An Analysis of the Divergence of Apology in Online Game Setting based on *Honor of King*

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Abstract

Apology manifests in various dimensions of social life and in sophisticate forms has partly contributed to its significance of research. Furthermore, technological affordance in current society has provided much more possibilities to apologetic behavior in terms of its realization through various expressions, which in essence is realized by an effort of dynamic adaptive process. It, therefore, has advanced new requirements for depiction comprehensive illustration of apologetic discourses, which should be a potential direction of further research. The present study sheds light on the apologetic behaviors in a unique but newly emerging environment of online game, Honor of King. The pieces of written discourses where an apologetic behavior occurred in this context is collected to form a corpus, which then was analyzed by virtue of relevant politeness and adaptability theory. A combination of both qualitative and quantitative analysis has led to the conclusion that due to technological affordance, apologetic behaviors in such an environment present a distinct landscape from offline one or even other types of online communication context. Moreover, it also finds further evidence to the claim that some disparities exist in terms of the apologetic pattern between the Chinese and the English. This, in the final analysis, demonstrates potential for more detailed illustration to a complete picture of apologetic behavior in modern society. Besides, it also lends more supports to the great significance of adaptability to dynamic context, where new possibilities and constraints are advanced by technological affordance.

Keyword: apology, adaptability, politeness theory, Honor of King

1. Introduction

The increasingly advanced technology has been successfully developing a transformative communication pattern where, to a certain extent, some social relationships can be temporarily erased (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015a; Gill, 2017). Meanwhile, worthwhile to notice in these new possibilities are the occurrence of some constraints, which has also contributed to the formulation of this continuously change communicative system for instance, Twitter's 140 characters constraint on its content edition in per time (Coesemans & De Cock, 2017). *Affordance* in Hutchby (2014) is conceived as "the enablements and constraints…of technologies'', that ''shape the conditions of possibility associated with an action''. One word of caution is that what is in concert with this new possibility in essence can be ascribed to a dynamic movement of adaptability. *Adaptability* in its oldest interpretation is illustrated by Verschueren (1999), who define it as "the property of language which enables human beings to make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable range of possibilities in such a way as to approach points of satisfaction for communicative needs". Premised on the above notions, it is suggested that those dynamic changes in online communication can be illustrated as continuous creative adaptation to *affordance* of this new activity (Gill, 2017). The present research approaches this dynamic adaptation to *affordance* as a process of interactive meaning generation where the apologetic behaviors in specific context are taken into further analysis. It is hypothesized that some divergences of apology behaviors in terms of both linguistic and extralinguistic choices occurs as an attempt to satisfy new possibilities and constraints provided by *affordance* in certain circumstance.

Within pragmatics, the research literature review traces a number of paths through the far ranging and dynamic form of online communication. The focus of online communication behaviors may range from conflictive discourses (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann, 2003), metadiscourses (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015a) to apology discourses (Davies, Merrison & Goddard, 2007; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Page, 2014). Ubiquitous as it is in human speech acts, apologetic discourses have been explored in different media of online communication, such

as Twitter (Page, 2014), blog (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017) and email (Davies, Merrison & Goddard, 2007; Harrison & Allton; 2013). Furthermore, the involved subjects in the extant research also disclose a wide coverage which ranges from huge profiles, such as large cooperate (Page, 2014) and Politician (Benoit, 2004), to mundane group (Bei, 2010; Li Jun, 2007; Pan, 2004). Besides, it is found that irrespective of online communication as virtual context, a certain degree of the disclosure of users' self-identity still cannot be avoid, such as gender (Pan, 2004) and social status (Davies, Merrison & Goddard, 2007; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017).

However, it is worthwhile noticing that communication in an online game is distinguished from those in that users' private information (such as age and social status) is hidden in the black once the team match work is succeeded by its system. Meanwhile, the identity of both team members and rivals are not accessible unless the player invites his friends incidentally in the game. The specialty in this context, therefore, should be approached as a valued point deserving further investigations because of the limited relevant research. Thus, the present study addresses to analyze the language used for apology in *Honor of King,* which as an online game has received great popularities among the Chinese. It is expected to find that both the convergence and the divergence of this ubiquitous speech act in such an online game developed by Chinese users, irrespective of their being conscious or not. Besides, some comparative analysis will be involved in order to testify what the present research claims.

By virtue of the analysis of apologetic discourse in emerging environment, the present research aims at offer some new theoretical perspectives in the relevant pragmatic theory. Furthermore, in view of the practical implications, it is hoped that the current findings can inspire the game designers to better exercise their corporation social responsibility activities, which is of great significance of their public identity construction. Because the involved now are in such a dilemma where the society generally holds a negative attitude toward their constructed virtual community that is reportedly characterized as harmful to the users.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Online Communication

Technological advancement has transformed the once familiar landscape of face-to-face communication, in which the negotiation of social relationship and identity is reconfigured in a novel manner. Meanwhile, it is argued that such a transformative evolution has its potential to bring about cognitive and linguistic changes from adaptation to some new possibilities and constraints of technological affordance (Gill, 2017). Compared with offline communication, these emerging online communicative means appear to equip themselves with a further stronger dynamic adaptability to new environment. It can be partly reduced to their commitment to fewer constraints by social considerations to humans, which, instead, exert strong influence on their offline communicative behaviors (Virtanen, 2017). For instance, online participants are likely to behave more actively for their inner desires of attention, which, on the contrary, are more likely to be suppressed in the black in their offline interaction (Gill, 2017).

As online communication manifests in social life, it has received continued attention from various perspectives, ethnographic theory (such as intercultural comparison and gender difference) and pragmatic analysis, for instance (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015; Fu Bei, 2010; Pan Xiaoyan, 2014). Within pragmatics, researchers show their concerns towards a wealth of issues, such as conflictive discourses (Culpeper, Bousfield & Wichmann, 2003), self-referenced discourses (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015) and apologetic discourses (Davies et al., 2007; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Page, 2014). However, extant literature concerning with apologetic discourses are generally relevant with high profiles, such as politician and large operations (Page, 2014; Morrow & Yamanouchi, 2020) and mundane group, students (Fu Bei, 2010; Davies et al., 2007; Li Jun, 2007; Pan, 2004). It should be noted that the private information of these above groups are, irrespective their being conscious or not, appear accessible or obtainable to other participants at any time if not made up incidentally (Virtanen, 2017). As a result, some traces of intentional adaptation are likely to be identified in their final version of spoken words under the control of such kind of constraints (Coesemans & De Cock, 2017; Gill, 2017). To recapitulate, irrespective of their being in online environment, their communicative patterns, more or less, have been influenced by such concerns of those online communication participants. Instead, as rivals and teammates in Honor of King are all arranged randomly by its internal system, users are unable to browse others' information after the match process is proceeded and before that process is finished. Not until the game is over are they admitted to acquire some private information of their teammates and rivals. In other words, all of their private information appears inaccessible before one round is finished with an exception to users' intentional invitation of their own friends as teammates. Hence, it is reasonable to hypothesize that users of Honor of King enjoy some ultimate freedom to express their opinions compared with other circumstances, in which their private information is not protected as well as in this unique setting. To

recapitulate, the specialty of such online context hence provides some new possibilities as well as potential constraints to its participants, which might contribute to a valued point in the analysis of online discourse.

2.2 Defining and Identifying Apology

Ubiquitous and frequent in human interaction, apology as a speech act at its core is acknowledged as a means of expressing politeness significant in all of the social, cultural and psychological levels (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017). To some extent, the speakers can disclose their acknowledgement of social norms when uttering apologetic words for their wrongdoings, which is conducive to the re-establishment of mutual rapport and social harmony. As a consequence, conducting an apology is often perceived as an ongoing or post-event speech act in which it is initiated as a remedial behavior to restore the original equilibrium between participants (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Morrow & Yamanouchi, 2020; Spenser-Oatey, 2008). However, it is suggested in the present research that apology in essence can also be made even before the occurrence of potential offensive behaviors despite of the minority of frequency (Davies et al., 2007).

Within pragmatics, apology discourses are often viewed as a face-attacking strategy for the speakers who are required to admit their offence towards others' face. Most specifically, conducting an apology often means a speech act addressed to listeners' face-needs but a potentially face-damaging behavior for speakers' positive face (Holmes, 1990; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Shukla & Shukla, 2020).

However, further supported by Page (2014), the present research indicates that apology behavior may also act as a face-saving strategy to the speakers, which can happen during any time in a communication, including even before the offensive behaviors are made.

With regard to the identification of apology discourses, it is widely agreed that the occurrence of Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (hereafter IFID for short) as explicit apologetic patterns be an essential element of defining apology behaviors (Aijmer, 1996; Wierzbicka, 1987). The most frequent IFID as apology they reports, therefore, contain such expressions as sorry, forgive, pardon, excuse, among which sorry enjoys "the overwhelming favorite" (Wierzbicka, 1987). However, a belief that apart from the most rountised apology, some others forms can also display apologetic illocutionary force varying form contexts prevails among researchers in current research (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Page, 2014). Based on the categorization of apologetic discourses offered by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), Lutzky and Kehoe (2017) claims that, in addition to explicit apology such as IFID and the acknowledgement of responsibility, other discourses pertaining to an additional explanation, an offer of repair as well as a promise of forbearance can also be supposed to emerge as formulaic apologies but in an implicit manner. Compared with these explicit apologies that are identified through "relatively easy" (Deutschmann, 2003) effort, those indirect apologetic expressions have not received due attentions among this field with an exception to Lutzky & Kehoe (2017) and Page (2014). As a consequence, the present research is undertaken to find out more apologetic discourses in such an indirect form, which is of great importance to a further comprehensive understanding of this ubiquitous interactional expression.

To recapitulate, the present research reports on the apologetic behavior in a unique environment as online game. It is hoped that the findings in this research can lend further evidence to the claim that communication behavior can be affected by online affordance through dynamic adaptive efforts. Moreover, the present study is also undertaken to depict a more comprehensive picture of human apologetic behavior where more apologetic discourses will emerge.

3. Methodology

The key issue the present research addresses is under investigation with a integration of quantitative and qualitative research method, which is of great significance of the validity and reliability of consequent result (Flowerdew, 2009). To sum up, by virtue of the apologetic expressions identified by previous research, the present one employed natural corpus to conduct a more reliable analysis towards apology in *Honor of King*.

In the search of apologetic discourses in established corpora, data dependent on recognized expressions with apologetic communicative force has conventionally been preferred by the state-of-the art research (Deutschmann, 2003; Virtanen, 2017). The drawback of directly using these perceived expression for convenience can be ascribed to its inability to a full representation of all existing forms with IFDI as apology (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017). Because it has been emphasized that due to the adaptive process to online affordance, these underlying expressions which divert from prototypical types of apology can also emerge and perform the similar function varying from contexts, for example, oops as an IFDI of apology in blogs. At the same time, this perspective should not be pushed too far. Arguably, the adoption of close-ended lexical expressions preceding the attempt to an open one has also been suggested in the choice of data analysis. (Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2008). Since starting with a set of routine

expression may facilitate the ongoing research as well as increase the validity of the research procedure. Most specifically, research primarily dependent on a closed range of lexical items can be more efficient in setting out more reliable expressions which in essence embed themselves with apologetic powers in some unique environment.

Meanwhile, partly because of the limited time and resource, the linguistic data from movies and television as the source of research in many occasions has been utilized as data resources (Li, 2007). Arguably, this sort of information may be strong enough to depict a complete real picture of what happens in real social life, which more or less is embedded with artificial colors. Besides, Discourse Completion Tests (hereafter DCTs for short) also prevails among pragmatic empirical research as an approach to data collection where participants are required to show their response to the simulative context designed by researchers (Davies et al., 2007; Fu, 2010). Compared to human social life DCTs themselves admittedly have the capability of establishing an utmostly real context by asking participants to perform rules coherent to their real identity (Fu, 2010). However, potential risks still exist that participants may be limited to certain choices unconsciously because to some extent their responses are solicited and influenced by deliberate tasks offered by this tool (Davies et al., 2007; Page, 2014).

In the final analysis, data collected in this research are composed of a transcription of written words from random non-participant observation, which happened after a natural communicative process. Furthermore, their grammatical errors, together with various emoticons they employed, had also been kept for the completeness and reliability of corpus. Because non-participant observation can help ensure the apology made out of player's own perception without any intentional intervention, which then can be approached as entirely naturally-occuring (Flowerdew, 2009).

To sum up, the present research is undertaken to set out more potential linguistic forms with IFDI as apology in a particular context of an online game. Moreover, it is noted that compared with other online community, participants in Honor of King have been endowed with unprecedented freedom, where they can conduct their own behaviors more freely due to their enjoyment of further reduced constraints. By combining the recognized explicit apologetic expressions in Chinese offered by Li (2007) and Pan (2004), the final set of explicit apologetic expressions in Chinese were processed as a starting point of the present research, which include *duibuqi (对不起) ,bu hao yi si (不好意思), bao qian (抱歉), wo de cuo (我的错）, wo bu dui (我不对)*. Furthermore, some implicit apologies vary from social context, which should be identified by the researcher herself under the guidance of the category of apology being indicated by Lutzky & Kehoe (2017), where others' judgment had also been taken into consideration. The final set of implicit expressions presented in the research is, therefore, composed of common patterns occurring simultaneously in the feedback of different participants.

Thirty-four pieces of chatting records during the game had been transcripted to shape a corpus totaling 2492 words. To increase the validity of the present research, the data collected here are all in a random acquired from the game forum, which are uploaded by different players. Furthermore, what should be emphasized is that all of the information of the speakers has been hidden in the black, where, for instance, their gender and age had been excluded in the present research. During the process of transcription, the users' nicknames which are generally named after by themselves had also been kept together with their discourses for the completeness of data. A close analysis on these nicknames also led evidence the claim that their private information is generally not accessible if they are not willing to expose themselves to other strange players. Some representative nicknames could be illustrated as *佛系胜天* and *清风重上王者*.

Through concordancing tools, all above recognized apologetic expressions, together with its neighboring word groups, had been picked out for further analysis. A particular focus on the neighboring word groups can be justified as the collocational analysis, which claims that the meaning of a sentence can be determined by its immediate textual environment or that ''[y]ou shall know a word by the company it keeps'' (Firth, 1956; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017). Besides, the neighboring sentences were defined in the present research as sets of word groups whose orders are proximate to the apologetic expression in both the left and the right. It is argued that collocactional analysis can be considered as an effective instrument to a deeper understanding of language through a more comprehensive perspective.

Through an analysis of apologetic expressions manifested in the present research, it is aimed to disclose how apologetic strategy adapted by involved users adapts itself to a unique context where more freedom has been granted. It is, therefore, can be processed as a miniature of another human society where human have been imposed fewer constraints by social factors. However, some omissions may happen due to the insufficient knowledge of the researcher when deciding the apologetic function of certain expressions. The finding of the present research can further verify what kind of influence does social constraints in human apologetic behavior. Generally, it is

hoped that the result of the present research will be contribute to a more comprehensive picture of human apologetic behavior and politeness theory.

4. Results

Taking the routine apologetic expressions in Chinese offered by Li (2007) and Pan (2004) as a starting point during the process of concordancing, it was found that IFDI as explicit apology had occurred 6 times totally. Their relative frequencies in the established coopera are presented in the following Table 1. Furthermore, their cooresponding expressions in English were provided simultaneously with an reference to Fu (2010).

Table 1. Relative frequency of IFDI as explicit apology in the corpora about *Honor of King*

Explicit Apology	Frequency	contexts	Context frequency
对不起 (sorry)	1	Being solicited by others	1
		Being solicited by others	4
不好意思 (shame on me)		Being solicited voluntarily	1
	5		
抱歉 (I apologize)	0	-	-
我的错 (My bad)	0	-	-
我不对 (My bad)	0	-	-
Total frequency	6		6

The frequency of explicit apologies in the selected corpora did not in accordance with what has been clarified by Wierzbicka, (1982), who claimed sorry as the most favorite approach to expressing apology in English. Instead, it was concluded that 不好意思 relatively occured more frequently in the apologetic discourses used by participants in Horor of King. Besides, it was identified that participants in such online environment tended to express their apology on the occasion that they had confronted some pressures from others rather than out of their willingness. For example, an apology occurred after another player threatened to quit the games (不玩了,挂机).

With the purpose of setting out more implicit strategies used to express apology, collocational analysis was employed in the present research in the interpretation the sentence or word groups occuring as neighbors of these above apologetic formulas. As a consequence, this effort led to a new hypothesis that implicit apology sometimes occurs simultaneously with the explicit one to speakers' apology (Li, 2007). Furthermore, due to the adaptability to various environments, implicit apologetic discourses in some occasion can even realize this function independently.

By virtue of collactional analysis, implicit apologetic expressions, for instance, 网卡 (The internet is not good), were founded to accompany with the above explicit ones together or to occur independently in the formation of a apology. Other instances were represented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Relative frequency of IFDI as implicit apology in the corpora about *Honor of King*

Implicit apology	Sub-types	Frequency	Frequency in percentage
	some circumstance eg: 真的,我有急事,不想刮记 [挂机] (I really have something urgent to deal with, but I don't want to hang up.)	3	27.27%
An offer of Explanation	*slow network* eg:我这一直 200 转圈卡死了 (My internet is too bad in 460mm) clarification of misunderstanding Eg: 我还打算救人呢	5	45.45%
	(I was intended to help you in fact)	2	18.18%
An offer to repair	-	0	0
A promise for forebearnce	Eg:我认真了 （I will take it serious now）	1	9.10%
Total frequency	-	11	100%

It was suggested that implicit apology had occurred in the selected corpus with a total of 11 times, which accounts for almost two times as much as its counterparts characterized as explicit (11 and 6 respectively). More specifically, making an apology through an additional explanation set in a dominant position in the selected corpus, accounting for as much as a total of 10 times. It took the largest proportion even where both explicit and implicit ones were all taken into consideration (approximating to 58 percent).

It is also useful to note that punctuation marks to form a complete grammatical sentence were less preferred by users when they enter their words in the chat frame of *Honor of King*. Moreover, several errors both in in their external form were identified in the present research. For instance 刮记 should be perceived as 挂机, which should be identified as a formal mistake made by its users. Moreover, there also existed several languages which may not be unable be understand by someone who never play this game before, such as *460* (a signal of bad network) and 挂机 (a state of hanging on in the game).

5. Discussion

The analysis of data collection firstly suggested that some disparities emerge in the distribution of apologetic expression between the Chinese and the English-speaking groups. Besides, apologizers in *Honor of King* do also seem to run counter to what was claimed by the previous research as the findings indicated that neither 对不起 nor 不好意思 performs as a routine expression of apology in offline communication (Li, 2007). Participants in such a virtual environment inclined to express their apology through a more indirect way under the solicitation of others, which was generally realized by their additional offering of explanation. Furthermore, overt apologetic expressions in *Honor of King* were even combined with some explanations which are conspicuous in their efforts to attribute responsibilities to the third party or give evidence that the damaging behavior was caused by factors beyond their control, for instance, to the bad network or an sudden call (网卡 or 有人打电话来了). The present research had also disclosed some difference in the form of apologetic behaviors from other contexts. It could find evidence in such expressions as 挂机 and *460* which disclose themselves as unique discourse and hence may seldom occur in other environment.

The behavior of expressing apology in essence is generally considered as face-threatening for the speakers (Olshtain, 1989), which, therefore, can lend some supports to the abundance of indirect apologetic discourse in such an online communication. Indirect apology through an offer of explanation hence can be considered as a strategy to protect the face-needs of speakers, which responds to the claim of Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu (2007) and Davies et al., (2017).

Moreover, it can further be considered as a powerful evidence to the phenomenon that apology in most case is solicited under the threat or request of others rather than out of a voluntary intention. With the purpose to re-establish their images and protect themselves from being reported by their teammates, speakers may express their apology in a rather indirect way in this game as a response to the threat of their teammates. Even though, their apologies to a large extent do not come from their total willingness, accounting for one-third percent to the whole apologetic behaviors in the select corpora.

In contrast to the potentially face-damaging nature of it (Page, 2014; Pan, 2004), apologetic discourse is not only beneficial to the face-needs of addresses but also a useful reconstruction of addressers' positive image. Because Davies et al., (2017) indicated that apology should be viewed as an effective way to avoid tarnishing one's own image or even that one of a larger group. This kind of function that apology enjoys is rather manifest in its indirect form as an offer of repair or a promise of forbearance. In response to the teammate who show his or her suspicion to the apologier's ability in Honor of King, the apologier replies by 我要认真了 as a way to reconstruct his or her own identity in the view of others. As a consequence, their apologies can be recognized as an efficient way to reconstruct their face-needs in this virtual environment.

From another perspective, the higher frequency of implicit IFDI as apology than explicit ones, which also were largely solicited in a non-voluntary fashion can be ascribed to the apologiers' adaptation to a new environment where they are offered with greater freedom than offline communication (See Table 1 and Table 2). Since their private information is well under the umbrella of this game system and some concerns for social regulation can be discarded temporarily. They might feel fewer constraints by the social convention where mutual harmony and polite principle are advocated (Brown and Levinson, 1987). As a consequence, they are less willing to admit their offense to others than in other circumstances, which will directly do harm to their own face-needs (Page, 2014). However, the potential of being reported by other players after the game will prohibit them from accessing into the game for a period of time which also causes some constraint on their freedom. Consequently, a more implicit and indirect way which can downplay their own responsibility is much acceptable for them in such an online

context. Consequently, a different landscape of their apologetic discourses in Honor of King can be approached as a way to their dynamic adaptation to the new possibility and constraints provide by such environment.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) defines apology as a "post-even speech act" that limit its occurrence only after the potential offensive behaviors. Based on the categorization offered by Davies et al., (2007), an identification in terms of the time when the apology occurs are divided into three subtypes, including a pre-even speech act, ongoing speech act and post-even speech ones. Through data analysis, the present research also inclines to the spirit that irrespective of its lower frequency, apologetic expressions may also emerge before or during the conduction of offensive behaviors. Apart from the apology as a remedial after the offensive behaviors, it is found that speakers are also possible to apology for predicated future events. In the selected corpus, participants of Honor of King also showed a trace of indirectly apologizing for their own predicated offensive behaviors by informing their instable network (*在高速上*) or indication of low battery (*手机快没电了*). As a consequence, it is reasonable to hypothesize that apologetic discourses are not necessarily equal to a remedial for past acts. As to the temporal aspects of apology, apologizers may also conduct this kind of behaviors through an implicit way if the offensive behaviors are characterized as future acts.

With regard to more specific interpretation of an additional explanation as implicit IFID, some unique expressions arise conspicuously in the online communication of Honor of King, for instance, *460* and *挂机*. As a representation of dynamic adaptive process, *460* conveys a particular information in this context to signal a bad network, which is created by virtue of the new possibility offered by this new context. Meanwhile, the apologetic component as *挂机* which originally referred to a situation where the communication by telephone had been stopped by the communicators. However, its dynamic adaptive to the new context has endowed this word group with a new meaning that players in Honor of King quit to manipulate his or her selected character.

It is noted that almost apologetic discourses in this context are produced in an incomplete form in terms of its grammar, which distinguished it from other written forms in offline characterized as formal. Besides, errors may also arise in some situation in its forms. What is interesting that these mistakes seemly do not cause much other hinders to their right interpretation, which then need not further explanation of the speakers. The emergence of these uncommon can be ascribed to the constraints caused by this unique environment where users are supposed to react in a short time. As a consequence, communication in this context tends to be conducted in the simplest way by this new possibility as well as constraints this environment offers. In the final analysis, conflictive discourses in essence are found to be rampant in the selected corpus as they presents a higher frequency than apology behaviors, which meanwhile is beyond the expectation of the present research. This is partly due to much more freedom of the new possibilities in *Honor of King* is available to its participants. As a consequence, the originally perceived mutual rapport harmony may be of secondary importance than in offline communication or other types of online ones where private information is relatively easy to be accessible. Its frequent occurrence in such an online context should also be promoted as a valued point toward which the further research is expected to expand.

6. Conclusion

The present research, within a narrow compass on *Honor of King,* was motivated to formulate a specific landscape of apologetic behaviors in this increasingly popular online context. With an aim to increase the validity of research finding, naturally occurring language transcribed from *Honor of King* were adopted as the main source with which the research was supposed to conduct relevant analysis. Besides, by virtue of collocational analysis, it was hoped to identify more expressions with apologetic functions on the basis of a set of closed items provided by previous researchers. The intrinsic objective of the present study lie in the provision of some evidence to the adaptive process of human language by technological affordance, which had also been claimed by some recent research (Coesemans & De Cock, 2017; Gill, 2017; Lutzky & Kehoe, 2017; Virtanen, 2017)

In overall, it was concluded that apologetic expressions present a rather different distribution in the language of *Honor of King*. More specially, compared with implicit apology, participants in this new context show less willingness to articulate their apology through an explicit and direct way. In most situations, they offer some explanation of their offense to others as, which implicitly indicate their apologies. Moreover, their implicit apologies are often produced in a more economical way due to the technological affordance, where they response adaptively to these new possibilities as well as constraints. Diverging form the prototypical apology characterized as explicit apology, *对不起* receives less popularities than *不好意思* in Chinese, which runs counter to its situation in English (Wierzbicka, 1987). This finding can led evidence to the belief that cultural difference does have an impact on the language used by different people (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015b; Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu, 2007). Besides, some variations with apologetic functions have also emerged, which meanwhile reflect the

adaptive process to technological affordance. However, the present study is not without weakness or limitations. Due to the chatting record cannot be accessible to once one certain play is finished nor other non-participant observers, the relevant data is relatively limited which can be employed for research. Moreover, some apologies in *Honor of King* realized through instant voice are not included in the present research which also needs further analysis. One phenomenon of caution is that apart from apologetic discourses, conflictive ones in such online context should also be perceived as a valued point for further research.

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