘sorry’?
   b) say ‘sorry’ without apologizing?

4. In any given situation, what factors affect
   a) the need to apologize?
   b) the way in which you apologize?

5. Would you apologize if you did any of these in company?
   a) accidentally blocking someone’s way
   b) blowing your nose
   c) sniffing?
   d) sneezing?
   e) interrupting a conversation?
   f) contradicting someone?
   g) passing the wind?
   h) coughing in the middle of a speech?
References:


Brown, P., and S. Levinson. Politeness: Some Universals in Language


Cohen, A. "Developing the ability to perform speech acts", in *Studies of Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 18, (1996) pp253–267


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