

Three Factors Affecting CSL Learners' Strategy Use of Chinese Comforting: Power, Severity, and Situation Type*

Stephanie Hui-Chen YEH Chun-Yin Doris CHEN¹

Department of English
National Taiwan Normal University

Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the perception and production of Chinese comforting strategies by English and Japanese learners of Chinese as a second language (CSL) under the three manipulation factors: power, severity, and situation types. A total of 12 English and 17 Japanese intermediate CSL learners together with 20 Chinese controls were recruited to complete two tasks (i.e., an effectiveness evaluation task and an oral discourse completion task).

The results indicated that the three experimental factors exerted their influence to differing degrees: situation types were found most influential followed by severity and power. In addition, there were indeed discrepancies between the subjects' perception and production of comforting strategies. Moreover, it was found that the intercultural variations played a part during the acquisition process of the comforting act.

Keywords: comforting strategy, second language acquisition, speech act, teaching Chinese as a second language

* This work was financially supported by the "Chinese Language and Technology Center" of National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) within the framework of the Higher Education Sprout Project by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan.

¹ Chun-Yin Doris CHEN is the corresponding author.

1. Introduction

Serving as a universal speech act across languages, comforting is omnipresent in everyday life. It is not only behavior to assuage negative feelings but also a way to maintaining friendships, romances, and work relationships (Burleson 2003). Below is a comforting scenario commonly seen in a partnership.

(1) Speaker A: *Biaoxian de tai cha le, wo jue de hen nanguo.*
perform DE too bad ASP ISG feel very sad
'I really did an awful job. I felt very sad.'

Speaker B: *Meiguanxi, women xiaci hui zuo de geng hao.*
it's okay 1PL next.time will do DE more good
'It's okay. We will do a better job next time.'

Example (1)² shows that the two speakers, Speaker A and Speaker B, are group members. When Speaker B heard that Speaker A was disappointed with his performance, he immediately uttered some promising words. In this case, Speaker B's words did not merely show his concern as a partner but comforted Speaker A by offering a better future. Thus, functioning as emotional support, comforting skills play a crucial role in interpersonal communication competence and the interpersonal relationship (Samter 2003; Burleson 2008).

² As one of the reviewers pointed out, the comforting expression uttered by Speaker B is a response to Speaker A's self-denigration. There are different kinds of comforting expressions toward the first part in an adjacency pair. According to Searle (1969), there are four felicity conditions that illocutions must meet in order to be successful (i.e., felicitous). Following Searle, we may define the illocution *to comfort*, as follows:

- (i) The propositional content condition: The act that the speaker commits him/herself to must be a future action to be performed by the speaker him/herself.
One cannot offer comfort to someone else or comfort someone with something that has already been done.
- (ii) The preparatory condition: This condition concerns those circumstances that are essential for the illocution to lead to the intended perlocution. In the case of comforting, the content of the comfort should not be a matter of course, and the comfort must be advantageous to the addressee.
- (iii) The sincerity condition: The speaker must honestly be willing to provide the promise.
- (iv) The essential condition: This is the condition that separates the illocution in question from other illocutions. In the case of comforting, this means that the speaker takes upon him/herself the responsibility of carrying out the act stated in the content of the comfort. If any of these four conditions is not met, the illocution is infelicitous.

However, the preference for emotional support differs from person to person and even from culture to culture (Burleson 2008). Considerable studies have focused on individual differences of merely either perceiving or employing comforting strategies (e.g., Burleson and Samter 1985), but the discrepancies between people's perception and production of comforting strategies are worth investigation as well. Besides, an individual's perception of the effectiveness of comforting strategies is closely related to his/her preference (Burleson 1994), but it has not been widely explored.

It has been acknowledged in a general sense that people from different countries tend to communicate differently (Nishimura, Nevgi and Tella 2008). In fact, countries belonging to different cultural patterns demonstrate different propensities in interpersonal communication. Previous research has endeavored to propose some cultural taxonomies to explain such differences in Western and Eastern cultures (Hall 1976; Hofstede 1980, 1991). Hall's (1976) high- and low-context cultural patterns emphasize the role of context in communication. He proposes that cultures differ on a continuum that ranges from high to low context. People of high context (HC) cultures including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean prefer to use covert and implicit messages because of their clear distinction of in- and out-groups. On the other hand, Hofstede (1980, 1991) argues that the interaction between the power distance index (PDI) and the individualism index (IDV)³ appears to be negatively correlated to each other: That the higher a culture's PDI is, the lower its IDV score will be. People of high PDI and low IDV cultures prefer a collectivist orientation that centers on strong interpersonal bonds, the pursuit of group profit, and the maintenance of group harmony. At the other extreme, people of low PDI and high IDV cultures view independence, privacy, and self as vital concepts. Eastern cultures, including Japan and Taiwan, are collectivist cultures that believe that the concept of "we" instead of "I" should be the priority and that each person has a rightful place in the social order. Therefore, they are cultures of high PDI and low IDV. Conversely, Western cultures, such as those of the USA and Canada, prefer small power distances; they minimize hierarchies, and emphasize independence of self. They belong to the cultural pattern

³ The individualism index (IDV) refers to the degree to which a culture depends on the self and the group whereas the power distance index (PDI) examines how a culture values the appropriateness and importance of status differences and social hierarchies.

of low PDI and high IDV. Thus, various cultural patterns result in the differences of belief, value, thinking, and even ways of speaking in Eastern and Western cultures. These differences may extend to different tendencies in the perception and employment of comforting strategies.

In addition to cultural differences, social power, which refers to the power relationship between different interlocutors, is the capacity of an individual to influence the behavior of others. It has been found to be an important social factor affecting the strategy use of speech acts (Brown and Levinson 1987). Other factors like severity (i.e., the condition or situation of being severe) and situation type (i.e., various contexts) have proved to affect people's strategy adoption not only in other speech acts (e.g., Lin 2010; Hsu 2016), but also in the speech act of comforting (Burlison 1982, 1984).

Inspired and motivated by the aforementioned niche, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Will experimental variables such as social power, severity, and situation type influence comforting perception and production of the participants from different cultural backgrounds?
2. Will the results show discrepancies between the perception and production of comforting strategies by learners of Chinese as a second language?
3. To what extent do the intercultural variations between English and Japanese learners of Chinese as a second language influence their comforting strategies?

Therefore, the present research investigated factors such as social power, severity of the problem, and types of situations. As a cross-cultural study, we targeted two language groups, Japanese and English, taking learners of Chinese as a second language (CSL) as the representatives from Eastern and Western cultures by examining their perception and production of comforting strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speech Act of Comforting

This section discusses the speech act of comforting from two perspectives:

psychological and linguistic. A psychological perspective introduces what comforting is, and how people define effective comforting strategies, and a linguistic perspective presents linguistic features and a categorization of comforting strategies.

Comforting originally referred to the activity in which counselors and psychotherapists regularly engage. It was then proposed as an approach by the famous psychologist, Rogers (1957, 1975), and his associates (Aspy 1975; Carkhuff and Berenson 1977). The Rogerian approach claims that only if messages can express EMPATHY, RESPECT, and GENUINENESS to recipients can they be regarded as successful comforting strategies. However, it was subjected to criticisms of being too general and vague, and even of being too widely used in therapeutic conditions, and was thus replaced by constructivism. Applegate (1978, 1980), one of the representatives of constructivism, proposed that comforting messages could be evaluated for the extent to which the feeling and perspective of a distressed other are explicitly acknowledged, elaborated on, and granted legitimacy. He then developed a coding system composed of nine hierarchies in which the three major levels are each subcategorized into three sublevels; the higher levels refer to more sophisticated and advanced messages. Because of its concrete features, his constructive coding system gradually replaced the Rogerian approach.

Later on, Burleson (1985, 1994) defined comforting strategies as messages having the goal of alleviating or lessening others' emotionally distressed experiences. The act of comforting is also seen as an activity directed at managing or modifying the physical states or feelings of others, rather than the treatment of physical or material conditions. Example (1) shows that the speaker expresses his/her understanding to the situation (*"I really understood..."*); he/she in turn provides similar experiences of being rejected (*"I haven't been invited to..."*), and he/she finally offers a possible reason (*"maybe Jean really wanted to..."*) to alleviate the disappointment of the distressed others.

In addition, based on the coding system of Applegate, Burleson (1985, 1994) specifically associates it to the concept, PERSON CENTEREDNESS: "In comforting contexts, person centeredness reflects the extent to which messages explicitly acknowledge, elaborate, and contextualize the distressed other's feeling and perspectives (Burleson 2008:209)." Messages are thus categorized into three levels of

person centeredness: low person centeredness (LPC), moderate person centeredness (MPC) and high person centeredness (HPC). Some implications can be inferred (Burleson 1994): Firstly, messages of LPC are more speaker-centered by interpreting the situation mainly from the speaker's own perspective, and advising how others should think or act. Conversely, messages of higher person centeredness are more listener-centered by recognizing the other's feelings. Secondly, MPC or HPC comforting messages are more neutral than LPC messages because they generally describe the feelings and situations. Therefore, among the three levels of comforting strategies, higher person centered strategies are usually preferred because of the greater degree of involvement in the problems, the neutral evaluation, and the cognitive-oriented explanation of the feelings (Burleson 1994).

In short, the psychological perspective of comforting describes its development from the vague definition given by Rogerian researchers to Applegate's concrete coding system (1978, 1980) under constructivism. Finally, Burleson (1985, 1994) links Applegate's nine hierarchies with the concept of person centeredness, defining three major levels. The new comforting framework simplifies the complexity but maintains the specific characteristics, and thus it has been prevailing until now.

Although the psychological framework has been extensively adopted (e.g., Samter, Burleson and Murphy 1989; Xu 2007), the implications that it can provide for pedagogy are still limited. Under this situation, Suzuki (2010) defines the act of comforting from a linguistic perspective, proposing that the speech act of comforting should be a face-enhancing act (FEA). Speakers use the FEA, which is supposed to benefit hearers, to convey sympathy, offer encouragement or support, and give suggestions (Suzuki 2010). In addition, according to Suzuki (2010:84), "Comforting is assumed to belong chiefly to Searle's EXPRESSIVE (Searle 1979), and Leech's CONVIVIAL⁴ (Leech 1983) because of its FEA nature." All in all, a psychological perspective and a linguistic perspective of comforting have been reviewed. The psychological perspective of comforting strategies discusses the necessary features

⁴ According to Searle (1979), EXPRESSIVE is one of the five illocutionary acts which express a speaker's attitude toward a proposition or statement. EXPRESSIVE was later categorized as CONVIVIAL by Leech (1983:104) in accordance to its relationship with the Politeness Principle.

and functions of an effective comforting message from the concept of person centeredness. However, without further analysis of the form and content, it was hard to categorize comforting strategies. Therefore, the present study adopted Suzuki's categorization to form a concrete and unambiguous standard in research design and data coding.

2.2 Previous Empirical Studies of Comforting

Burleson and Mortenson (2003) investigated whether there were indeed cultural differences (American vs. Chinese) in preferred comforting strategies. Their participants, 203 college students from Euro-American and Chinese cultural groups, comprising 59 American males, 39 American females, 44 Chinese males, and 61 Chinese females, were asked to finish four questionnaires by rating items on a 7-point scale. The results of the participants' evaluation of comforting strategies and interactive coping behaviors indicated that although Chinese speakers considered comforting strategies more sensitive than American speakers, Americans viewed comforting strategies of high person centeredness more positively and LPC comforting strategies less positively than Chinese. This finding was consistent with the prediction that Chinese would discriminate less than Americans in evaluating comforting strategies. Moreover, as predicted, the findings showed that Chinese participants viewed escape and dismiss behavior significantly more positively than Americans. However, it was contradictory in that Chinese evaluated the strategy of solace more positively than Americans, which went against the hypothesis that Americans would rate it more positively than Chinese. On the other hand, they found that both value and goal orientation played significant parts in the evaluation of comforting messages, and that interaction goals were indeed a stronger mediating factor affecting the evaluation. Taken together, the results suggest a model that would connect culture, interaction goals, and evaluation of supporting behavior.

Xu (2007) collected 172 valid questionnaires of discourse completion tasks (DCTs) from 180 native speakers of Chinese who were also college students in Guangdong University. The questionnaire of DCTs consisted of 10 situations varying according to relative power within contexts of specific distressed emotions. Adopting the categorization of Burleson (1994), Xu coded comforting strategies into two main

groups: HPC and LPC. To be more specific, three strategies (concern, sympathy, and approval of the distressed emotion) were assigned to HPC, and five strategies (reasoning, problem solving, providing a different perspective, denial, and weakening) fell under the category of LPC. Within the eight strategies, 19 sub-strategies were in turn created for a more careful inspection. The results showed that among the responses elicited from the questionnaires, LPC comforting strategies accounted for a considerably large proportion, 94.78%, showing that Chinese preferred focusing directly on the event or denying the emotion rather than approving negative emotions. In contrast, HPC comforting strategies were only sparsely touched on, indicating the dislike that Chinese have toward encouraging a distressed emotion. Specifically speaking, offering different perspectives, denying the value of negative emotions, and weakening the extent of the distressed emotion were the strategies that the participants most often used to comfort the addressees under the category of LPC. In terms of the influence of social factors, relative power and gender both played crucial roles. HPC strategies were used more frequently when the participants comforted a person of equal status rather than those of higher or lower status. In addition, there were clear differences in employing specific strategies when the participants faced comfortees of different power status. That is, none of the three situations had the same order as the total frequency. Similarly, gender influenced the choice of strategies used. Despite the fact that there was no clear difference in the total number of strategies used, the respective strategy preferences differed a lot from males to females. Men were reported to use denial and weakening more frequently; nonetheless, women tended to use approval of the feeling, different perspectives, and reasoning. As for the realization patterns of the comforting behavior, Chinese were found to usually use a conventional phrase structure made up of negative adverbs + negative emotions, like “*buyao shangshin*” ‘don’t be sad’. In short, social factors like relative power and gender exercised great impact on strategy use. In conclusion, Xu (2007) found Chinese speakers’ preferences were for LPC categories rather than HPC ones, and that relative power and gender could exert their impacts on the employment of comforting strategies.

Burleson (2008) reported three studies concerning how certain psychological and situational factors affect people’s responses to various comforting messages. Study 1

was designed to explore whether, and to what extent, responses to different levels of comforting strategies vary as a function of the value people place on emotional support skills. One hundred and eighty-four participants were recruited to rate the importance of skillful comfort on a 5-point scale, and then to rate the effectiveness and quality of three levels of messages within comforting situations. The results indicate that people placing high value on emotional support skills rated HPC comforting skills more positively and LPC messages less positively than those placing low value on emotional support skills. Study 2 concerned the influence of people's self-concept about the communicative behavior. Collecting the data and analyzing the answers from 387 college students (190 men and 197 women), Burleson found that people with high expressivity considered HPC comforting messages to be the best strategies. In addition, even though people with high instrumentality viewed MPC messages more helpful than those with high expressivity, they still rated HPC strategies as the most helpful strategies. Different from Studies 1 and 2, which focused on personal traits, Study 3 examined how aspects of the communicative situation influence responses to different levels of comforting strategies. In this study, a total of 131 participants were recruited, and two aspects of communicative situations were scrutinized: the severity of problem experienced by message recipients and the gender of the helper. It was found that message person centeredness appeared to be the strongest influencer on message evaluations. Regardless of problem severity and helper's gender, HPC messages were rated as the most effective strategies. To sum up, Burleson (2008) showed that although certain psychological and situational factors had some effect on responses to comforting strategies, their impacts were relatively minor compared to the influence of message person centeredness.

Generally speaking, comforting strategies varying from moderate to high person-centeredness (MPC & HPC strategies) and solace behavior were favored, and comforting strategies of low person centeredness were less favored (Burleson and Mortenson 2003; Burleson 2008), indicating that strategies explicitly acknowledging and recognizing addressees' feelings were more appropriate and preferred. However, this universality did not appear to work for Chinese culture: Burleson and Mortenson (2003) discovered that Chinese have positive evaluations of both solace and avoidant

strategies, and Xu (2007) found that LPC strategies were mostly used among native Chinese speakers. These differences proved that cultural and value orientations influenced the perception and production of comforting strategies. As for other factors affecting the employment or evaluation of comforting strategies, gender differences appeared to be another influential factor for both strategy employment and strategy evaluation in that females evaluated strategies more positively than males, and that they preferred to use different strategies (Xu 2007). Moreover, the higher frequency of using HPC strategies when facing comfortees of higher power indicated that social power was a critical factor (Xu 2007). As for the limitations, these studies simply categorized comforting strategies within a psychological framework under constructivism, suggesting a lack of analysis from a linguistic perspective. In addition, although a written DCT (Xu 2007) is a widely used tool to elicit data, it has often been criticized for lacking authenticity.

3. Research Design

3.1 Participants

A total of 49 participants participated in the present study. They were further divided into two experimental groups and a control group. The experimental groups consisted of 29 intermediate CSL learners recruited from the Mandarin Training Center of National Taiwan Normal University, whose native languages were English and Japanese: 12 English (mean age: 24.2) and 17 Japanese (mean age: 25.8). The control group comprised 20 native Chinese speakers from Taiwan (mean age: 21.4), who were Chinese or applied Chinese major in university.

3.2 Methods and Materials

The present study comprised a production task and a perception task to investigate whether the participants' production corresponded to their perception of comforting strategies. For the production task, a questionnaire in the form of an oral discourse completion task (ODCT) was designed. With regard to the perception task,

an effectiveness evaluation task (EET) with a 4 point-scale⁵ was included in the study.

Previous research has proved social power to profoundly influence the strategy adoption of various speech acts, such as apologizing (Bergman and Kasper 1993), complaining (Chen, Chen and Chang 2011), and even comforting (Xu 2007). Regarding the politeness issue, the participants in these studies were found to employ indirect strategies or polite expressions to avoid face threatening when talking to higher-powered addressees. Besides social power, situation type has been evidenced by previous researchers to impact the strategy perception and adoption of the speech act of comforting (Burlinson 1982). However, these studies merely examined two situations, academic difficulty (i.e., the comfortee did not do well on the test) and social rejection (the comfortee was isolated by his close friends). The issue of health problems, a frequently discussed topic in daily life conversation, has seldom been investigated. Hence, the present study included this topic as one of the situation types. The degree of severity has also been claimed to affect the choice of strategies regarding face-threatening issues in the politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987). The present study thus included this factor to observe its impact on comforting strategy employment.

The present study involving the factors of social power, situation type, and severity designed several combinations of these three variables. Social power was divided into two dimensions, high power [HP] and low power [LP], representing whether the addressee was of high or low power compared to the comforter. Three types of situations—health problems, social rejection, and academic performance—were created for the factoring of situational differences. As with power, the factor of severity was also divided into two dimensions, severe [+S] and not severe [-S]. The 2 X 3 X 2 dimensions resulted in 12 combinations. The structure of the designed scenarios demonstrated not only the allocation of each test item but also the relationship among the three experimental factors—power, situation type, and

⁵ We employed a 4-point scale instead of a 5-point scale because lack of the midpoint can provide more 'solid' responses. The participants either agree or disagree fully/partially and not both. It can also encourage them to think of each statement more carefully to avoid nonsensical choices.

severity. The details and examples of each task are described in the following sections.

3.2.1 Oral Discourse Completion Task

The present study designed a questionnaire in the form of an ODCCT to examine the participants' comforting strategies. An ODCCT has the advantages of providing ease in collecting ideal data and improving naturalness. The participants were asked to pretend to be a comfort-giver facing various scenarios with interlocutors of different social power. The factor of power was divided into two levels, [HP] and [LP]. [HP] indicates that the power of the addressee is higher than that of the comfort-giver, and [LP] is the opposite. Situation types consisted of three different conditions—health problems like illness and cancer, social rejection such as teasing and bullying, and academic performance including test performance and having difficulty with one's courses. Severity comprised two levels, severe [+S] and non-severe [-S], dependent upon the degree of the negative impact that a problem might bring about for people: For example, pertaining to health problems, cancer, which is more likely to be fatal, would be regarded as more severe compared with illnesses like colds or allergies. In terms of social rejection, being bullied and isolated would cause more harm than being teased. For academic performance, failing to do well on a crucial exam like the Joint Entrance Exam (to get into university) would be considered more severe than poor performance on small quizzes.

An example of the designed scenarios in which the participants were asked to perform the act of comforting is shown below:

- (2) *Tongxue han ni zai liaotian. Nimen kandao gebi de*
Classmate and 2SG ZAI chat 2PL see next.door DE
lao nainai zuowan jiancha, cong yiyuan huilai, xinqing kanqilai
old granny finish check-up from hospital come.back emotion look
feichang nanguo.
Very upset
'Your classmate and you were chatting. You noticed that the old granny living
next door to you had just come back from the hospital, and she looked really
upset.'

After hearing the discourse, the participant was asked to pretend to be the comfort-giver. He/she should comfort an addressee of higher social power who is facing a severe health problem. The question was designed to elicit their comforting strategies.

3.2.2 Effectiveness Evaluation Task

Apart from investigating the participants' performances of the comforting behavior, the present study examined their evaluation of the speech act of comforting, and further compared the discrepancies between the results of the ODCCT and the EET, which has often been adopted to investigate the perception of comforting strategies or comforting scenarios regardless of whether participants are children, adolescents, or adults (Burleson 1984, 2008; Burleson and Samter 1985; Burleson and Mortenson 2003). For the EET, the test items remained the same as those in the ODCCT. In addition, based on Burleson's hierarchies of the degree of person-centeredness (1994), and Suzuki's classification (2010), five corresponding comforting messages including 'sympathizing, encouraging, offering support, soothing, and advising' were added to each scenario for which the participants were to rank the effectiveness. Burleson's (1994) hierarchies have merely been classified from the psychological perspective and the discussion of linguistic features has been ignored. Therefore, the present study adopted Suzuki's classification (2010), which has a linguistic perspective. Not only does it classify the strategies according to linguistic components, but it also roughly corresponds to Burleson's person centeredness. In Suzuki's classification, the linguistic features of the strategy of *sympathizing* match the content of the HPC comforting strategies; the strategies of *encouragement*, *offering support*, and *soothing* can be regarded as the MPC ones; the strategy of *advising* is similar to the LPC strategy.

The scenarios with corresponding strategies of the EET are identical to those in the ODCCT. In each scenario, there were five corresponding strategies. Each participant pretending to be the comfort giver was asked to rank the effectiveness of the corresponding strategies on a 4-point scale.

3.3 Procedures

Before the experiment, a consent form was given to each participant. A brief

introduction of the two experimental tasks was presented on the consent forms. In addition to the description of the tasks, the participants were informed that the whole experiment would be recorded and that the data would only be used for the research.

The participants were asked to answer the test items by watching the PowerPoint slides containing audio files played by the experimenter for them individually in a quiet and undisturbed classroom. The 12 scenarios were presented in random order. For each scenario, there was one question for the ODCT, and five questions for the EET (see the appendix). The experimenter first presented the scenario including its setting and the uncompleted discourse to the participants, and the participants were asked to complete the discourse orally without a time limit. To avoid the potential practice effect, we conducted the production task (i.e., ODCT) first, and then the perception task (i.e., the EET) within the scenario. The participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the five corresponding comforting messages on a 4-point scale, each of which was read to them one by one. After the participants completed one scenario, the second scenario was described. It took each participant about 30 minutes to finish the two tasks. The responses from all the participants were audio-recorded during the experiment section. All the recorded data were transcribed and used for the follow-up analysis.

With regard to the scoring policies for the ODCT and the EET, the strategies used in the participants' comforting strategies collected from the ODCT were coded based on the Suzuki's five types of comforting strategies (2010). Since some of Suzuki's categorizations were vague, a modification was made to fit into the analysis of comfort-giving, as illustrated below.

Three Factors Affecting CSL Learners' Strategy Use of Chinese Comforting

Table 1: The Coding System Used in the Study (Based on Suzuki 2010)

Strategy	Function	Feature	Examples in the Study
Soothing [SO]	(1) Minimizing the problem (2) Offering an account	used as a head act or a lead in for the following advice	(1) " <i>Meiguanxi.</i> " 'It's Okay.' (2) " <i>Keneng nimen zhijian you yixie wuhui</i> " 'Maybe there was some Misunderstanding between you.'
Sympathizing [SY]	Representing speaker's understanding	subj. + cognitive verb + fact / object's feeling	" <i>Wo zhidao ni hen nanguo.</i> " 'I know that you felt sad.'
Offering Support [OS]	(1) Offering physical or mental support (2) Providing companionship as a distractor	in a declarative or interrogative mood	(1) " <i>Wo dou zai zheli.</i> " 'I am here for you.' (2) " <i>Women qu chi bingqilin haobuhao?</i> " 'Let's have some ice cream, shall we?'
Encouraging [EN]	Offering hearer a better future	using modals	" <i>Xiaci ni hui kao de geng hao.</i> " 'You will do better next time.'
Advising [AD]	Offering something beneficial for hearer	in an imperative or interrogative mood	(1) " <i>Buyao danxin.</i> " 'Don't worry about it.' (2) " <i>Ni yaobuyao qu kan yisheng?</i> " 'Would you like to go to see a doctor?'

Table 1: The Coding System Used in the Study (Based on Suzuki 2010) (cont.)

Wishing for Betterment [WB]	Expressing a wish that the situation will improve	Mostly used in the context of health	“ <i>Xiawang ni zaori kangfu.</i> ” ‘Wishing you a speedy recovery.’
Enquiring about the situation [ES]	Making confirmation of the situation	Usually in an interrogative mood	“ <i>Zhezhong qingkuang weichi duojiu le?</i> ” ‘How long has this been going on?’

For the strategy coding, there were two raters with a linguistics background. When they failed to reach a consensus, a third rater became involved to achieve interrater reliability. After data coding, the tokens of each type of comforting strategy and each combined strategy pattern were counted⁶. The percentage of the participants’ preferences for each strategy’s use was calculated for further analysis.

As for the EET, the participants were asked to rank the effectiveness of different comforting strategies based on Suzuki’s five-type categorization (2010) on a 4-point scale. A test item was regarded as the most favored strategy if the mean score was four. On the contrary, if the mean score of the test item was one, it was considered the least preferred.

In both the ODCCT and the EET, the participants’ answers were first typed into Excel and the tokens or the mean scores of test items were calculated. Next, the software program, R, together with the assistant software, RStudio for Windows, were adopted as the tools for statistical computation. In terms of the statistical analysis, frequency counts of strategies were run by *Chi-square* for the ODCCT. For the EET, the participants’ ranking of comforting strategies was processed with mean scores by one-way ANOVA to examine the significance to address the influence of different experimental factors. Before conducting one-way ANOVA, we tested whether the data conformed to the two assumptions of ANOVA—in normal distribution and in

⁶ In this paper, we only reported the participants’ single (not combined) strategy use, so the data collected fit the classification stated in Table 1. Since the main purpose of the paper is to investigate the participants’ strategy use, their linguistic errors such as phonological, semantic, or syntactic were not analyzed.

constant variance. Only if the data passed the examination would we conduct the analysis. If the data were not suitable for conducting one-way ANOVA, the Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test would be conducted instead to calculate the mean scores to see if there was a significant difference.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Factors Affecting the Subjects' Perception of Strategy Effectiveness

This section discusses whether the three experimental factors, power, severity, and situation types exert their influence on the perception of strategy effectiveness.

4.1.1 Overall Findings: Power

The manipulation of the experimental factor, power, is found to have impact on certain comforting strategies. Figure 1 shows the subjects' overall and respective mean scores on the effectiveness of each comforting strategy.

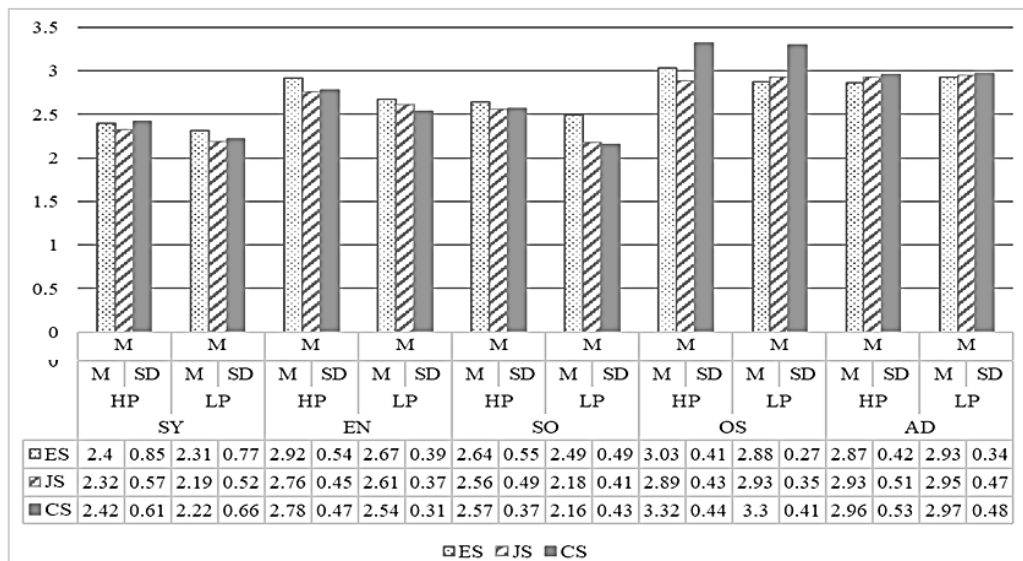


Figure 1: Manipulation of Power: Ratings of the Perception of Strategy Effectiveness

Notes: 1. For strategy abbreviations: SY: the strategy of sympathizing; EN: the strategy of encouraging; SO: the strategy of soothing; OS: the strategy of offering support; AD: the strategy of advising.

2. Group abbreviations: ES: English L1 speakers; JS: Japanese L1 speakers; CS: Chinese L1 speakers

3. The mean score ranges from 1 ~ 4.

The influence of power is shown by the statistics in Figure 1. Our subjects as a whole tended to evaluate strategies under the condition of facing a higher-powered comfortee (the HP condition) as more effective than those under the condition of facing a lower-powered comfortee (the LP condition), except the advising strategy (SY: $2.38 > 2.24$; EN: $2.82 > 2.61$; SO: $2.59 > 2.28$; OS: $3.08 > 3.03$; AD: $2.92 < 2.95$). This tendency was verified by the significances of the strategies of encouraging, ($F(1, 96) = 1.45, p < .05$), and soothing, ($F(1, 96) = 13.51, p < .001$), indicating that power played a role and caused differences in the subjects' perception of strategy effectiveness.

Regarding the mean scores of different language groups, the tendencies were similar to the overall findings: Strategies were often considered more effective under the condition of facing a higher powered comfortees than under the condition of addressing lower powered comfortees. The results of the soothing strategy even yielded significant differences in the Japanese group ($F(1, 32) = 5.99, p < .05$) and Chinese ($F(1, 38) = 10.29, p < .01$). With regard to the between-group differences, the Chinese subjects were found to perceive the strategy of offering support significantly more effective than the other groups under both conditions (HP: $F(2, 26) = 4.89, p < .05$; LP: $X^2(2) = 10.36^7, p < .01$). Under the condition of facing higher powered addressees, the Chinese subjects ($M = 3.32$) scored significantly higher than the Japanese subjects ($M = 2.89$) with $p < .01$. When facing comfortees of lower power, the native Chinese speakers ($M = 3.30$) got an apparently higher score than the native English speakers ($M = 2.88$) and native Japanese speakers ($M = 2.93$), resulting in significant differences (CS-JS: $p < .05$; CS-ES: $p < .01$).

4.1.2 Overall Findings: Severity

Figure 2 shows the mean scores of each language group and the average mean scores of the three groups.

⁷ Some of the data were not suitable for conducting the one-way ANOVA since, even after transformation, the residuals of the data still violated normality and the data were not in constant variance. This goes against the assumptions of ANOVA. Instead, the Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test was conducted to calculate the mean scores to see if there was a significant difference.

Three Factors Affecting CSL Learners' Strategy Use of Chinese Comforting

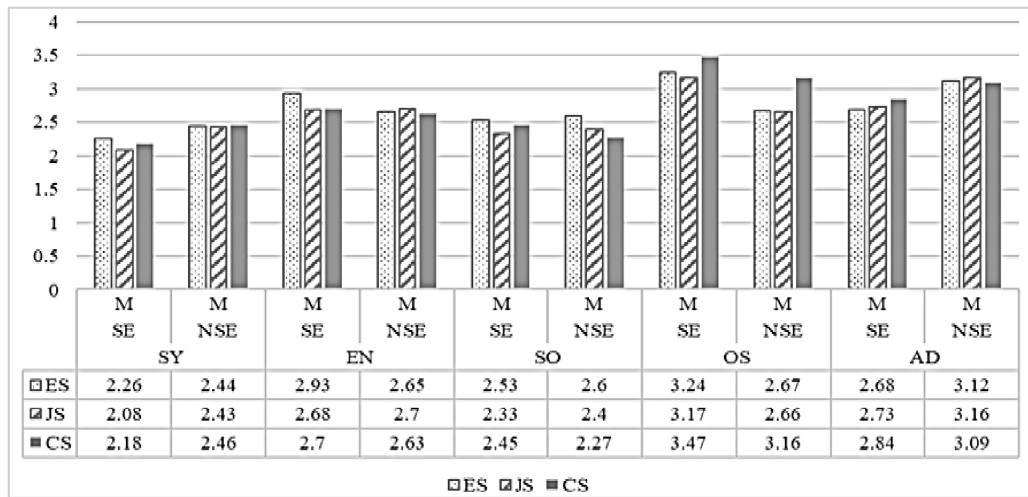


Figure 2: Manipulation of Severity: Ratings of the Perception of Strategy Effectiveness

As indicated in Figure 2, severity influenced the subjects' perception of the effectiveness of strategy use in different ways. The strategies of sympathizing and advising were evaluated as less effective under the severe (SE) condition than under the non-severe (NSE) condition (SY: $2.17 < 2.44$; AD: $2.75 < 3.12$), yielding significant differences (SY: $F(1, 96) = 4.38, p < .05$; AD: $F(1, 96) = 14.3, p < .001$). On the other hand, the subjects considered the strategies of encouraging, soothing, and offering support more effective under the severe condition than under the non-severe condition (EN: $2.77 > 2.66$; SO: $2.44 > 2.42$; OS: $3.29 > 2.83$), and the strategy to offer support was found to show a significant difference (OS: $F(1, 96) = 21.73, p < .001$).

Scrutinizing the results in each language group, we found similar tendencies to the overall findings: All the language groups perceived providing sympathy and advice as less effective under the severe condition than under the non-severe condition. The mean scores of the advising strategy were significantly different under the severe conditions and the non-severe conditions for both the English and Japanese groups (ES: $F(1, 22) = 6.88, p < .05$; JS: $F(1, 32) = 7.16, p < .05$). Most subjects also evaluated the strategies of encouraging, soothing, and offering support more effective under the severe condition than under the non-severe condition, and the strategy of

offering support was found to show significant differences (ES: $F(1, 22) = 12.54, p < .01$; JS: $F(1, 32) = 10.65, p < .01$; CS: $F(1, 38) = 4.97, p < .05$). For the between-group differences, the Chinese controls favored the offering support strategy under the non-severe condition much more than did the other groups, causing a significant difference ($F(2, 46) = 6.56, p < .01$). The significant differences between Chinese and the other two groups ($ps < .01$) demonstrated a difference in the perception of the offering support strategy among the subjects.

4.1.3 Overall Findings: Situation Type

Figure 3 shows the mean scores of each language group and the overall mean scores of the three groups.

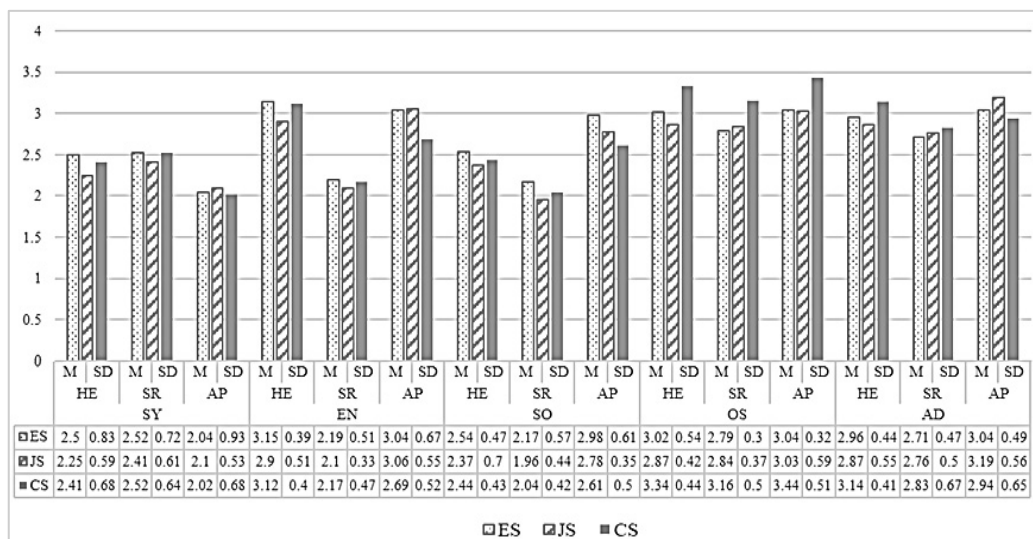


Figure 3: Manipulation of Situation Type: Ratings of the Perception of Strategy Effectiveness

In Figure 3, the effectiveness of different strategies varied from condition to condition. Take the strategies of soothing, offering support, and advising for example. The subjects got the highest mean scores under the academic performance (AP) condition (SO: 2.79; OS: 3.17; AD: 3.06) but the lowest means under the social rejection (SR) condition (SO: 2.06; OS: 2.93; AD: 2.77). These differences among conditions revealed a significance in the strategies of soothing and advising (SO: $F(2, 144) = 25.47, p < .001$; AD: $F(2, 144) = 3.60, p < .05$). For the sympathizing strategy,

it varied differently by getting the highest score under the condition of social rejection ($M = 2.48$), followed by the health (HE) condition ($M = 2.39$), and then the condition of academic performance ($M = 2.05$), causing a significant difference (SY: $F(2, 144) = 3.60, p < .05$). The strategy of encouraging performed in the other way by scoring the highest under the health condition ($M = 3.05$), followed by the condition of academic performance ($M = 2.93$), and then the condition of social rejection ($M = 2.15$), revealing a significant difference (EN: $F(2, 144) = 46.63, p < .001$).

Each language group generally shared a similarity with the overall findings with the strategies of soothing, offering support, and advising by getting the highest scores under the condition of academic performance, followed by the health condition, and then the social rejection condition (SO: ES: $2.98 > 2.54 > 2.17$; JS: $2.78 > 2.37 > 1.96$; CS: $2.61 > 2.44 > 2.04$. OS: ES: $3.04 > 3.02 > 2.79$; JS: $3.03 > 2.87 > 2.84$; CS: $3.44 > 3.34 > 3.16$. AD: ES: $3.04 > 2.96 > 2.71$; JS: $3.19 > 2.87 > 2.76$). The results of the soothing strategy were found to reach a significant difference (ES: $F(2, 33) = 6.50, p < .01$; JS: $F(2, 48) = 10.83, p < .001$; CS: $F(2, 57) = 8.55, p < .001$). For the strategies of sympathizing and encouraging, the perception of each group was also highly identical to the overall tendency whereas the results of the encouraging strategy were significantly different (ES: $F(2, 33) = 11.46, p < .001$; JS: $F(2, 48) = 19.95, p < .001$; CS: $F(2, 57) = 20.52, p < .001$). With regard to the between-group differences, the native Chinese subjects' penchant for the offering support strategy made it significantly different from the other two groups under all of the conditions (HE: $X^2(2) = 8.20, p < .05$; SR: $F(2, 46) = 4.06, p < .05$; AP: $X^2(2) = 7.84, p < .05$). Under the health condition, the Chinese native controls ($M = 3.34$) viewed offering support as more effective than how it was perceived by the Japanese group ($M = 2.87$) with $p < .01$; under the social rejection and academic performance conditions, significant differences were revealed in both the comparisons of Chinese versus Japanese and Chinese versus English ($ps < .05$).

4.1.4 General Discussion

As reported, the three factors were all proved to have influence on the subjects' perception of the effectiveness of each comforting strategy use. To begin with, for the power factor, most strategies were considered more effective under the condition of

facing comfortees of higher power, and significant differences were revealed in the strategy perception of the encouraging and soothing strategies. However, the advising strategy was seen as less effective under the condition of addressing higher-powered comfortees. It could be associated and explained by Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), which states that acts such as advising and suggesting threaten a hearer's negative face by forcing him to do something. In addition, Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that the relative power that the hearer has over the speaker will add to the weightiness of a face-threatening act (FTA). It thus made sense that the subjects evaluated the designed advising strategy especially in an imperative mood as less effective under the condition of facing comfortees of higher power to avoid a FTA. For the significant differences of the encouraging and soothing strategies, it is possible that the encouraging strategy offers a better future and the soothing strategy relieves the hearer's negative feelings without threatening the higher-powered hearers' face.

Secondly, the factor of severity was found to influence the subjects' perception of the effectiveness of each strategy's use to different degrees. The strategies of encouraging, soothing, and offering support were perceived to be more effective under the severe condition than under the non-severe condition with a significant difference found in the strategy of offering support. On the other hand, the subjects saw sympathizing and advising as the more effective strategies in the non-severe condition with a significant difference found in both strategies. One possible reason might be explained by the Optimal Matching Model⁸ (Cutrona 1990; Cutrona and Russel 1990, often abbreviated as OMM). When the problem is severe, comfortees need strategies that can help them by temporarily distracting them from their negative mood or immediately downgrading the degree of severity. For this reason, the strategy of offering support, which directly offers physical and mental involvement or serves as a distractor, could be evaluated as more effective. Similarly, the soothing strategy, which minimizes the problem, and the encouraging strategy,

⁸ The Optimal Matching Model Theory proposes that certain supportive strategies are viewed more positively when they are "better matched" with the needs of support seekers. For example, providing a car driver who has run out of gas directions to a gas station is obviously more effective than offering sympathy (Cutrona 1990; Cutrona and Russell 1990).

which provides the comfortee with a better future, would help tone down the severity. In contrast, the sympathizing strategy, which merely acknowledges the comfortee's distress, and the advising strategy, which is less involved with the comfortee, obtained lower effectiveness scores when used in severe situations.

Thirdly, for the effects of situation types, it was found that the strategies of soothing, encouraging, and advising were significantly more effective under the academic performance (AP) situation than under the situation of social rejection (SR). Such findings accord with the results of Clark, MacGeorge and Robinson (2008), who explained the differences by the OMM theory (Cutrona 1990) and argued that it was easier for the recipients to control the problem of academic difficulty than social rejection with others' advice, which seems to be a demonstrable fact in the present study. Compared with the problem of social rejection, speakers can normally take the initiative to solve academic difficulties by changing their mindset and adopting better learning strategies. As for social rejection, the victim is never in the driver's seat of the situation. Therefore, the strategies of soothing, encouraging, and advising were considered significantly more effective under the condition of academic performance. Conversely, the reason why the sympathizing strategy appeared to be the most effective in the situation of social rejection can be explained in the same way: What a recipient needs most is the recognition and the acknowledgement of the socially lost acceptance and instead to find inclusion (Clark, MacGeorge and Robinson 2008).

Table 2 summarizes the p-values reported in the previous parts and presents the effects of the three factors affecting subjects' perception of strategy effectiveness. From the table, we can see that the factor of situation types had the greatest impact, followed by severity, and then power.

Table 2: Effects of the Factors on Subjects' Perception of Strategy Effectiveness

Factor Group Type	Power				Severity				Situation Types			
	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All
SY								*				*
EN				*					***	***	***	***
SO		*	**	***					**	***	***	***
OS					**	**	*	***				
AD					*	*		***				*

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, is used; *** $p < .001$.

The reason why power has relatively little influence can be attributed to the trend of globalization or Westernization. By adopting Western values and concepts, Eastern cultures nowadays stress equality among human beings instead of rigid social hierarchies, which gradually decreases the impact of the power relationship (Thong 2012). However, when isolated from other factors, the characteristics of situation types make the power factor stand out. Compared with types of situations, the degree of severity was more dependent on individual subjectivity. Thus, it affected the subjects' perception in a moderate way (Holmstrom et al. 2013).

Finally, for the between-group differences, no significant difference was found except for the strategy of offering support, showing that although our L2 subjects had acquired a certain degree of native-like pragmatic competence in perceiving comforting strategy effectiveness, they were, nevertheless, invariably found to take the offering support strategy as being less effective than did the native controls, implying that there is still room for improvement. The strategy of offering support designed in the present study consisted of implicit utterances, which were challenging for the L2 learners. For example, “*Ni manman shuo, women dou zai zheli.*” ‘Take your time to tell us. We are all here with you.’ The message being implicit somehow caused the L2 learners to have difficulty decoding the perlocutionary effects (Leech 1983) of physical and mental supports.

4.2 Factors Affecting Subjects' Production of Strategy Types

This section reports and discusses the influences of the three experimental factors, power, severity, and situation type on the subjects' production of strategy types.

4.2.1 Overall Findings: Power

The effect of power did not exert its influence on the subjects' productive use of strategy types, as shown in Table 3.⁹

Table 3: Manipulation of Power: The Distributions of the Subjects' Strategy Use

Strategy Type		<i>f</i> / %	ES	JS	CS	All
SY	Facing a higher-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	17	17	15	49
		%	7%	7%	5%	7%
	Facing a lower-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	19	15	9	43
		%	8%	6%	3%	5%
EN	Facing a higher-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	22	16	25	63
		%	10%	7%	8%	8%
	Facing a lower-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	37	23	22	82
		%	16%	9%	7%	10%
SO	Facing a higher-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	67	56	96	219
		%	29%	24%	32%	29%
	Facing a lower-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	75	71	110	256
		%	32%	29%	33%	31%
OS	Facing a higher-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	24	27	23	74
		%	10%	12%	8%	10%
	Facing a lower-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	23	32	41	96
		%	10%	13%	12%	12%

⁹ One thing which should be noted is that although Tables 7-9 include the distributions of other strategies, we mainly focused on the former five specific strategies so as to be able to make a comparison with the results of the subjects' perception.

Table 3: Manipulation of Power: The Distributions of the Subjects' Strategy Use(cont.)

AD	Facing a higher-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	76	100	113	289
		%	33%	43%	38%	38%
	Facing a lower-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	75	97	138	310
		%	32%	39%	41%	38%
Others	Facing a higher-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	23	13	24	80
		%	10%	5%	8%	12%
	Facing a lower-powered comfortee	<i>f</i>	8	10	15	43
		%	3%	4%	4%	5%

As indicated in Table 3, regardless of power levels, the overall distributions of the subjects were similar in proportion with the strategies of soothing (as in (3), taken from ES9's Q10) and advising (as in (4), taken from ES-5's Q2) accounting for a large proportion of their comforting strategies (SY: HP: 7%; LP: 5%; EN: HP: 8%; LP: 10% SO: HP: 29%; LP: 31% OS: HP: 10%; LP: 12% AD: HP: 38%; LP: 38%). Below are two replies of the ES group:

- (3) *Wo keyi liaojie ni de qingkuang, tamen zhende hen guofen.*
 1SG can understand 2SG DE situation 3PL really very over
 "I can understand your situation. They were too over."
- (4) *Bie danxin, ni buyong zheme kuai fangqi. Ni xian xiuxi fangsong yixia.*
 don't worry 2SG need.not so quick give.up 2SG first rest relax a.bit
 "Don't worry. You don't have to give up now. Just take a break and relax first."

No significant difference was revealed in the employment of any strategy, indicating that power did not affect the subjects' productive use of types of comforting strategies. When examining the distributions of each language group, we found there was no significant difference either between types or between groups.

4.2.2 Overall Findings: Severity

The results indicate that severity marginally affected the subjects' production, as can be seen in Table 4.

Three Factors Affecting CSL Learners' Strategy Use of Chinese Comforting

Table 4: Manipulation of Severity: The Distributions of the Subjects' Strategy Use

Strategy Type		<i>f</i> / %	ES	JS	CS	All
SY	Severe	<i>f</i>	17	15	6	38
		%	7%	6%	2%	5%
	Non-severe	<i>f</i>	19	18	18	55
		%	9%	8%	6%	7%
EN	Severe	<i>f</i>	33	30	31	94
		%	13%	12%	9%	11%
	Non-severe	<i>f</i>	26	10	16	52
		%	12%	4%	5%	7%
SO	Severe	<i>f</i>	65	53	87	205
		%	27%	21%	26%	25%
	Non-severe	<i>f</i>	77	73	119	269
		%	35%	32%	40%	36%
OS	Severe	<i>f</i>	34	35	46	115
		%	14%	14%	14%	14%
	Non-severe	<i>f</i>	13	24	18	55
		%	6%	11%	6%	7%
AD	Severe	<i>f</i>	84	105	143	332
		%	34%	42%	43%	40%
	Non-severe	<i>f</i>	67	92	108	267
		%	30%	41%	36%	36%
Others	Severe	<i>f</i>	12	15	19	46
		%	5%	6%	6%	6%
	Non-severe	<i>f</i>	20	8	20	48
		%	9%	3%	7%	7%

As shown above, no significant difference was revealed in the employment of any of the five strategies (SY: SE: 5%; NSE: 7%. EN: SE: 11% NSE: 7 %. SO: SE: 25%; NSE: 36%. OS: SE: 14%; NSE: 7%. AD: SE: 40%; NSE: 26%). When

investigating the distributions of severity conditions between language groups, we found that the Japanese subjects were significantly more likely to employ the encouraging strategy under severe conditions than under non-severe conditions (JS: SE: 12%; NSE: 4%, $X^2(1) = 4.00, p < .05$).

- (5) *Ni de bing yiding hui bei zhihao de.*
 2SG DE illness must will be cured DE
 “You will definitely be cured.” (taken from JS-8’s Q11)

Aside from the significance found in the use of the encouraging strategy, no significant difference was discovered in the use of the other strategies. As for the between-group differences, there was no significant difference.

4.2.3 Overall Findings: Situation Type

The manipulation of situation type partially affected the subjects’ productive strategy use; the results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Manipulation of Situation Type: The Distributions of the Subjects’ Strategy Use

Strategy Type		<i>f</i> / %	ES	JS	CS	All
SY	Health	<i>f</i>	13	12	9	34
		%	9%	8%	5%	7%
	Social Rejection	<i>f</i>	13	13	12	38
		%	8%	8%	6%	7%
	Academic Performance	<i>f</i>	10	8	3	21
		%	6%	5%	1%	4%
EN	Health	<i>f</i>	22	18	22	62
		%	15%	11%	11%	12%
	Social Rejection	<i>f</i>	11	7	8	26
		%	7%	4%	4%	5%
	Academic Performance	<i>f</i>	26	15	17	58
		%	16%	10%	8%	11%

Table 5: Manipulation of Situation Type: The Distributions of the Subjects' Strategy Use (cont.)

SO	Health	<i>f</i>	32	31	51	114
		%	22%	19%	26%	23%
	Social Rejection	<i>f</i>	36	26	51	113
		%	22%	16%	24%	21%
	Academic Performance	<i>f</i>	74	69	104	247
		%	47%	45%	46%	46%
OS	Health	<i>f</i>	15	16	13	44
		%	10%	10%	7%	9%
	Social Rejection	<i>f</i>	25	34	30	89
		%	15%	21%	14%	17%
	Academic Performance	<i>f</i>	7	9	21	37
		%	4%	6%	9%	7%
AD	Health	<i>f</i>	48	76	89	213
		%	33%	48%	45%	42%
	Social Rejection	<i>f</i>	64	68	89	221
		%	40%	42%	43%	41%
	Academic Performance	<i>f</i>	39	53	73	165
		%	25%	34%	33%	31%
Others	Health	<i>f</i>	17	7	14	38
		%	12%	5%	7%	7%
	Social Rejection	<i>f</i>	13	15	19	47
		%	7%	9%	9%	9%
	Academic Performance	<i>f</i>	2	1	6	9
		%	1%	1%	3%	2%

For the overall findings, Table 5 shows that the distributions of the soothing strategy differed significantly among the three situations ($X^2(2) = 12.87, p < .01$). The distribution of the soothing strategy in the academic performance situation (SO: 46%) was significantly larger than it was under the health condition (SO: 23%) and the

social rejection condition (SO: 21%) with $ps < .01$. The three groups shared the same tendency as the overall finding of using the soothing strategy significantly more under the condition of academic performance than under the other two conditions (ES: $X^2(2) = 13.74, p < .01$; JS: $X^2(2) = 19.08, p < .001$; CS: $X^2(2) = 9.25, p < .01$). In addition, significant differences were also found in the English and Japanese subjects' distributions between the soothing strategy and the strategy of offering support (ES: $X^2(2) = 6.28, p < .05$; JS: $X^2(2) = 9.78, p < .01$). They employed significantly more offers of support (as in (6) and (7)) under the social rejection condition than under the academic performance condition (ES: $p < .05$; JS: $p < .01$).

- (6) *Ni bu yong jidong. Women ting ni shuo. Women hui bang ni.*
 2SG not need mad 1PL listen 2SG say 1PL will help 2SG
 “Don’t be mad. We will listen to you and give you a hand.”
 (taken from JS-13’s Q2)
- (7) *Meiguanxi, women qu chi bingqilin hao bu hao?*
 okay 1PL go eat ice-cream good not good
 “It’s okay. Let’s have some ice cream, shall we?” (taken from ES-7’s Q10)

Regarding the between-group differences, no significant differences were found.

4.2.4 General Discussion

From the aforementioned results, we can see that the experimental factor of power did not exert its influence on our subjects' employment of strategy types; the factors of severity and situation type affected their production of comforting strategies to differing degrees. Firstly, power did not have an impact on the overall findings or on the results for each language group. The quantitative findings of the present study show that power seemed not to exert its influence on our subjects' production of the strategy types. Although the results are contradictory to the prediction made by theoretical politeness theories (e.g., Brown and Levinson 1987; Gu 1990), they correspond to the findings of previous research (cf. Xu 2007; Chen, Chen and Chang 2011). Chen, Chen and Chang (2011) found that while the quantitative results did not reveal significant differences according to different power relationships, the qualitative analysis indicated differences in the subjects' choices of linguistic form

and word usages. Xu (2007) also pointed out it was not in the use of main strategy categories but in the use of specific sub-strategies that the influence of power was displayed.

Secondly, in the overall findings the influence of severity was found not to reach a significant difference statistically. Nevertheless, the results in the Japanese group indicated that they used significantly more encouragement strategies under the severe condition than the non-severe condition. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980), cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) have low tolerance for ambiguity. It is possible that the high UAI orientation¹⁰ motivated our Japanese subjects to use the encouragement strategy of pointing to a brighter future to lower the uncertainty.

Thirdly, the factor of situation type played a role in influencing the subjects' use of the offering support and soothing strategies. The strategy of offering support was employed in a significantly higher proportion when the comfortees faced social rejection, which was consistent with the results of Clark, MacGeorge and Robinson (2008)¹¹. Since the strategy of offering support in the present study includes the compensatory feature of companionship, it is not surprising that it was preferred under social rejection conditions. As for the significant differences of the soothing strategy, it was more greatly favored in the situation of academic performance than under the other two conditions. This is because it is much easier for comforters to find a reasonable explanation for comfortees' undesirable academic performances compared to problems with health and social rejection. Therefore, the soothing strategy, which not only minimizes the problem but also accounts for the situation, appeared to be the most frequently used strategy under the academic performance condition in the present study.

By summarizing the effects of the three factors in Table 6, we can clearly see

¹⁰ According to Hofstede's research (1980:151), Japanese subjects scored a relatively high UAI compared with Taiwanese and American subjects. The UAI refers to the degree to which individuals of a specific society are comfortable with uncertainty and risk. The higher the UAI is, the lower the degree of tolerance and ease for uncertainty is.

¹¹ Clark, MacGeorge and Robinson (2008) found that the companionship strategy was evaluated more positively in situations of social rejection than in academic performance. To explain the correlation, they adopted the OMM theory and argued that the lost acceptance would be restored by the companionship due to its compensatory feature.

their different degrees of impact on the subjects' production of strategy types.

Table 6: Effects of the Factors on the Subjects' Production of Comforting Strategies

Factor Group Type	Power				Severity				Situation Types			
	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All
SY												
EN						*						
SO									**	***	**	**
OS									*	**		
AD												

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, is used; *** $p < .001$.

As shown in the above table, the factor of situation types has the greatest influence on the production, followed by severity and power, which is identical to the weighting of the scales for these three factors in the perception task: A clear distinction of the situation types makes it significantly easier for the subject to employ comforting strategies. On the other hand, the Westernized understanding of social hierarchy diminishes the impact of power and the resulting subjectiveness lessens the influence of severity.

To our surprise, there were no cross-cultural differences in employing comforting strategies in that all of the subjects greatly employed the soothing and advising strategies in most of the situations. Only a few exceptions were found: In severe and health situations, the advising strategy outnumbered the soothing strategy ($p < .05$) and the soothing strategy significantly outnumbered the other three strategies ($ps < .05$). Additionally, under the social rejection condition, our subjects still used the advising strategy in a much greater proportion of their utterances than the other strategies ($p < .01$), and the strategies of soothing and offering support appeared as the second most frequently used ($ps < .05$), followed by the strategies of sympathizing and encouraging as the least used.

The intercultural universality can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the

universal finding between the L2 learners and the native Chinese controls suggests that the L2 learners have already attained native-like competence in performing comforting behavior. Secondly, it is human nature that makes speakers mainly combine strategies in the production task (cf. Burleson 1982).

However, the question remains as to why the strategies of advising and soothing were especially favored by our subjects. A possible explanation is that people tend to deal with the emotional aspect and try to calm the distressed party down by using the soothing strategy, which aims to explain the reasons and in so doing, to relieve one's hurt, and then offer suggestions or solutions to the problem. Compared with the soothing strategy, the sympathizing strategy simply recognizes one's hurt without providing further relief and the encouraging strategy merely offers promise of a better future but it does not minimize the problem, causing the soothing strategy to stand out (Burleson 2008). On the other hand, compared with the advising strategy, the strategy of offering support is still less preferred although it also offers active support. It might be because the comforter would need to physically and mentally involve himself in the problem by using the offering support strategy, which could make the comforter hesitate. All in all, when comforting others, people have the shared tendency to employ strategies that are not only more effective in minimizing the comfortees' disappointment but also more manageable for both comforters and comfortees.

4.3 Discrepancies under the Influence of Factors between the Subjects' Perception and Production

After presenting the influence of the factors in both tasks, let us now compare and discuss the discrepancies¹² between the subjects' perception and production in this section. To compare the discrepancies, we made three ranking tables of strategies (from Tables 10 to 12) according to the statistics. The ranking tables contain rankings of the results in the perception and production tasks. On the part of perception, the higher the mean score was, the higher the ranking was. As for the production part, the

¹² It is possible that the discrepancies between the perception and production could be attributed to the research design in that it caused the so-called "practice effect". However, when closely examining the raw data, we found that the subjects' strategy choices still varied a lot from situation to situation. In short, the discrepancies between the subjects' perception and production still existed in the findings of the present study.

higher the proportion to which a strategy was employed, the higher the ranking was. Strategies categorized at the same rank indicate that there was no significant difference, and vice versa.

4.3.1 Discrepancies between the Subjects' Perception and Production under the Influence of the Experimental Factors of Power Levels

The ranking of strategies in the perception and production tasks depending on power levels are presented, followed by a comparison of the discrepancies.

Table 7: Rankings of Strategies between Power Levels

	Perception								Production							
	HP				LP				HP				LP			
	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All
SY	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2
EN	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
SO	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
OS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
AD	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Notes: 1. HP & LP are the conditions of addressing comfortees of higher or lower levels than oneself. "E", "J", and "C" are the language groups, English, Japanese, and Chinese; "All" is the overall finding.

2. Numbers 1~3 indicate different rankings of the strategies. Rank 1 is the highest ranking of effectiveness in the perception task and is the strategy with the most frequent use in the production task, followed by ranks 2 and 3.

As shown in Table 7, as for perception, the strategies of offering support, advising, and encouraging were generally viewed to be more effective than the soothing and sympathizing strategies under the condition of facing higher-powered comfortees. Under the condition of facing lower-powered comfortees, the encouraging strategy was considered less effective than the strategies of offering support and advising but more effective than the other two strategies. Regarding the rankings of different language groups, the Chinese subjects always perceived the strategy of offering support as the most effective; however, this was not the case in other groups. As for having a penchant for employing certain strategies, a similarity was shared by all groups of subjects: The distributions of the advising strategy and

the soothing strategy invariably ranked first. These two strategies were greatly favored by all groups of subjects, followed by the strategies of offering support and encouraging, and then the sympathizing strategy (see Table 7).

From the comparison of rankings shown in Table 7, we see that there were indeed discrepancies found between the subjects' perception and production. Although they generally considered the strategies of offering support and encouraging more effective strategies in the perception task, they did not employ these strategies frequently. On the other hand, the soothing strategy was not seen as one of the effective strategies in the perception task; however, it was greatly used in the production task.

4.3.2 Discrepancies between the Subjects' Perception and Production under the Influence of the Experimental Factors of Severity Levels

Rankings of strategies in the perception and production tasks depending on severity levels are presented below, followed by a comparison of the discrepancies.

Table 8: Rankings of Strategies between Severity Levels

	Perception								Production							
	SE				NSE				SE				NSE			
	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All
SY	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
EN	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
SO	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
OS	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
AD	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Note: SE & NSE refer to severe and non-severe conditions, respectively.

As indicated in Table 8, the rankings from one to three in the perception task showed that in severe situations the subjects generally regarded the strategy of offering support as the most effective strategy, followed by the strategies of encouraging and advising, and then the strategies of soothing and sympathizing. Under non-severe conditions, the tendency was a bit different: The advising strategy outranked the other strategies, followed by the offering support strategy, and then the

encouraging, sympathizing and soothing strategies. For the rankings of different language groups, the English subjects viewed the encouraging strategy just as effective as the strategy of offering support under severe conditions whereas the Chinese group (but not the other two groups) always perceived the strategy of offering support as the most effective.

With regard to the preferences for strategy use, most subjects greatly used the advising strategy, followed by the soothing strategy, and then the other three strategies under the severe condition, but the English subjects used the strategies of advising and the soothing in similar distributions to the other three. Under non-severe conditions, the distribution of the strategies of soothing and the advising were similarly high so that together they ranked in the first place, and the other three strategies were used significantly less frequently and therefore ranked in second place.

These results also showed discrepancies between the subjects' perception and production. In comparing the low rankings regardless of severity level in perception, the soothing strategy appeared to be the most frequently used strategy under non-severe conditions, and the second most frequently used strategy under severe conditions. On the other hand, the strategy of offering support was not favored in the production task as it was in the perception task.

4.3.3 Discrepancies between the Subjects' Perception and Production under the Influence of the Experimental Factors of Situation Type

Rankings of strategies in the perception and production tasks depending on situation type are presented below, followed by a comparison of the discrepancies in this section.

Table 9: Rankings of Strategies among Situation Type

	Perception												Production											
	HE				SR				AP				HE				SR				AP			
	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All	E	J	C	All
SY	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
EN	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
SO	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
OS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
AD	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Note: HE refers to the health condition; SR is the social rejection condition; AP indicates the condition of academic performance.

As can be seen in Table 9, the rankings in the perception task indicated that the subjects regardless of group perceived encouraging, offering support, and advising as more effective strategies than the strategies of sympathizing and soothing. This is especially true under the HE (health) condition. Under the AP (academic performance) condition, the encouraging strategy was less effective and therefore ranked in second place alongside the soothing strategy, while the sympathizing strategy ranked third as the least effective strategy. However, there was a different tendency under the social rejection (SR) condition in that the sympathizing strategy outranked the strategies of encouraging and soothing and came in at second place.

When it comes to the preferences for strategy use under the three conditions, the advising strategy invariably ranked as the strategy most frequently used regardless of situation type. The soothing strategy ranked in first place alongside the advising strategy under the academic performance condition, but it ranked in second place under the other two conditions. As for the other strategies, they were used less frequently in the three situations. As for the production of each language group, under the academic performance condition the English subjects used the encouraging strategy most frequently, making it stand out alone in second place.

In comparing the rankings between the perception and the production tasks, we still found several discrepancies. Firstly, the soothing strategy was seen as one of the

least effective strategies in the perception task; however, it was so frequently used that it ascended in rank in the production task. It even ranked in 1st place with over 45% of the production using it under the academic performance condition. Secondly, the encouraging and offering support strategies, which were favored as effective strategies in the perception task, were not so frequently employed in the production task. Thirdly, under the social rejection condition, the sympathizing strategy was considered effective in the perception task whereas it was not so preferred in the production task.

4.3.4 General Discussion about the Discrepancies between the Subjects' Perception and Production under the Influence of Experimental Factors

From the aforementioned findings, several obvious discrepancies stand out regardless of the manipulation of factors in the subjects' perception and production. To begin with, offering support and encouraging strategies were perceived to be the more effective strategies; however, they were not frequently used in the subjects' production. Moreover, the effectiveness of the soothing strategy usually ranked low in the perception task, while it was widely used along with the advising strategy and thus accounted for a rather large proportion of comforting utterances in the production task. These results show that discrepancies between perception and production indeed existed.

Actually, the issue of discrepancies between learners' perception and production has been widely studied in the second language acquisition of phonetics (e.g., Casserly and Pisoni 2010; Boersma and Chladkova 2011). Few studies have centered on the discrepancies between perception and production of speech acts. However, there was still some research demonstrating that a discrepancy between L2 learners' perceptive and productive capabilities in many language fields including speech act behavior (Cohen and Olshtain 2013). Take Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) for example, they found that even though immigrants in Israel clearly knew what was regarded as native-like utterances, they never truly acquired these utterances. Following previous research, the present study proved that although the subjects perceived some comforting strategies as being more effective, they might not use them in their actual speech production, showing that a discrepancy between

perception and production is a demonstrable truth.

Discrepancies between an L2 learner's perception and production are usually attributed to the learner's insufficient competence in the target language. However, in the present study, the subjects, both the native Chinese controls and the CSL learners, showed the same discrepancies. In the production task, they did not use the strategy of offering support which was originally perceived to be the more effective strategy in the perception task. One possible reason is that when people actually produce comforting strategies, they might take something different into consideration than they did in the perception task. That is, compared to the perception task which merely involves evaluation, people would consider whether they were able to afford the additional effort that they would need to make when employing strategies. Although the strategy of offering support by actively providing physical and mental support was considered effective, it was not favored in the production task because the manageability of the offering support strategy might be a problem to a comforter. In short, it is a universally shared human character trait to see the evaluation of the effectiveness of comforting strategies as one thing but to view the actual production of comforting strategies as another thing.

4.4 Intercultural Variation

In this section, we will focus on the cultural issue; that is, we will explore the intercultural variations. Despite the fact that the majority of the evaluations made by the Japanese and English subjects concerning their perceptions of strategy effectiveness were similar, we still found a difference. For example, the results showed that while the English subjects differed, the Japanese subjects together with the Chinese controls viewed the soothing strategy significantly more effective under the condition of facing higher-powered comfortees than under the condition of facing lower-powered comfortees. According to Hofstede (1980, 1991), Eastern cultures such as Japanese and Chinese are those oriented to collectivism, which emphasizes the bonds of in-group members, power distance and social hierarchies, causing them to give respect to anyone of higher power and social status. In contrast, Western cultures like English belonging to individualism, which puts little emphasis on power distance and believes in the equality of all humans. Such differences therefore cause

people's different reactions when facing people of different power levels. It was found that people of Eastern cultures especially favored the soothing strategy because it has a lot to do with comforting people of higher power. Serving the function of either minimizing or accounting for the problem, soothing not only alleviates higher-powered comfortees' distress but also allows them to save face by giving their failure a suitable explanation (Brown and Levinson 1987).

In the production task, some intercultural variations were also discovered between the Japanese and English subjects. The present study found that the number of the English subjects' per capita overall strategy use was obviously higher than that of the Japanese group. According to Hall's (1976) high- and low-context cultural patterns, people of Eastern cultures belonging to the low-context cultural patterns tend to use covert and implicit messages. However, people of Western cultures have the inclination to make messages overtly and explicitly understandable. In other words, Eastern cultures do not always verbally utter message like Western cultures do, leading to the differences of the number of verbal messages. Besides, we found that compared with the English subjects, a significantly higher proportion of the Japanese subjects utterances used the encouraging strategy when the manipulated situations were severe. Such a tendency corresponded to the high UAI orientation of the Japanese in the cultural dimension theory (Hofstede 1980): The low tolerance of future uncertainty makes the Japanese comforters even more sensitive to the severity of the problem and they therefore produced more encouraging strategies promising a brighter future. Moreover, Eastern and Western cultures display different attitudes towards children's academic performances (Kung 2015). Compared to Eastern parents' or teachers' high involvement in academic performance, people of Western cultures—respecting individualism and their children's autonomy—get less involved in it (Chua 2011). Such a claim has been proven by the present study: In a situation wherein a comforter comforted a student facing severe academic difficulty, the English subjects tended to choose not the strategy of offering support but rather the sympathizing and encouraging strategies. In other words, instead of actively getting involved in the problem with the student, they simply expressed their understanding of child's loss and built up the student's confidence.

From the above observations, we still see the influence of cultural backgrounds

on the performance of the comforting speech act. Such influence of the culture of the first language implies that although the CSL learners of intermediate levels recruited in the study have acquired the Chinese comforting strategies to a certain degree, they have not completely acquired native-like pragmatic competence.

5. Conclusions

Our study explored the Chinese speech act of comforting by English and Japanese CSL learners by investigating their perception and production of comforting strategies. Several issues have been addressed. The results show that the three experimental factors exerted differing degrees of impact on the subjects' perception and production of comforting strategies. Generally speaking, there was a similar tendency among all the subjects. The factor of situation type was found to have the greatest impact on the perception and performance of comforting strategies, followed by severity, and power. In addition, there were discrepancies found between the subjects' perception and production of comforting strategies. They evaluated the comforting strategies of advising, offering support, and encouraging as the most effective strategies but used the soothing and advising strategies most frequently. The results indicate that comforters take not only strategy effectiveness but also strategy manageability into consideration when comforting others.

Some pedagogical implications can be made based on the present findings. First of all, of the three experimental factors, the factor of situation types was found to have the greatest impact, causing the subjects to perceive and use comforting strategies differently from one condition to another. The situation-bound tendency implies that appropriate comforting strategies should be introduced in CSL classrooms according to situation type. Moreover, negative transfer from the subjects' first language was partially found in the study. For example, the English subjects tended to directly translate the English sympathizing strategy, 'I'm sorry to hear that' as corresponding to the Chinese "*Buhaoyisi*", which is mostly used by Chinese speakers to express apology. Hence, when teaching CSL learners comforting strategies, Chinese teachers should pay attention to some fixed expressions that the learners are likely to misuse in context.

This study is subject to the following limitations which can also be directions

for future research. To begin with, due to the time limit, we only recruited a small number of intermediate subjects, which might not be enough to represent the overall tendency of comforting strategy use. A bigger pool of subjects at different proficiency levels from other cultural backgrounds could be recruited to see whether cross-cultural variations still exist. Secondly, the perception task conducted in the present study was just one of the many measures. Future researchers may examine the effectiveness of comforting strategies by forming a group of native speakers to evaluate whether the speakers' comforting messages are effective or not. Lastly, the current study of the influence of intercultural variation was simply conducted in a monolingual Chinese version, which might be too indirect to observe the influence of intercultural variations. Future research might investigate the issue by designing an experiment with two sessions: one in the subjects' first languages and the other in their target language, Chinese, to make a direct comparison.

References

- Applegate, James L. 1978. *Four Investigation of the Relationship between Social Cognitive and Person-centeredness Regulative and Interpersonal Communication*. Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Ph.D. dissertation.
- Applegate, James L. 1980. Adaptive communication in educational contexts. *Communication Education* 29: 158-170.
- Aspy, David N. 1975. Empathy: Let's get the hell on with it. *Counseling Psychologist* 5: 10-14.
- Bergman, Marc L., and Gabriele Kasper. 1993. Perception and performance in native and nonnative apology. *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, ed. by Gabriele Kasper and Shoshana Blum-Kulka, 82-107. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, and Elite Olshtain. 1984. Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics* 5: 196-213.
- Boersma, Paul, and Kateřina Chládková. 2011. Asymmetries between speech perception and production reveal phonological structure. *ICPhS XVII-Proceedings*, 17-21. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.
- Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in*

Language Usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Burleson, Brant R. 1982. The development of comforting communication skills in childhood and adolescence. *Child Development* 53: 1578-1588.
- Burleson, Brant R. 1984. Age, social-cognitive development, and the use of comforting strategies. *Communication Monographs* 51: 140-153.
- Burleson, Brant R. 1985. The production of comforting strategies: Social-cognitive foundations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 4: 253-273
- Burleson, Brant R. 1994. Comforting messages: Features, functions, and outcomes. *Strategic Interpersonal Communication*, eds. by John A. Daly and John M. Wiemann, 135-161. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Burleson, Brant R. 2003. The experience and effects of emotional support: What the study of cultural and gender differences can tell us about close relationships, emotion, and interpersonal communication. *Personal Relationships* 10: 1-23.
- Burleson, Brant R. 2008. What counts as effective emotional support — Explorations of individual and situational differences. *Studies in Applied Interpersonal Communication*, ed. by Michael T. Motley, 207-227. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Burleson, Brant R., and Steven R. Mortenson. 2003. Explaining cultural differences in evaluations of emotional support behaviors: Exploring the mediating influences of value systems and interaction goals. *Communication Research* 30.2: 113-146.
- Burleson, Brant R., and Wendy Samter. 1985. Consistencies in theoretical and naïve evaluations of comforting messages. *Communication Monographs* 52: 103-123.
- Carkhuff, Robert R., and Bernard Berenson. 1977. *Beyond Counseling and Therapy* (2nd edition). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Casserly, Elizabeth D., and David B. Pisoni. 2010. Speech perception and production. *Cognitive Science* 1.5: 629-647.
- Chen, Yuanshan, Chunyin Chen, and Miaohsia Chang. 2011. American and Chinese complaints: Strategy use from a cross-cultural perspective. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 8.2: 253-275.
- Chua, Amy. 2011. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mom*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Clark, Ruth A., Erina L. MacGeorge, and Lakesha Robinson. 2008. Evaluation of

- peer comforting strategies by children and adolescents. *Human Communication Research* 34: 319-345.
- Cohen, Andrew D., and Elite Olshtain. 2013. Researching the production of second-language speech acts. *Research Methodology in Second Language Acquisition*, ed. by Elaine E. Tarone, Susan M. Gass and Andrew D. Cohen, 143-156. New York: Psychological Press.
- Cutrona, Carolyn E. 1990. Stress and social support: In search of optimal matching. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 9: 3-14.
- Cutrona, Carolyn E., and Daniel W. Russell 1990. Type of social support and specific stress: Toward a theory of optimal matching. *Social support: An Interactional View*, ed. by Babara R. Sarason, Irwin G. Sarason and Gregory R. Pierce, 319-366. New York: Wiley.
- Gu, Yueguo. 1990. Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 237-257.
- Hall, Edward T. 1976. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Press.
- Hofstede, Geert. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. California: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, Geert. 1991. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Holmstrom, Amanda J., Graham D. Bodie, Brant R. Burleson, Hennifer D. McCullough, Jessica J. Rack, Lisa K. Hanasono, and Jennifer G. Rosier. 2013. Testing a dual-process theory of supportive communication outcomes: How multiple factors influence outcomes in support situations. *Communication Research* 42.4: 526-546.
- Hsu, Weichieh. 2016. *The Development of English Speech Act of Advice-giving by Senior High School Students in Taiwan*. Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University MA thesis.
- Kung, Hsinyi. 2015. *Ni shi hupa huma? Lun tunghsifang fumu tsanyu chi chayihsing* [Are you tiger parents? On the participation differences of Western and Eastern parents]. *Taiwan Educational Review Monthly* 4.12: 8-11.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. 1983. *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Lin, Tinchou. 2010. *A Study of the Developmental Patterns of Apologies by Chinese*

- Children*. Taipei: National Taiwan Normal University MA thesis.
- Nishimura, Shoji, Anne Nevgi, and Seppo Tella. 2008. Communication style and cultural features in high/low context communication cultures: A case study of Finland, Japan and India. *Proceedings of a Subject-didactics Symposium*, 783-796. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Rogers, Carl R. 1957. The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology* 21: 95-103.
- Rogers, Carl R. 1975. Empathetic: An unappreciated way of being. *Counseling Psychologist* 5: 2-10
- Samter, Wendy. 2003. Friendship interaction skills across the life span. *Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills*, eds. by John Greene and Brant Burleson, 637-684. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Samter, Wendy, Brant R. Burleson, and Lori Murphy. 1989. Behavioral complexity is in the eye of the beholder effects of cognitive complexity and message complexity on impressions of the source of comforting messages. *Human Communication Research* 15: 612-629.
- Searle, John R. 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, John R. 1979. *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Suzuki, Toshihiko. 2010. A corpus-linguistic approach to the verbal realization of 'comforting'. *The Cultural Review* 36: 81-103.
- Thong, Tezenlo. 2012. 'To raise the savage to a higher level': The Westernization of Nagas and their culture. *Modern Asian Studies* 46.4: 893-918.
- Xu, Linyu. 2007. *A Study on the Speech Act of Comforting in Chinese*. Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University MA thesis.

[審查：2019.1.8 修改：2019.2.12 接受：2019.2.23]

華語文教學研究

葉惠真

Stephanie Hui-Chen YEH

10610 臺北市和平東路一段 162 號 國立臺灣師範大學英語學系

Department of English

National Taiwan Normal University

No.162, Sec. 1, Heping E. Rd., Taipei City 10610, Taiwan

s9403188@gmail.com

陳純音

Chun-Yin Doris CHEN

10610 臺北市和平東路一段 162 號 國立臺灣師範大學英語學系

Department of English



National Taiwan Normal University

No.162, Sec. 1, Heping E. Rd., Taipei City 10610, Taiwan





chunyin@ntnu.edu.tw

Appendix: An Example of the ODCT & the EET

Part A: The ODCT

你和同事在聊天，經理回辦公室後看起來很生氣。			
影部	聲部	影部	聲部
	你：「經理，你為什麼那麼生氣？」 經理：「我剛剛被罵，其他人不幫我就算了，還在旁邊笑我！」		聽到經理這樣說，你會對她說甚麼呢？

Part B: The EET

	影部	聲部	影部	聲部
1		同事也在旁邊安慰。她說：「經理，這樣聽起來其他人員真的很過分。」		你覺得這句話會安慰到經理嗎？ (從 4 分到 1 分，最有效的給 4 分，最無效的給 1 分)
2		她如果說：「沒關係經理，下次我們再去，就可以幫你了。」		你覺得這句話會安慰到經理嗎？ (從 4 分到 1 分，最有效的給 4 分，最無效的給 1 分)

3		<p>她如果說：「等等下班我們陪經理去逛街啦，不要想了。」</p>		<p>你覺得這句話會安慰到經理嗎？ (從 4 分到 1 分，最有效的給 4 分，最無效的給 1 分)</p>
4		<p>她如果說：「經理不要理他們，他們說的話不重要。」</p>		<p>你覺得這句話會安慰到經理嗎？ (從 4 分到 1 分，最有效的給 4 分，最無效的給 1 分)</p>
5		<p>她如果說：「經理別氣了，我們趕快把剛剛被罵的問題解決就好。」</p>		<p>你覺得這句話會安慰到經理嗎？ (從 4 分到 1 分，最有效的給 4 分，最無效的給 1 分)</p>

影響華語二語學習者的中文安慰言語行為之三大 變因：權力、事件嚴重度、情境類型

葉惠真 陳純音

國立臺灣師範大學英語學系

摘要

本研究旨在探討以華語為第二語言的英語與日語學習者對中文安慰策略的有效度判斷以及使用情形，並驗證不同操縱變因（如：權力、事件嚴重度及情境類型）對安慰策略的影響程度。研究對象共為十二名英語和十七名日語的中級華語學習者以及二十名華語母語者作為對照組，參與本研究的兩項測驗：一為有效度判斷，二為口頭完成情境對話。

研究發現，三個變因對安慰策略的影響不等：情境類型影響最大，其次是事件嚴重程度以及被慰者的權力高低。此外，亦發現研究對象對安慰策略有效度判斷與實際策略使用間確實存在影響差異。而且，跨文化差異仍存在於安慰策略的學習中。

關鍵詞：第二語言習得 言語行為 安慰策略 對外華語教學