Universality? Cross-linguistic influence?

Evidence from Chinese and English apology response strategy use
[共通性？跨語言影響？中英道歉回應策略使用的佐證]

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The present study investigated the use of apology response (AR) strategies by L1-Chinese L2-English learners and L1-English L2-Chinese learners from a cross-linguistic perspective. A total of 18 Taiwanese college students who were learning English as a foreign language and 18 foreigners in Taiwan who were learning Chinese as a second language were recruited to complete an oral discourse completion task both in Chinese and English. The major findings are as follows: First, the two groups showed no significant difference in their choice of AR strategies, both favoring Acceptance and Minimization, two face-preserving types, to show politeness. Second, cross-linguistic influence was found to affect our participants' AR performances. Both positive and negative influences occurred. Finally, regarding the use of multiple strategies, both groups of participants tended to combine Acceptance with other strategies to maintain social relationships. The results showed both language universal and language-specific features in the AR realizations in Chinese and English. The dominant use of positive response strategies, namely Acceptance and Minimization, highlights the profound influence of politeness principles.

Keywords: apology response, cross-linguistic influence, universality, strategy use

關鍵詞：道歉回應，跨語言影響，共通性，策略使用

1.   Introduction

Cross-linguistically, speech acts have been a popular research topic for the past few decades (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, Bataineh & Bataineh 2008, Chang 2016). Speech Act Theory is attributed to Austin (1962), who formed the central idea that "by saying something we do something" (p.109). That is to say, speakers in a conversation perform certain acts and accomplish certain functions as they produce utterances. For instance, people greet by saying *hi*, express gratitude by saying *thank you*, and offer an apology by saying *sorry*.

Many different speech acts (e.g., requests, compliments, promises) occur in human societies. They are regarded as "a critical factor that determines the processes of resolution of the problems and reconciliation between the parties" (Ohbuchi, Atsumi & Takaku 2008:55). For example, as defined by Bataineh & Bataineh (2008), an apology is a speech act through which "the wrongdoer acknowledges responsibility and seeks forgiveness for what he/she has done" (p.793). In Brown & Levison's (1987) view, an apology is perceived as a negative politeness device which threatens the speaker's face while preserving the hearer's. Below is an example taken from Holmes (1989).

(1)   Context: A bumps into V, who is standing still.
       A: Sorry.
       V: That's OK.   (Holmes 1989:196)

As shown in 0, the realization of an apology normally involves two parties, the wrongdoer (also referred to as the offender or the apologizer) and the victim (i.e., the apology respondent). In this case, the wrongdoer (A) apologizes to the victim (V) for the offense (bumping into V), and seeks forgiveness by saying *Sorry*. Here, from the wrongdoer's point of view, the apology represents a loss of face since the wrongdoer admits responsibility for causing the offense, which threatens his own dignity. From the victim's perspective, the apology compensates him to some degree, maintaining his face. In short, an apology implies loss of face for the wrongdoer and support for the victim (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984).

Then, after the wrongdoer offers an apology, a response from the victim, no matter verbal or non-verbal, is generally expected. According to Holmes (1995), responses to apologies (ARs) function as an indication to the wrongdoer of whether the victim feels satisfied with the apology. In (1), the victim accepts the apology by saying *That's OK*, which directly shows forgiveness and conduces to social harmony.

Though the concept of apology responses exists across cultures, their realizations may be culture-specific. In fact, studies have suggested that "different languages may use different linguistic forms to encode the same conceptual infor-

mation" (Kong & Qin 2017: 22), and a particular speech act may vary in its verbal realization patterns across languages and cultures (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984). Taking apology responses for example, studies have suggested that people from different cultural backgrounds vary in their use of AR strategies (Saleem & Anjum 2018), as shown below.

> Acceptance: It's OK, really./ Don't worry/ It doesn't matter.
> Acknowledgement: I accept your apology, but …/ That sounds good.
> Evasion: We had lovely time anyway./ Are you OK?
> Rejection: I don't accept your apology./ Sorry, I can't fogive you.
>
> <div align="right">(Saleem & Anjum 2018: 74)</div>

Though many studies have examined the influence of culture on apologies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, Bataineh & Bataineh 2008, Guan, Park & Lee 2009), cross-linguistic research on ARs in Chinese and English in bilinguals[1] remains limited.

   In addition to cross-cultural influence, the phenomenon of language transfer (i.e., cross-linguistic influence in general) should be taken into consideration when studying speech act performances by L2 learners. Transfer, in traditional approaches to second language acquisition (SLA), has been generally considered to be influence of the learners' first language (L1) on their second language (L2) (Gass & Selinker 1992). It has been suggested that negative transfer may occur in learners' language due to the interference from the L1 (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse 2017). However, recent studies have shown that transfer can be bidirectional,[2] that is, cross-linguistic influence can work both ways, from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1 (Pavlenko & Jarvis 2002, Su 2012). For instance, Su (2012) examined Chi-

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1. The definition of "bilingualism" has been quite controversial. According to Bloomfield (1933), a bilingual speaker has a "native-like control of two languages" (p. 56), as if each were his/her mother tongue. This is an ideal version of bilingualism since there are extremely few bilingual speakers of this type. Following Weinreich (1953), who defines bilingualism as "the practice of alternately using two languages" (p. 1), we consider a bilingual speaker to be a multi-skilled individual who develops language skills consistent with the use of his/her second language even if he/she has only a partial command of the second language. The term "bilinguals" in the present study refers to "L1-Chinese L2-English learners and L1-English L2-Chinese learners".

2. In the present bi-directional study, the participants were not monolingual speakers. We recruited bilingual speakers, who were either L1 Chinese learners of English as a foreign language or L1 English learners of Chinese as a second language. When we conducted a within-group comparison of their L1 with their L2, we aimed to see if their L1 use of ARs was influenced by the L2 version and if their L2 use of ARs was affected by the L1 version. To avoid the potential ambiguity, we have changed "Chinese-English bilinguals" to "L1-Chinese L2-English learners and L1-English L2-Chinese learners".

nese EFL learners' apologizing behaviors in their native and target language, finding that cross-linguistic influence occurred bidirectionally, although the effects of the L2 on the L1 were less noticeable. The study showed that language transfer occurred bidirectionally in L2 learners' apology performances at the pragmatic level. Yet, it remains unknown whether cross-linguistic influence also affects the performances of AR strategies. As Bataineh & Bataineh (2008) noted, "strategy use in one's culture may differ from that in the target culture" (p. 816). With this in mind, the current study explores the issue of cross-linguistic influence by focusing on the speech act of apology responses.

To fill this gap in the literature, this study examines the following questions:

a. Are there any cross-cultural differences in L1 Chinese and English apology response strategies by L2 learners of Chinese and English?
b. Does cross-linguistic influence affect L2 learners' apology responses?
c. What are the common multiple strategies of apology responses in Chinese and English?

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 some empirical studies of apology responses (ARs) are reviewed. Different types of Chinese and English ARs identified in previous studies are introduced in Section 3. The research design of the study is introduced in Section 4, including information regarding the participants, the methods and materials, and the experimental procedures. Section 5 presents the results and discussion. Lastly, Section 6 summarizes the major findings, the pedagogical implications, and the limitations of the study.

2.   Previous empirical studies of apology responses

This section reviews four empirical studies on the speech act of ARs. One was conducted in an L1 setting (Adrefiza & Jones 2013) and three were conducted in an L2 setting (Lin 2012, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017). Adrefiza & Jones (2013) were pioneers of research on the speech act of ARs. Though ARs had been discussed in the literature, they argued that ARs should not be simply "a supplement to the consideration of the apology act itself" (p. 72). To address this, they examined ARs performed by native speakers of Australian English (AE) and Bahasa Indonesia (BI), focusing on two aspects, gender and culture. They recruited 60 native speakers of AE and 60 native speakers of BI, with an equal number of males and females in each group. These participants were asked to complete an oral discourse completion task (ODCT), which required them to listen to pre-recorded apology expressions and respond naturally as if they were in a telephone conversation. The responses collected were analyzed based on a new categorization they devel-

oped, which consisted of 4 main AR strategies (i.e., Accept, Acknowledge, Evade, and Reject) and several extended strategies. The results showed that regardless of gender or situational variables, Acceptance was shown to be the AR strategy most commonly used by both the AE and BI speakers, with a relatively small difference between the two groups. However, the other strategies the participants displayed dissimilar patterns. For instance, Evade was found to be the second most preferred AR strategy for AE speakers, whereas Acknowledge[3] and Reject were more frequently used by BI speakers. In addition, there was no marked gender difference found in AR strategy use either within or between groups.

Lin (2012) examined ARs in two different languages, namely Chinese and English, and compared verbal and nonverbal responses to apologies employed by L2 learners. A total of 60 Taiwanese EFL learners and 30 Americans were asked to complete a written discourse completion task (WDCT), which required them to evaluate the acceptability of each apology on a scale ranging from 1 (low possibility) to 4 (high possibility) and to provide their reply (i.e., responses to the apology). It was found that Acceptance was generally favored by both the Taiwanese EFL learners and Americans, with the Taiwanese EFL learners displaying a more frequent use of such a strategy regardless of the type of offense. Though Americans also favored Acceptance as their AR strategy, they used strategies such as Acceptance, Evade, and Other differently with regard to offense situations. The effect of offense and apology strategies on the level of acceptance was not clear.

Wu & Wang (2016) investigated responses to apologies from a cross-cultural perspective, comparing ARs employed by Chinese EFL learners and native speakers of Chinese and English. Three groups of participants were recruited to work in pairs and initiate an oral dialogue according to given apology situations. The three groups English native speakers (ENS), Chinese native speakers (CNS), and Chinese EFL learners (EFL), each of which consisted of 32 participants. The ENSs and EFLs role played in English, while the CNSs did so in Chinese. The results showed that all three groups displayed a similar pattern of AR strategies, that is, Indirect Acceptance was the most favored AR strategy, whereas Direct Refusal was the least favored. Specifically, indirect strategies (IA and IR) were used more frequently than direct strategies (DA and DR) by all three groups. In addition, the three groups responded to apologies differently with respect to three factors. For example, social power influenced the AR strategy of the ENSs and CNSs, but not that of Chinese EFL learners. When facing apologizers with lower social power, both the ENSs and CNSs used IA less frequently and IR more often, while the

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3. An example of Acknowledge used by BI speakers is as follows:

(i) You should have called me. (Indonesian: *Seharusnya kamu nelpon*)

(Adrefiza and Jones 2013: 78)

Chinese EFL learners used IA much more frequently than the other strategies. Regarding social distance, the Chinese EFL learners' pattern of ARs was similar to that of the CNSs, whereas the ENSs displayed a different pattern. Finally, it was found that severity of offense affected the AR strategies used by all three groups, resulting in different patterns. The Chinese EFL learners preferred to use DA when the offense was not severe, while they tended to use IA when the offense were severe.

Waluyo (2017) examined apology response strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners in an L2 setting. A descriptive qualitative method was adopted to categorize the participants' AR strategies and describe factors that influenced their strategy choices. A total of 20 English majors were recruited to complete an oral discourse completion task (ODCT), consisting of 8 apology situations, and to participate in a follow-up interview. It was found that Acceptance was the most predominant AR strategy used by the Indonesian EFL learners, while Acknowledgement was least frequently used. These findings were somewhat consistent with those of Adrefiza & Jones (2013), in which Acceptance was also the most favored AR strategy by both the Australian English (AE) and Bahasa Indonesia (BI) native speakers. In addition, four factors affecting the participants' realization of AR strategies were discussed, namely power (i.e., social power), relation (i.e., social distance), degree of mistake (i.e., severity of offense), and the setting of situation. The results showed that the participants took social power into consideration when responding to apologies. They tended to accept apologies and respond to them politely when they considered themselves as having lower status. It was also found that Acceptance was favored when the relation between the apologizer and apology receiver was close, indicating that socail distance affects AR strategies. The degree of mistake also influenced the participants. Finally, when the apology situation occured in public, the participants also tended to accept the apology.

Though the above studies were conducted to investigate the speech act of apology responses (Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Kitao & Kitao 2014, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017, Saleem & Anjum 2018), many were conducted in languages other than Chinese, such as Australian English and Bahasa Indonesia (Adrefiza & Jones 2013), American English (Kitao & Kitao 2014), Indonesian English (Waluyo 2017), and British English and Pakistani Urdu (Saleem & Anjum 2018). In other words, the Chinese database regarding ARs remains limited. For a better understanding of the speech act of ARs across different languages and cultures, more studies of ARs are needed. Furthermore, most AR studies have been conducted in L1 settings (Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Kitao & Kitao 2014, Saleem & Anjum 2018) rather than L2. Though Wu & Wang (2016) investigated ARs in both Chinese and English, they focused mainly on a cross-cultural perspective. That is, the issue

of language transfer was not precisely examined. Regarding the most favored AR strategy, a universal tendency was found: Acceptance was the predominant form of AR across languages and cultures, in both L1 and L2 contexts (Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017). However, the least favored AR strategy differed across different languages and cultural backgrounds. These studies shared a common limitation in that only single strategies of ARs were analyzed, i.e., the language-specific patterns of ARs were not thoroughly examined. Besides, the resarchers mainly focused on single strategies of ARs, which, however, cannot fully present how an apology receiver gets out of his/her dilemma (i.e., to accept or to reject the apology). If he/she chooses to accept the apology, the offending force of the predicated act might be downplayed. However, he/she directly rejects the apologizer, the face of the apology might be threatened. It is likely that the apology receiver uses multiple strategies as a middle ground solution in order to maintain the face of both parties.[4] Therefore, the present study analyzes apology responses using both single and multiple strategies.

3.   Types of apology responses in Chinese and English

Speakers in a conversation are normally expected to be cooperative and attempt to make their contributions as required (i.e., cooperative principle, Grice 1975). For this reason, after the wrongdoer offers an apology, a response from the victim is generally expected. Responses to apologies, apology responses for short, function as an indication of whether or not the victim feels satisfied with the apology (Holmes 1995). With this indication, the offender can perceive how the victim interprets the offense, evaluates the apology, and considers whether more effort should be made to pacify the victim. Ideally, conflict between the two parties is resolved through the realization of apologies and apology responses. In other words, ARs play an essential role in maintaining social harmony and restoring social order and human relationships (Holmes 1989, Kitao & Kitao 2014).

Most psychology studies divide ARs into two broad categories, those accepted and those rejected, focusing on the effect of apologies on the victims in different conditions with certain variables controlled (Bennett & Earwaker 1994, Ohbuchi, Atsumi & Takaku 2008). However, from a linguistic point of view, ARs are not restricted to those two broad categories and can be realized through various strategies. In fact, several AR strategies have been identified by previous studies, and different AR classifications have been proposed (Owen 1983, Holmes 1989;

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4. The authors would like to thank the reviewer for helping us clarify the rationale for examining multiple strategies in the present study.

1995, Robinson 2004, Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Kitao & Kitao 2014, Wu & Wang 2016). In order to examine ARs in Chinese and English cross-linguistically, a revised classification is proposed below.

Type 1. Direct acceptance[5]

Direct Acceptance is a typical type of preferred response which directly absolves the offender, preserving the offender's face and conducing to the restoration of social harmony (Owen 1983, Holmes 1989; 1995). Adrefiza and Jones (2013) argued that it is a type of "easy response" for the victim (p. 95). Originally, this type was identified in Owen (1983), where expressions like *that's/it's OK* and *that's/it's all right* function as acceptances, as in 0.

(2) **M:** …Sorry about that. It's a nuisance.

   H: Oh, **that's OK.**   (Owen 1983: 98)

Similar expressions were also identified in Robinson (2004), in which *that's alright* and *that's okay* were reported to be the two most common ARs in naturally occurring English. As Robinson (2004) explained, these expressions consist of two terms, an "indexical term" (i.e., *that's*) and an "evaluative term" (i.e., *alright, okay*) (p. 302). Robinson (2004) argued that the term *that's* refers to the possible offense instead of the apology per se, and the term *alright/okay* represents a positive response. In other words, responses of this kind "acknowledge the commission of a possible offense" and "claim that no offense was actually taken" (p. 303). The present study follows Robinson's (2004) view in that Direct Acceptance simultaneously implies offensiveness and reveals forgiveness.

   With regard to the ARs in Chinese, *meiguanxi* has been a response frequently used to accept apologies directly, as in 0.

(3) **Meiguanxi.**
   it's.OK
   'It's OK.'

Here, though *meiguanxi* is similar to *that's/it's OK* and *that's/it's all right* in function (i.e., absolving the offender directly), their linguistic forms are quite different. It appears that there is no exact corresponding form of *that's/it's OK* and *that's/it's all right* in Chinese. For example, *hao/haoba* 'good' can be used as weaker Acceptance, representing functions similar to those of *OK/okay* in English. In addition,

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5. The term "Direct Acceptance" (rather than "Acceptance") is used to distinguish this type from "Minimization", which is discussed later.

the passive form *apology accepted* is grammatically and semantically accepted in English, while this form is not common in Chinese.

Many studies have demonstrated that a high proportion of ARs generally fall into the category of Acceptance (Holmes 1989; 1995, Robinson 2004, Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017, Saleem & Anjum 2018). Such an inclination can be explained from different perspectives. From a psychiatric perspective, an apology places the victim in a position of "constraint" (Goffman 1955), which arises from the pressure of the need to accept an apology in the victim's mind. As Holmes (1995) explained, Acceptance can be interpreted as a positively polite act that restores social balance and preserves the offender's face. Following Brown & Levison's (1987) assumption, since people generally cooperate to maintain each other's face, the dominance of Acceptance in ARs makes sense.

Type 2. Minimization

Minimization refers to euphemistic responses in which the victim attempts to absolve or minimize the possible offense (Kitao & Kitao 2014). Responses of this type often involve negation forms (e.g., *no, not*), which deny the offensiveness or disagree with the need for the offender to have apologized or shift the blame to others. In Wu & Wang's (2016) view, these are a type of "Indirect Acceptance". An example of this type is shown below.

(4)   **M:** I'm sorry to ring rather early.

   P: No, it's all right. **It's not early**.   (Owen 1983: 100)

As in 0, though negation forms are used, these responses do not function as Rejection. Instead, they are preferred responses that preserve the offender's face. Kitao & Kitao (2014) used the term "minimizing the offense" to include responses of this kind.

(5)   **M:** I'm sorry if I offended you.

   B: No, don't apologize.   (Kitao & Kitao 2014: 7)

As for ARs of this type in Chinese, an example is shown below.

(6)   **Meiyou**, **meiyou**./ **Buhui**, **buhui**.
   NEG   NEG   NEG   NEG
   'No, no.'

As in (6), *buhui, buhui* appears to correspond to *No, no* in English. Both function as Minimization. Chinese speakers also use *meishi, meishi* 'nothing',[6] whose closest translation is "never mind", as a response when they intend to minimize the offense.

Generally speaking, both Direct Acceptance and Minimization are preferred responses since they preserve the offender's face and are conducive to social harmony.

Type 3. Direct rejection[7]

Unlike Acceptance or Minimization, Direct Rejection is a type of dispreferred response, which directly threatens the offenders' face and escalates social conflict (Holmes 1989; 1995). As Holmes (1995) explained, responses of this type are not aimed at achieving balance but instead at preserving the asymmetric results of the apology. One way to reject an apology is by agreeing with the offender's need to have apologized, which highlights the offensiveness. Some typical examples are shown in Robinson (2004), in which the verbal *Yeah* and a non-verbal shrug were considered as dispreferred responses to apologies, as in 0.

(7)   **N:** Sorry I brought it up.

　　H: Yeah…　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Robinson 2004: 314)

As Robinson (2004) argued, these responses "endorse an apology's claim to have caused offense" (p. 319) and imply that offense was indeed taken. In Wu & Wang (2016), these responses were regarded as "Direct Refusal", which was shown to be the least favorable response strategy. In extreme cases, blame, criticisms, or curses can be used as Direct Rejection, which explicitly reveal the victim's dissatisfaction. (8) is a typical example. The sincerity of the apology is questioned, suggesting that the apology offered has not been accepted:

(8)   **L:** I'm so sorry!

　　C: Liar!　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Kitao & Kitao 2014: 11)

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6. As the reviewer pointed out, *meiguanxi* is often heard in Taiwan and *meishi*, in mainland China. They are similar in meaning. In our study, *meiguanxi* is considered close in meaning to "it's OK" and *meishi* is close to "never mind" in English; thus, they were categorized into two different types: the former as Direct Acceptance and the latter as Minimalization. In Wu & Wang (2016), minimization is actually a type of indirect acceptance. Maybe that is why *meiguanxi* and *meshi* to some Chinese native speakers are quite similar in meaning. However, their degree of acceptance varies.

7. The present study uses the term "Direct Rejection" (rather than "Rejection") to distinguish this type from "Focusing on the Offense".

Some ARs of this type in Chinese are shown below.

(9) **Wo bu   jieshou nide daoqian.**
I   NEG accept   your apology
'I don't accept your apology.'

(10) **Wo buneng yuanliang ni.**
I   can't   forgive   you
'I can't forgive you.'

In 0 and 0 the responses in Chinese are similar to those in English regarding both form and function. However, though the passive form *apology not accepted* is acceptable in English, this structure is not convertible to Chinese. Wu & Wang (2016) found that both westerners and easterners take the offender's face into consideration when responding to apologies and avoid the use of refusal (especially Direct Refusal). Adrefiza & Jones (2013) showed that Rejection is noticeably high in ARs of both Australian English and Bahasa Indonesia.

Type 4. Focusing on the offense

The fourth type, Focusing on the Offense, refers to dispreferred responses which emphasize the seriousness of the offense or its consequences. This type was originally identified in Kitao & Kitao (2014), and was shown to be the second most common type of response to apologies in English, as shown in (11). The response not only emphasizes the seriousness of the offense (*a big mistake!*) but also highlights its consequences (*You're making me look really bad here*):

(11) **L:** I'm so sorry! I didn't mean it. I just made a mistake.

P: Yeah, **a big mistake! You're making me look really bad here.** I told Mom you were ready for this.   (Kitao & Kitao 2014: 8)

In Chinese, responses of this type appear similar to those in English, as in 0, which emphasizes the seriousness of the offense. This type is basically convertible to English.

(12) **Zhejian shi   hen yanzhong!**
this   thing very serious
'This is very serious!'

Type 5. Evasion

Evasion refers to e implicit responses in which the victim, intentionally or unintentionally, avoids responding to the apology directly. It could be regarded as a shift of topic in general, as in (13).

(13)   **Forget it**. Let's have fun.   (Saleem & Anjum 2018: 74)[8]

As in (13), the response *forget it* functions as a typical Evasion, which diverts the unpleasant and stressful moment caused by the offense and the apology. When responses of this type are used, they generally show no clear indication of whether the apology has been accepted or rejected. Other examples of this type include "Deflecting" (Adrefiza & Jones 2013), as in (14):

(14)   **We had lovely time anyway.**   (Adrefiza & Jones 2013: 78)

Again, these responses are not directed to the apology per se, which provide an out for the victims. As Holmes (1989) explained, by responding to some other aspect of the apology, the victim can "avoid admitting the loss of face" attributed to the offense (p. 208). This provides the victim with an escape from the current moment.

      With regard to ARs of this type in Chinese, (15) is a typical example. It is used as an evasive response to avoid the continuum of the current offense topic.

(15)   **Bu   shuo le.**
       NEG say   ASP
       'Forget it.'   (Wu & Wang 2016: 67)

Though this expression is very similar to *forget it* in language use, the two are not identical in meaning. In this case, *bu shuo le* is closer to *don't mention it/don't talk about it*, which is not commonly used as an AR in English.

      In short, Chinese and English offer similar and different AR expressions. Among these AR expressions, some are common to both languages and some are culture-specific expressions which appear to function unequally. The sets of common expressions (e.g., *Wo jieshou ni de daoqian/I accept your apology*) are similar in form and function and can be directly translated into the target language (i.e., correspondence). By contrast, there are two kinds of culture-specific expressions. First, some forms/expressions only exist in one language (e.g., *Apology accepted*), resulting in a missing category. Second, there are also cases in which the corre-

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8. Example (13) is an estimated English expression by British speakers corresponding to ب جاو ۔اسے چلو مزہ کرتے ۔ں in Urdu spoken by Pakistanis.

sponding form of a particular AR expression in one language (*forget it* in English→*wangle ba* in Chinese literally) is not commonly used as an AR.

4.   Research design

4.1   Participants

To examine the speech act of ARs in both Chinese and English from a cross-linguistic perspective, the present study recruited a total of 36 L2 learners of Chinese and English as participants. They were divided into two groups: a group of native Chinese speakers (NC) who were learning English as a foreign language (i.e., L2 learners of English) and a group of native English speakers (NE) who were learning Chinese as a second language (i.e., L2 learners of Chinese), with 18 participants in each group.[9]

The native Chinese speakers consisted of 18 Taiwanese college students recruited from National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU). Most of them were freshmen who were taking General English. According to the Common Core Education Committee (Foreign Language Division), all freshmen at NTNU (except for the students who major in English and those with an exemption) are required to take General English I and II, courses aimed at developing students' English proficiency and improving the four skills. For the purpose of improving learning effectiveness, the students who take these courses are assigned to four levels (elementary, intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced) based on their English score. Since the current study required the participants to have a high level of pragmatic knowledge, learners at the intermediate and high-intermediate levels (CEFR B1-C1) were targeted.

The native English speakers consisted of 18 foreigners living in Taiwan, mainly recruited from the Mandarin Training Center (MTC) at NTNU, the largest Chinese learning center in Taiwan, hosting around 1,700 students from more than 70 countries each academic quarter. According to the MTC, their courses are divided into 9 levels, which are compatible with Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). New students at the center are

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9. In a second-language acquisition situation, the target language is used for communication in that country whereas in a foreign-language learning situation, the language is not used in the immediate environment. However, Ringbom (1980) pointed out, "situational variables are not the only type of variables; there are also learner variables…. Oversimplification is inevitable" (p. 42) when there are complex matters involved. Thus, in the present study second language and foreign language are used interchangeably, and EFL learners and CSL learners are considered comparable.

required to take a placement test so that they can be assigned to a class that suits their level. For the purpose of the current study, intermediate and high-intermediate students (CEFR B1-C1) were targeted.

4.2 Methods and materials

With regard to data collection, different techniques have been used to collect ARs by previous studies, such as corpora (Kitao & Kitao 2014), role plays (Wu & Wang 2016), and discourse completion tasks (i.e., DCTs) (Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Waluyo 2017, Saleem & Anjum 2018). In fact, the validity of data gathered through different instruments has long been debated (Turnbull 2001, Yuan 2001). Though spontaneous speech is generally considered to provide the most authentic and reliable data, the difficulty of collecting a particular speech act through such a method is evident. Another deficiency in using authentic data is that the context cannot be controlled. For these reasons, elicitation techniques such as DCTs have gradually become prevalent to collect speech acts data for studies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Waluyo 2017, Saleem & Anjum 2018). Yet, several problems concerning DCTs have been identified in the literature. The main criticism is reliability: the authenticity of the data collected through DCTs has been questioned (Turnbull 2001, Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Vanrell, Feldhausen & Astruc 2018). For instance, it has been suggested that DCTs may fail to capture the fullness of dynamic interactions in speech (Adrefiza & Jones 2013) and generate simplistic data (Turnbull 2001). Similarly, some suggest that DCTs cannot reveal the influence of overall context, and data collected through DCTs may not represent a complete picture of language use in real situations (Vanrell, Feldhausen & Astruc 2018). Nevertheless, a number of scholars regard DCTs as an adequate method and support their continued use (Nurani 2009, Vanrell, Feldhausen & Astruc 2018). This suggests that DCTs are still needed in many cases, and that the strengths of the instrument should not be ignored. DCTs are an appropriate elicitation technique especially for cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatic studies since the tasks can be easily applied to the participants from different language/cultural backgrounds (Nurani 2009), and they are feasible for both monolingual and bilingual speakers (Vanrell, Feldhausen & Astruc 2018).

Since the current study examines ARs from a cross-linguisitc perspective, a DCT is an ideal instrument. Specifically, the current study adopted an oral DCT (ODCT), which is considered to be more reliable than a written one (Yuan 2001). For instance, it has been shown that ODCTs generate more natural speech features (e.g., repetitions, inversions, omissions) and allow participants to take more turns and produce longer responses than with the written format (Yuan

2001). Others suggest that certan common interactional features can be captured through the use of oral DCTs (Holmes 1995).

Recent studies have also revealed that contextual factors, such as social power and severity of offense, may affect speakers' AR behaviors to a certain degree (Bennett & Earwaker 1994, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017). In order to use scenarios to approximate real life experiences, we designed scenarios based on three levels of social power (high, equal, low) and two levels of severity of offense (less severe, more severe).[10] Also, to gather more reliable data and improve the quality of the study, two scenarios were designed for each condition. Thus, a total of 12 scenarios (3×2×2) were employed in the study. To ensure that *the illocutionary force of the AR speech acts* in the two languages were the same, the scenarios were presented in two versions (Chinese and English, please see Appendices I and II, respectively), which were basically identical with only minor modifications in *word usage* rather than global semantic shift. During the ODCT, the pictures relating to the scenarios were shown to the participants, and pre-recorded dialogues were played. An example of the English version of the ODCT is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. An example of the English version of the ODCT[11]

Participants saw:	Participants heard:	Participants saw:	Participants heard:
	Your classmate is supposed to work on a report with you, but he does not show up. You wait for him for almost two hours. Later, you find out that he totally forgot about this and he is sleeping at home.		Your classmate apologizes to you afterwards, and he says, "Sorry I stood you up". What would you say to the classmate?

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10. In order to create comparable scenarios with different degrees of severity, an evaluation task was conducted in which 6 participants (3 native Chinese speakers and 3 native English speakers) were asked to evaluate the offense severity with regard to the given scenarios from a degree of 1 (not severe at all) to 4 (very severe). The results were identical to the original design of the scenarios. Hence, these scenarios were used.

11. The pictures for the ODCT were retrieved from the following websites:

i.   Settings: https://www.freepik.com/

ii. Characters: https://www.freepik.com/

iii. Apologizing icons: https://silhouette-ac.com/tw/silhouette/118452/

Specifically, the ODCT used in the present study was the "open item verbal response" construction, one of the five types of DCT distinguished by Nurani (2009). In other words, the participants were asked to provide verbal responses. After the given apology scenario was described, the participants were asked to imagine what they would say to the apologizer and then respond as naturally as possible. Their responses were audio-recorded and transcribed.

4.3 Procedures

To begin with, before the task began the participants were asked to complete a consent form, and their language backgrounds and their L2 proficiency levels were initially checked to ensure they were suitable candidates for the study. Then, directions for the task (ODCT) were given through a pre-recorded soundtrack. The participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers so that they could respond freely. To ensure that they were able to complete the task, the researchers conducted a training session before the task began.

In order to examine the ARs in both Chinese and English cross-linguisitcally, the participants were asked to complete two versions (Chinese & English) of the task. The L2 version was conducted first and then the L1 version was completed three days later to reduce the potential practice effect. The tasks were performed in quiet places (such as classrooms) so that the participants were able to concentrate and respond clearly without interruption. Each version of the task took approximately 20–25 minutes for each participant, including the directions and training session.

After collecting the data, the participants' responses were analyzed and categorized into a modified classification of types of ARs, which consisted of six main strategies, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The coding system for the present study: Single AR strategies

Types	Chinese examples	English examples
1. Direct Acceptance (DA)	*Meiguanxi.* 'It's OK.'	*OK/Fine.*
2. Minimization (MIN)	*Meishi.* 'Never mind.'	*No big deal.*
3. Direct Rejection (DR)	*Zhe bushi daoqian keyi jiejue de!* 'Sorry doesn't cover this situation!'	*That's not okay.*
4. Focusing on the Offense (FOC)	*Zhe jian shiqing hen yanzhong.* 'This is very serious.'	*I wait for you the whole afternoon yesterday.*
5. Evasion (EVA)	*Xiaci zai shuo.* 'We can discuss this next time.'	*Are you OK?*

Table 2. *(continued)*

Types		Chinese examples	English examples
6. Other (OTH)	Warning	*Wo hui qu tousu ni!* 'I will make a complaint against you!'	*I will tell your parents.*
	Request	*Qing ni qu gen laoban shuoming!* 'Please explain this to the boss!'	*You have to buy me a new one.*
	Suggestion	*Zoulu yao xiaoxin yidian o.* 'Be more careful while walking.'	*Let's reschedule another time.*

Originally, five types of ARs were identified in the literature, including Direct Acceptance (DA), Minimization (MIN), Direct Rejection (DR), Focusing on the Offense (FOC), and Evasion (EVA). However, other responses were found in the pilot study, includings warnings, requests, and suggestions. Since these responses were clearly distinctive, a new category was added, namely Other (OTH). Responses using more than one strategy were classified as multiple strategies, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The coding system for the present study: Multiple AR strategies

Types	Chinese examples	English examples
DA+MIN	*Meiguanxi, shi changjian de shiqing.* 'It's OK. It happens.'	*It's fine. Don't worry about it.*
MIN+MIN	*Meishi, buyong daoqian.* 'Never mind. No need to apologize.'	*No, don't worry about it.*
FOC+OTH	*Zhe shi yidian dou bu haowan, wo xiwang ni buyao zai zuo le.* 'This is not funny at all. I hope that you will not do it again.'	*I was waiting for a few hours. Please let me know next time.*

Two raters were asked to help with the coding process, and a third rater was invited when a disagreement occurred. RStudio was used for statistical computing, and frequency counts of each type of AR strategies were analyzed via *chi*-square to identify their overall distribution. In addition, the influence of two social variables, social power and severity of offense, were examined through a *chi*-square analysis. Finally, in addition to the quantitative approach, the apology responses collected were analyzed qualitatively by focusing on the linguistic patterns and their pragmatic functions.

5.   Results and discussion

5.1   Single strategies of ARs: NCC vs. NEE

The first research question addresses the issue of cross-cultural variations, that is, whether there are cross-cultural differences in AR strategies used by the L1-Chinese L2-English speakers (i.e., native Mandarin-Chinese speakers learning English as an L2, abbreviated as NC) and L1-English L2-Chinese speakers (i.e., native English speakers learning Chinese as an L2, abbreviated as NE). To answer this question, we compared the overall distribution of the AR strategies used by the two groups, as shown in Table 4. Due to the small number of participants, the intermediate and higher-intermediate learners in each group were lumped together for analysis across all the social situations:

Table 4. Single AR strategies: NCC vs. NEE

	NC-L1 Chinese (NCC)		NE-L1 English (NEE)	
Group type	*f*	%	*f*	%
1. DA	139	32.55%	104	20.27%
2. MIN	66	15.46%	154	30.02%
3. DR	9	2.11%	11	2.14%
4. FOC	60	14.05%	94	18.32%
5. EVA	45	10.54%	31	6.04%
6. OTH	108	25.29%	119	23.20%

Note. DA = Direct Acceptance, MIN = Minimization, DR = Direct Rejection, FOC = Focusing on the Offense, EVA = Evasion, OTH = Other

The results of the *chi*-square comparisons showed that the difference between the native Chinese speakers and native English speakers in their use of AR strategies did not reach statistical significance ($X^2(5) = 9.3911$, $p = .09444$). This indicates that the choice of AR strategies by the two groups was somewhat similar. The results showed that both groups of participants used a relatively high proportion of face-preserving strategies (Direct Acceptance & Minimization) to show politeness and maintain social relationships. By contrast, they rarely used the strategy of Direct Rejection so as to avoid further conflicts. This demonstrates the profound influence of politeness on the choice of AR strategies across cultures. As Brown & Levison (1987) suggested, politeness principles play an important role in human interaction, and are universally reflected in language. One of their central arguments regarding the politeness theory was the concept of face, an essential "want"

that everyone desires (p. 62). It has been argued that it is common knowledge that people cooperate to maintain each other's face due to its vulnerability, and speakers in a conversation generally avoid using face-threatening acts (FTAs) to prevent harm and employ certain strategies to show politeness. In view of this, responses to apologies appear to be restricted by politeness because of their close connection with the face of the addressees (i.e., apologizers). According to Fu, Jiang, & Liao (2012), for interactions involving FTAs, speakers of different language communities, whether offenders or victims, often adopt similar strategies to maintain each other's face. This may explain why Acceptance and Minimization, two face preserving responses, were favored by the participants of both groups.

Though the two groups' AR strategies appeared to be similar, qualitative analysis revealed that there were subtle differences in the linguistic performances of certain strategy types in Chinese and English. For instance, the realizations of Minimization were rich in English, with many linguistic variations, as shown below.

(16) a.   No worries.   (NEE, S15, E03)[12]
      b.   No problem.   (NEE, S04, E08)
      c.   It's no big deal.   (NEE, S12, E08)
      d.   Don't worry about it.   (NEE, S03, E04)
      e.   Not a problem at all.   (NEE, S14, E08)

On the other hand, no particular expression of this type was found in Chinese except for *meishi* 'never mind' and *mei shenme* 'no big deal', as in (17).

(17) a.   O **meishi**   la, zhishi dengle bijiao jiu   yidian!
           oh never.mind la just   wait   much longer a.bit
           'Oh, never mind. I just waited a bit longer!'   (NCC, S04, C05)
      b.   Meiguanxi, zhe **mei shenme**.
           it's.OK   this NEG what
           'It's OK, it's no big deal.'   (NCC, S16, C08)

We found that the native Chinese speakers tended to employ the strategy of Minimization in a more precise and strict way in which their responses were often based on the situation. For instance, if the offender apologized for being late, they may have offered a response like *Meiguanxi, wo ye meiyou deng hen jiu* ('It's OK. I didn't wait very long.'). Additionally, if the offender apologized for burping out

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12. The first code in the bracket (NCC, NEE, NCE, NEC) refers to the source of the data; the second code (S01~S18) refers to the number of the participant; the final code (C01~C12, E01~E12) refers to the corresponding scenario in which the response was obtained: "C" represents the Chinese version and "E" the English version.

loud, they may have responded with *Meishi, zhe hen zhengchang* ('Never mind. It's quite natural.').

Moreover, the native Chinese speakers, unlike their native English speakers, tended not to use the strategy of Minimization alone. In fact, none of the 66 tokens of Minimization used by the native Chinese speakers in their L1 were used alone as a complete response. Instead, they were all used in fixed patterns together with other strategies. In other words, the native Chinese speakers preferred to employ this strategy in a more indirect way by frequently combining it with others.

Last, some slangy ARs were used by both groups of participants, as in (18).

(18) a. **Wo shayan!**   Keyi buyao zheyang kai   wanxiao ma?
          I   dumbfounded can NEG   this   make joke   Q
          'Double facepalm! Please don't make such joke!'   (NCC, S01, C06)
      b. **No biggie**, it's just a pen.   (NEE, S17, E03)

These expressions are often used in spoken language, which is generally considered to be less formal. First, *shayan* 'dumbfounded' is a local slang phrase in Chinese, indicating a kind of speechless and unbelievable feeling. In (18), the expression *shayan* is used to show the dissatisfaction caused by the offense. *No biggie* stands for *it's no big deal*, and is used more frequently in American English, showing that the victim did not take offense and was willing to show forgiveness. Since these expressions were used only by native speakers, they represent a unique and nativized use of a language.

In sum, the above findings show that the realizations of ARs are strongly influenced by politeness principles because of their direct correlations with face. Universally speaking, victims take the face of addressees into account and attempt to mitigate conflict by offering face-preserving strategies. Consistent with the findings of previous studies, the current study confirms that the strategy of Acceptance and Minimization plays a dominant role in ARs (Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Kitao & Kitao 2014, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017) and that apologies are rarely rejected across cultures (Bennett & Earwaker 1994). However, different languages display subtle differences in their linguistic performances, showing that some culture-specific variations exist.

5.2   Single strategies of ARs: L1 vs. L2

The second research question addresses the issue of language transfer, that is, whether cross-linguistic influence occurs in AR realizations. To answer this question, we compared the participants' use of AR strategies in their native and target

languages. Table 5 shows the distribution of AR strategies used by the native Chinese speakers in their L1 and L2.

Table 5. Single AR strategies: NCC (L1) vs. NCE (L2)

Group type	NC-L1 Chinese (NCC)		NC-L2 English (NCE)	
	f	%	f	%
1. DA	139	32.55%	109	26.98%
2. MIN	66	15.46%	91	22.52%
3. DR	9	2.11%	12	2.97%
4. FOC	60	14.05%	65	16.09%
5. EVA	45	10.54%	50	12.38%
6. OTH	108	25.29%	77	19.06%

Based on the *chi*-square comparisons, the difference in the use of AR strategies between the two versions (i.e., NCC vs. NCE) was not significant ($X^2(5) = 3.1401$, $p = .6784$), suggesting that the use of AR strategies by the L2 learners of English in the target language was similar to that in their native language.

A similar result was found for the AR strategies used by the native English speakers (Table 6). The difference in their use of the AR strategies between the two versions (i.e., NEE vs. NEC) did not reach statistical significance ($X^2(5) = 2.4041$, $p = .7909$), indicating that the L2 learners of Chinese employed a similar pattern of AR strategies in both their L1 and L2.

Table 6. Single AR strategies: NEE (L1) vs. NEC (L2)

Group type	NE-L1 English (NEE)		NE-L2 Chinese (NEC)	
	f	%	f	%
1. DA	104	20.27%	120	24.05%
2. MIN	154	30.02%	125	25.05%
3. DR	11	2.14%	4	0.80%
4. FOC	94	18.32%	86	17.23%
5. EVA	31	6.04%	50	10.02%
6. OTH	119	23.20%	114	22.85%

The above findings show that the choice of AR strategies by both groups in the target language was similar to that in their native language, indicating that both groups of participants relied on their L1 pragmatic knowledge when using AR

strategies in their second language (i.e., positive influence). Following Selinker's (1972) theory of interlanguage, namely the transitional linguistic system in relation to L2 learners' evolving linguistic patterns, it has long been accepted that non-native speakers' production is substantially influenced by their L1 knowledge (Selinker 1972, Kasper 1992). Many empirical studies have demonstrated that L2 learners rely on their L1 sociocultural norms when making speech act performances in the target language (Shishavan & Sharifian 2013). Cook (2002) suggested that the correlation between languages in a multilingual's mind is a continuous integrated process, and as the learner learns a second language, his L1 and L2 systems may integrate into one system. These findings may explain why our participants, namely L2 learners, who have been exposed to a second/foreign language environment for some time, employed similar AR strategies in both language settings.

In addition to positive influence, the phenomenon of negative influence was also observed by examining the errors in the participants' L2 responses. An example of an L2 error made by a native Chinese speaker is shown below.

(19)   **(Scenario:** The kid apologizes for accidently burping in front of you.)

   A: Sorry.

   R: That's fine. **I don't care about it.**   (NCE, S02, E04)

Firstly, the response in (19) contains an error commonly made by native Chinese speakers. In this scenario, the offender apologizes for accidently burping out loud. The participant offered a response with an initial Acceptance (*That's fine.*) plus the expression *I don't care about it*, which appears somehow bizarre and impolite in such a context. It seems that the participant's initial intention was to say "*I don't mind*" rather than "*I don't care*," though in English the two expressions display very different attitudes and have different connotations. In fact, *I don't care* shows a sense of indifference and attributed negative connotations (e.g., arrogance). By contrast, *I don't mind* reveals mildness and engenders no such negative interpretation. Though the two lexical items, *care* and *mind* are interchangeable in some contexts, the two convey different messages in others. Since both words are commonly translated as *jieyi* 'mind' or *zaiyi* 'mind' in Chinese dictionaries, Chinese EFL learners may have trouble distinguishing between the two words. This constituted an instance of pragmalinguistic failure, which occurs "on any occasion on which H perceives the force of S's utterance as other than S intended s/he should perceive it"[13] (Thomas 1983: 94). This error hence could be offered as an aspect of the inadequacy of pragmatic competence. Most of our results were consistent with

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13. "H" stands for "hearer" and "S" for "speaker".

the findings of previous studies (Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Kitao & Kitao 2014, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017); however, as shown above, the L1-Chinese L2-English participants in the present study were still influenced by social power and generated L2 errors. This differs from Wu & Wang's (2016) result in that social power only influenced the AR strategy of the English native speakers and Chinese native speakers, but not their Chinese EFL learners. This difference might be attribtuted to the incomparable proficiency levels of Wu & Wang's (2016) EFL participants[14] and ours.

Similarly, some errors were also found in the L2 responses given by the native English speakers. For instance, the response in (20) contains an error that is likely to confuse the hearer, especially a native speaker of Chinese.

(20)   (Scenario: The colleague apologizes for hiding your key on purpose.)
    A: Dueibuchi, na   le   nide yaoshih.
        sorry   take ASP your key
        'Sorry for taking your key.'
    R: Aiya! **Ni jihu   rang wo sidiao le!**
        oh   you almost make me die   ASP
        'Oh! You're killing me!'
        Laoban hen shengchi a!
        boss   very angry   a
        'The boss was very angry about this!'   (NEC, S01, C06)

In this scenario, the offender apologizes for taking a key and making the victim look bad in front of the boss. The participant offered a response with *Ni jihu rang wo sidiao le* ('You almost made me die'), which is confusing in this context. Here, it appears that the participant, a native speaker of English, directly translated the idiom *you're killing me* into Chinese, in which there is no exact equivalent. In fact, the expression *you're killing me* can be used to express different meanings in different contexts. For instance, it can be used as an exaggerated way of expressing anger (*Are you serious? You're killing me!*) or saying someone is very funny (*Your jokes are hilarious. You're killing me!*). It may also be used to express frustration (*I don't know what happened. It's killing me!*). However, it appears that there is no identical phrase in Chinese (i.e., absent), and thus it became more challenging for the native English speaker to use this expression.

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14. These EFL participants learned English from schools in China, and they had all passed the TEM-4 (Test for English Majors, Band 4) in college, which is designed to assess L2 learners' listening, reading and writing skills.

In addition, as in (21), the native English speakers often misused the expression *meiwenti* 'no problem' as a response to apologies. This is unnatural in Chinese.

(21)   (Scenario: The kid apologizes for breaking the victim's new phone.)
    A: Duibuqi.
        sorry
        'Sorry.'
    R: **Meiwenti**,   wo zhidao bushi guyide.
        no.problem I   know NEG   intentionally
        'No problem. I know you didn't do it on purpose.'   (NEC, S06, C09)

Though the phrase *no problem* is commonly used as a response to apology in English, the identical form of the expression in Chinese (i.e., *meiwenti* 'no problem') is not used in the same way. That is to say, though Chinese and English share corresponding forms, the two display different functions in language use. In Chinese, *meiwenti* is used more often as an agreement with requests. For instance, if someone asks you to do something (*Ni keyi ba wenjian na gei wo ma?* 'Can you hand me the document?'), *meiwenti* is a definite response that shows agreement. However, the expression is not commonly used as a response to apologies. Instead, native Chinese speakers tended to use *meiguanxi* to show forgiveness. This difference between Chinese and English may lead to certain learner errors and create misunderstandings.

In short, the above findings show that L1 influence played an important role in shaping our participants' AR performances, in which the phenomena of both postive and negative influence were observed. Similar to the findings of Shishavan & Sharifian (2013), the current study showed that our L2 learners might apply their L1 pragmatic knowledge when making speech act strategies in the target language. Additionally, our qualitative analysis revealed that negative influences occurred due to the differences between languages and the interference from L1. This is consistent with the results of previous studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse 2017).

5.3   Multiple AR strategies

The final aim of this study was to analyze the use of multiple AR strategies identified by the current study. After data analysis, a total of 658 instances of combined AR strategies were identified (NCC: 165, NCE: 141, NEE: 177, NEC: 175), including combinations of two strategies (e.g., DA+MIN) and three or more strategies (e.g., DA+MIN+EVA). Of these 658 combined strategies, two-strategy combinations constituted the majority, with 436 instances (NCC: 128, NCE: 107, NEE: 97,

NEC:104). The focus will be on the responses with two strategies combined only. Based on the coding system, 22 different patterns of AR strategies were identified. Table 7 below presents the 5 most frequently used patterns of multiple AR strategies within each group (L1 vs. L2) and across the two groups in L1 and L2.

Table 7. The 5 most frequently used combined AR strategies

Group type	NC-L1 Chinese (NCC)			NC-L2 English (NCE)		
	Pattern	f	%	Pattern	f	%
I	DA+MIN	31	30.10%	DA+MIN	32	40.51%
II	DA+OTH	29	28.16%	DA+OTH	18	22.78%
III	DA+EVA	25	24.27%	DA+EVA	14	17.72%
IV	FOC+OTH	12	11.65%	FOC+OTH	9	11.39%
V	OTH+FOC	6	5.83%	FOC+FOC	6	7.59%
Group type	NE-L1 English (NEE)			NE-L2 Chinese (NEC)		
	Pattern	f	%	Pattern	f	%
I	DA+MIN	21	31.34%	DA+MIN	17	25.76%
II	DA+OTH	15	22.39%	DA+OTH	15	22.73%
III	MIN+MIN	13	19.40%	DA+EVA	14	21.21%
IV	DA+EVA	10	14.93%	FOC+OTH	11	16.67%
V	MIN+OTH	8	11.94%	MIN+MIN	9	13.64%

As shown in Table 7, within each group we can see that DA+MIN, DA+OTH, and DA+EVA were the top three multiple AR strategies used by the Chinese speakers in their L1 and L2. This ranking was also found in the L1 n and L2 for the English speakers, with only a minor difference found in their L1, the percentage of MIN+MIN (19.40%) being higher than that of DA+EVA (14.93%).

Regarding the between-group L1 versions, DA+MIN and DA+OTH were also the ARs mostly frequently employed by the native speakers. With regard to the between-group comparison of the L2 version, DA+MIN, DA+OTH, DA+EVA and FOC+OTH were ranked in an identical order, demonstrating a universal tendency for how L2 learners respond to apologies. One tiny cross-linguistic variation was that the fifth AR multiple strategy for the Chinese learners of English was FOC+FOC, but for the English learners of Chinese it was MIN+MIN. This shows that the English group who favored MIN+MIN in their L1 tended to transfer this multiple AR strategy to their L2. This cross-linguistic transfer from L1 to L2, however, did not apply to the Chinese group. Instead, they were more culturally sensitive to severe situations and tended to focus on offense.

All in all, the results showed that DA+MIN, DA+OTH, and DA+EVA were three multiple AR strategies most commonly used across both language and culture, revealing that both L1-Chinese L2-English speakers and L1-English L2-Chinese speakers tended to combine the strategy of Acceptance with other strategies in order to maintain social harmony. Several examples are given below.

(22)   Direct Acceptance+Minimization (DA+MIN)
     a. Meiguanxi, zhe mei shenme.
        it's.OK   this NEG what
        'It's OK, it's no big deal.'   (NCC, S16, C08)
     b. Meiguanxi, wo ye meiyou deng hen jiu.
        it's.OK   I   ye NEG   wait very long
        'It's OK, I didn't wait very long.'   (NEC, S10, C04)
     c. It's OK. Not a problem at all.   (NEE, S09, E06)
     d. It's OK. I know you didn't do it on purpose.   (NCE, S13, E12)

Firstly, "DA+MIN" was found to be the pattern most frequently employed in the four sets of data (i.e., NCC, NCE, NEE, NEC), indicating that it is widely used across languages and cultures. As shown in (22), these responses not only absolve offenders directly (e.g., *It's OK.*) but also minimize the offense caused (e.g., *I know you didn't do it on purpose.*). This duplicates and maximizes the effect of politeness. As discussed in previous sections, Direct Acceptance and Minimization are face-preserving strategies often employed when the offense was considered to be less serious or when the apology respondents considered themselves to be in a lower social position. In these situations, the apology respondents may consider a single Acceptance or Minimization to be insufficiently polite, and thus combine the two positive strategies.

Another commonly used pattern was "DA+OTH", which consists of different subsidiary acts such as requests, warnings, suggestions, and thanking. Examples are given below.

(23)   Direct Acceptance+Other (DA+OTH): request, warning
     DA+OTH (request)
     a. Meiguanxi, xiaci bu keyi zai zheyang le!
        it's.OK   next Neg can again this   ASP
        'It's OK, just don't do this again next time!'   (NCC, S16, C12)
     b. It's OK. But you have to buy me a new one.   (NCE, S07, E10)
     DA+OTH (warning)
     c. Meiguanxi, danshi wo hui gen ni mama shuo!
        it's.OK   but   I   will to you mother tell
        'It's OK, but I will tell your mother about this!'   (NCC, S10, C09)
     d. It's OK. Next time I'll report you to the boss!   (NEE, S06, E07)

As discussed earlier, when victims consider the offense to be more serious, they may feel reluctant to accept an apology directly and be more likely to employ the strategy of Other (OTH) to ask for further compensation. However, in such cases, a single request (e.g., *You have to buy me a new one.*) or warning (*I'll report you to the boss!*) as a response may be considered as too direct and impolite to the hearer, having the potential to escalate the conflict further. Hence, the combinations of "DA+OTH (request)" and "DA+OTH (warning)" appear to offer a more balanced tactic that not only conveys the speakers' own appeal but also maintains a certain level of politeness. For instance, the responses in (23) imply that the apologizers should offer recompense, such as a promise of forbearance (*The next time I'll report you to the boss!*) or an offer of repair (*you have to buy me a new one.*), in exchange for the negative effects caused by the offense. By combining the strategy of Acceptance with these acts, the apology respondents could fulfill their needs (i.e., further compensation) in a more tactful way.

In addition, it was found that the participants occasionally combined the strategy of Acceptance with other subordinate acts such as suggestion and thanking. Examples are given below.

(24)   Direct Acceptance+Other (DA+OTH): suggestion, thanking
DA+OTH (suggestion)
a.   Meiguanxi, zoulu yao   xiaoxin yidian o.
     it's.OK   walk should careful a.bit   o
     'It's OK, but be more careful while walking.'   (NCC, S07, C01)
b.   It's fine, but I think… maybe you should have a note to remember next
     time.   (NCE, S13, E06)
DA+OTH (thanking)
c.   Meiguanxi, xiexie.
     it's.OK   thanks
     'It's OK, thanks.'   (NCC, S11, C03)
d.   It's okay. Thank you.   (NEE, S06, E08)

As in (24), suggestions are often considered to be a more euphemistic act, which often involves indirect usages such as hedges (*yidian/maybe*). In some cases, the victims may feel the urge to offer gentle suggestions as a response. When the victims consider the offense to be relatively minor or when they consider themselves in a lower position, a suggestion may be considered as a more appropriate response, due to its indirectness. Finally, though not common, there were a few instances in which the participants combined the strategy of Acceptance with thanking. In fact, previous studies have found that thanking is often used as a conversational closing technique (Al-Amoudi 2013). In other words, thanking can be used as a response to end a conversation in a polite way.

The third most commonly used combined pattern was "DA+EVA", as in (25) below. These responses include Acceptance followed by some "evasive lateral comments" (Holmes 1989:207), that is, speech elements that either divert or end the topic of the conversation.

(25)   Direct Acceptance+Evasion (DA+EVA)
     a.   Meiguanxi, xiaci   zai   shuo.
         it's.OK   next.time then talk
         'It's OK, we can talk about it next time.'   (NCC, S18, C05)
     b.   Meiguanxi, laoshi shang yi   tang ke   shang shenme?
         it's.OK   teacher last   one CL   class teach what
         'It's OK, what did you teach in the last period?'   (NCC, S12, C04)
     c.   That's fine. How was your meeting?   (NCE, S03, E05)

Apology respondents may sometimes feel uncomfortable with continuing the conversation with the apologizers (especially those in a higher position) or consider the offense to be relatively minor and feel no need to continue discussing the topic. In such cases, victims may adopt the strategy of Evasion. As in (25), these responses often contain speech elements which refer back to a past event (e.g., *How was your meeting?*) or forward to an uncertain future (e.g., *xiaci zai shuo* 'talk about it next time'). Though Evasion provides victims an escape from the current restrained situation, it is a more implicit strategy, which shows no clear indication of the speakers' intention. In fact, a simple evasive response to an apology (e.g., *xiaci zai shuo*) may be irrelevant and ambiguous (which violates Grice's (1975) Maxims of Relation and Manner) and could generate negative interpretations. Hence, by combining the strategy of Acceptance and Evasion, victims cannot only divert or end the topic of the conversation but also avoid generating strong negative interpretations.

In sum, we have discussed the pragmatic functions as well as the social contexts in which the three patterns ("DA+MIN", "DA+OTH", & "DA+EVA") were often used. The patterns contain an initial Acceptance, which conveys friendliness and modesty. Thus, positive politeness is shown. The above analysis revealed that these combinations with an Acceptance initial played an active role strengthening politeness and balancing possible impoliteness. In fact, numerous studies have demonstrated the dominant role of Acceptance in ARs due to its harmony restoring nature (Holmes 1989; 1995, Robinson 2004, Adrefiza & Jones 2013, Wu & Wang 2016, Waluyo 2017, Saleem & Anjum 2018). This may explain why speakers across languages and cultures tend to combine the strategy of Acceptance with other strategies.

In addition to the above patterns, our results showed that both groups of participants occasionally combined the strategy of Focusing on the Offense (FOC)

with some particular acts, forming combinations like "FOC+OTH" and "OTH+FOC". As discussed, these two types were often used in more severe conditions. By combining the strategy of FOC with speech acts such as requests and warnings, the apology respondents could further emphasize the seriousness of the offense and highlight their need for further compensation. By contrast, when the offense was considered to be less severe, the participants often adopted the combination of "MIN+MIN" so as to intensify the modesty effect. Interestingly, such combinations appeared to be more commonly used by native English speakers than native Chinese speakers.

Finally, though there were few instances, several unique AR patterns were identified, such as the combination of "DA+FOC" and "MIN+FOC", as in (26) below.

(26)   Direct Acceptance/Minimization+Focising on the Offense (DA/MIN+FOC)
   a.   O meishi   la,
        oh never.mind la
        'Oh, never mind.'
        zhishi deng le   bijiao jiu   yidian!
        just   wait ASP much longer a.bit
        'I just waited a bit longer!'   (NCC, S04, C05)
   b.   Okay. But it's really rude.   (NCE, S07, E12)

Though Direct Acceptance/Minimization and Focusing on the Offense appear to be opposing types, in which the former preserves the offenders' face while the latter threatens it, combinations of the two were used in particular contexts. As in (26), interestingly, responses consisting of such combinations reveal forgiveness and imply offensiveness simultaneously.

6.   Conclusion

The present study investigated the use of apology response strategies by L1-Chinese L2-English learners and L1-English L2-Chinese learners from a cross-linguistic perspective. The results showed that the native Chinese speakers and native English speakers showed no significant difference in their choice of AR strategies: both groups favored Acceptance and Minimization, two face-preserving strategies, to show politeness, and rarely used Rejection so as to avoid further conflict. Nevertheless, subtle differences in linguistic performances of certain strategy types in the two languages (i.e., Chinese and English) were found. That is to say, both universal and language-specific features were used in the AR realizations.

In addition, cross-linguistic influence was found to affect our participants' AR performances and both positive and negative influence occurred: the choice of AR strategies in the target language by both groups was similar to that in their native language, indicating that our participants successfully applied their L1 pragmatic knowledge to the L2. Error analysis of the participants' L2 responses revealed that the L2 errors often resulted from the differences between the two languages (Chinese and English) and interference from their mother tongue.

Finally, for different patterns of multiple AR strategies, we found that "DA+MIN", "DA+OTH", and "DA+EVA" were the three most commonly used combined patterns across languages and cultures, indicating that both westerners and easterners tended to combine the strategy of Acceptance with other strategies so as to maintain social relationships. These findings highlight the profound influence of politeness principles on AR realizations.

In light of this, it is suggested that L2 teachers should provide learners with more opportunities to experience the differences between their native language and the target language with teaching materials such as videos. Then, instructors may highlight variations in the target language in class and let learners practice using the unique expressions in different social situations (e.g., role play). In doing so, L2 leaners can learn to distinguish the differences between the two languages and acquire the languages used in context.

The present study also found that certain slang expressions were only used by native speakers. These expressions represent a more unique and nativized use of a language, worth introducing to advanced learners. Hence, instructors are recommended to include more authentic materials with real-life language use to enable learners to acquire more native-like usages. Our results also showed that AR strategies were often realized through multiple patterns, which may serve different pragmatic functions in different contexts. In view of this, it is suggested that instructors introduce responses to a particular speech act in fixed patterns with a focus on their pragmatic usage. This would enable L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge to grow. In short, as Lightbown & Spada (2013) suggest, knowing more about the learner language helps teachers to assess their teaching procedures. The above pedagogical implications may be beneficial for second language instructors and researchers in the field.

The present study may contribute some insight into the speech act of making apology responses in Chinese and English; however, there remain some limitations. One is that for the sake of sampling convenience, we recruited both intermediate and high-intermediate participants in each group. Since L2 proficiency might be a variable affecting cross-linguistic performance on apology responses, further research might recruit L2 learners at a homogeneous level of L2 proficiency to avoid confounding this variable's effect.

Another limitation is that cross-linguistic influence is often explored in terms of transfer patterns. In a quantitative sense, forward positive transfer (from L1 to L2), operationally defined by Selinker (1969), occurred when there were no statistically significant differences in the percentile of the adopted strategy between L1 and L2 native controls, and between L2 learners' L2 strategy use and that of L2 native controls. Conversely, negative transfer occurred when there were statistically significant differences in the percentile of the adopted strategy between L1 and L2 native controls, and between L2 learners' L2 strategy use and that of L2 native controls. Therefore, it is desirable that other possible types of cross-linguistic influence in other samples be examined in future studies.

Finally, as pointed out by the reviewer, it would be better to examine the effect of social power by comparing the strategies within the group (L1 vs. L2) or across the groups in L1 or L2 between the situations involving the apologizer and victim with higher status versus lower status. However, due to the scope of the study, the effect of each distinctive social variable was not fully examined via statistical analysis across contrasting social situations. Instead, we compared an overall distribution of AR strategies rather than a distribution across different social situations. Future research may recruit more participants to verify our findings by conducting a within-group or within-language comparison of the AR strategies to examine the effect of social power.

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Appendix I. Chinese version of the ODCT[15]
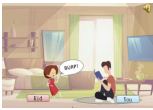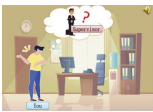
	Participants saw:	Participants heard:	Participants saw:	Participants heard:
C01		下班時間，你準備搭搭捷運回家。月台上有一灘水，有個小孩不小心踩到，差點滑倒，撞到了你。		小孩後來向你道歉，他說：「對不起」。請問你會跟小孩說什麼?
C02		你的第一節課是體育課。上課過程中，老師在全班面前取笑你的身材，還以你的穿著開玩笑!同學們因此笑成了一片。		老師後來向你道歉，他說：「對不起，開你玩笑」。請問你會跟老師說什麼?
C03		第二節課，你同學向你借講義，說下課還你。下課後，她拿著講義，匆匆忙忙追了上來。原來她剛才差點忘了要把講義還你了。		同學向你道歉，她說：「對不起，差點忘記還你了」。請問你會跟同學說什麼?
C04		中午你跟老師約好，想問他問題。你準時到辦公室，發現老師不在。你等了一會兒，老師匆忙趕來。原來他是因為上課延誤了。		老師跟你道歉，說：「對不起，讓你等我」。請問你會跟老師說什麼?
C05		你在補習班打工，接到主任的電話，請你去一趟補習班，有事情想與你討論。你到了補習班，等了整個下午，都沒看到主任。原來他忘了這件事，先回家了。		隔天主任向你道歉，他說：「對不起，昨天忘記和你討論了」。請問你會跟主任說什麼?
C06		你保管的鑰匙不見了。你找了好久都找不到，你向老闆報告。老闆聽了很生氣，把你趕出辦公室!後來你發現是你的同事故意把鑰匙藏起來，想要捉弄你。		同事後來向你道歉，他說：「對不起，拿了你的鑰匙」。請問你會跟同事說什麼?

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15. The pictures were respectively retrieved from the following websites:

i.   Settings: https://www.freepik.com/

ii.   Characters: https://www.freepik.com/

iii. Apologizing icons: https://silhouette-ac.com/tw/silhouette/118452/

	Participants saw:	Participants heard:	Participants saw:	Participants heard:
C07		你跟同學約好了一起討論期末報告，但你在圖書館等了快兩個小時都沒有看到人!打他的電話也不接!後來你才知道他根本忘了這件事，跟朋友出去玩了!		後來同學向你道歉，他說：「對不起，忘記跟你有約了」。請問你會跟同學說什麼?
C08		除了補習班的工作，你平常也接家教，教小朋友英文。今天上課時，小朋友肚子不舒服，不小心在你面前放了屁。		小朋友向你道歉。他說：「對不起」。請問你會跟小朋友說什麼?
C09		晚上你到了另一個家教小朋友的家。今天上課時，小朋友趁你不注意偷玩你的新電腦，後來還把它弄壞了!		小朋友後來向你道歉，他說：「對不起」。請問你會跟小朋友說什麼?
C10		上班時，你和老闆在會議室討論公司的行銷企劃。後來老闆收到通知，說有重要的客戶要來，必須先離開。		老闆為此向你道歉，他說：「對不起，我臨時有事得先走」。請問你會跟老闆說什麼?
C11		後來你回到辦公室時，你發現有個同事坐在你的位子上，與其他人聊天。原來同事聊天聊得太開心了，不小心佔據了你的位子。		同事發現後向你道歉，他說：「對不起，坐到你的位置了」。請問你會跟同事說什麼?
C12		中午你去接家教小朋友放學，你準時到校門口，等了一個多小時，等不到他。天氣很熱，你流了一身汗!原來小朋友故意不跟你說，自己先跑回家玩了!		小朋友後來向你道歉，他說：「對不起」。請問你會跟小朋友說什麼?

Appendix II. English version of the ODCT

	Participants saw:	Participants heard:	Participants saw:	Participants heard:
E01		You're going to school by bus. The driver suddenly slams on the brakes, and all the passengers are shocked. A child bumps into you by accident.		The child apologizes to you immediately, and he says, "Sorry". What would you say to the child?
E02		Your classmate is supposed to work on a report with you, but he does not show up. You wait for him for almost two hours. Later, you find out that he totally forgot about this and he is sleeping at home.		Your classmate apologizes to you afterwards, and he says, "Sorry I stood you up". What would you say to the classmate?
E03		In your second class, one of your classmates borrows a pen from you because she forgot to bring one. After class, she returns the pen though she almost forgot to.		The classmate apologizes to you, and she says, "Sorry, I almost forgot to give it back to you". What would you say to your classmate?
E04		You work as a tutor for kids. Today, the kid you teach finishes eating before class, and she burps in front of you by accident.		The kid apologizes for this, and she says, "Sorry". What would you say to the kid?
E05		You have an appointment with your teacher. You arrive on time, but she is late. After you wait for a while, she shows up in a hurry and says that she was delayed by a meeting.		Your teacher apologizes to you, and says, "Sorry for keeping you waiting". What would you say to your teacher?
E06		Your boss asks you to attend a meeting with him. After you get to the meeting room, no one is there. You wait for the whole afternoon and find your boss forgot about the meeting and is already at home.		Your boss apologizes to you the next day, and he says, "Sorry, I forgot about the meeting yesterday". What would you say to your boss?

	Participants saw:	Participants heard:	Participants saw:	Participants heard:
E07		You can't find a document at work. You have no choice but to tell your boss about it. He is mad and shouts at you. Later, you find that your colleague hid the document on purpose.		Your colleague apologizes to you after that, and he says, "Sorry, I took your document". What would you say to the colleague?
E08		After you return to your office, you find that your colleague is occupying your seat. He doesn't notice that he has taken the wrong seat.		Later, your colleague apologizes for this, and he says, "Sorry for taking your seat". What would you say to your colleague?
E09		You wait for your student for an hour at the school gate in the rain. Later, you find he is playing with his friend. Though he knows you are waiting for him, he thinks it's funny to make you worry.		After your student gets home, he apologizes for this, and says "Sorry". What would you say to your student?
E10		You work at a kid's house. The kid is very naughty and he keeps running and jumping around in the classroom. He even breaks your new phone.		The kid apologizes to you and says "Sorry". What would you say to the kid?
E11		Your boss and you are discussing a business project. After a phone call, he tells you that he has something urgent to do and has to leave early.		Your boss apologizes for this, and says, "Sorry, I've got to leave early". What would you say to your boss?
E12		You are having an English class. In the middle of the class, the professor jokes about your accent and appearance in front of the class. The whole class burst out laughing.		The professor apologizes to you after that and says, "Sorry for making fun of you". What would you say to the professor?

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