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APOLOGY ACROSS LANGUAGES

The cross-linguistic comparison of speech behavior has always attracted considerable interest. Linguists have become particularly interested in this field of study. Making use of terminology from the anthropological, the sociological, and the philosophical literature, researchers adopted the term *speech act* as a minimal unit of discourse upon which to focus their investigations.

Apologies, as speech acts, have been examined as means of maintaining the social order and as indicators of distance and dominance in relationships. They have also been used to reveal the role that pragmatic competence plays in speaking a language.

An extensive discussion of apologies has been carried out by scholars in the field of sociology. In Goffman's work [1], apologies as *remedial interchanges* between speakers are considered part of an actor's preservation of face or as part of the system of social sanctions and rewards that encourage appropriate behavior. Remedial interchanges serve according to Goffman, to prevent the worst possible interpretation of events from being made. In the case of apologies, they are an acceptance that social norms have been broken, an acceptance of responsibility by the speaker, and an implicit self-judgement against the speaker. Within Goffman's judicial metaphor, an apology is one of the exchanges in which speakers make a charge, reach a verdict, and hand down a sentence against themselves, the "crime" being a failure to follow social norms [1, 39].

Empirical investigations of apologies have been carried out by numerous scholars [2, 3, 4, 5].

An apology is basically a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation. In the decision to carry out the verbal apology, the speaker is willing to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit to fault and responsibility for that violation. Hence the act of apologizing is face-saving for the hearer and face-threatening for the speaker, in Brown and Levinson's terms [6, 78]. According to Leech's "tact maxim", apology is a convivial speech act [7, 104] whose goal coincides with the social goal of maintaining harmony between speaker and hearer. In Leech's terms, therefore, the realization of an apology provides benefit for the hearer and is to some degree at cost to the speaker.

The five strategies which make up the speech act set of apology [4] consist of two which are general and three which are situation specific. The two general strategies are: the *IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device)*, which

contains the formulaic, routinized forms of apology (various apology verbs); and *the expression of speaker's responsibility*, which relates to the speaker's willingness to admit to fault.

IFIDs can range from truly sincere expressions of regret on the apologizer's part, which would make a "strong" apology, to a mere expression of sympathy for the apologizee, which aims to placate the hearer acknowledging the fact that some breach of social norms has malaffected the hearer. The goal of such acknowledgment can be defined as "issued not so much to express a genuine feeling as to satisfy the social expectation that such feeling be expressed" [8,51]. In other words, the weaker version of an *IFID* is intended to satisfy social needs of etiquette and not necessarily to express genuine feeling of regret.

Stronger apologies and the effect of sincerity of the *IFID* can be achieved primarily through internal intensification or through the choice of an apology verb which carries strength of regret. In each language the speakers intuitively recognize the *IFID* variants, which carry only acknowledgement features since they are usually highly recurrent and routinized as opposed to the stronger and more sincere performative verbs and their respective modal extensions.

The choice of a weaker or stronger *IFID* might depend on the speaker's perception of the nature of the object of regret [9] or in other words, on its level of severity. It might also be influenced by the assumed expectation for an apology on the part of hearer as perceived by speaker. Some questions will face the speaker: Is the offence viewed as a serious breach of social norms? What is the prior experience with the hearer concerning his or her way of handling an offence and/or expecting certain ways of apologizing? Was the offence unavoidable, from the speaker's point of view, or was the object of offence within the control of the speaker? Was the occurrence of the event obviously the responsibility of the speaker?

The first two of these questions relate to the selection of an *IFID* along the strong-weak continuum. The other two relate to the *expression of responsibility*.

An expression of responsibility contains substrategies which relate to "pleas for excusable lack of foresight, pleas for reduced competence and admissions of carelessness" [5, 94]. Here again there is a continuum stretching from a high level of responsibility to a very low level of responsibility. When the speaker decides to use a high level of responsibility, there is more self-humiliation and dispraise of oneself [7,132] which brings about higher cost to the speaker. Such speech act behavior might be safer in bringing about the restoration of harmony between speaker and hearer, since indirectly it provides benefit for hearer. On the other hand, the choice of low level responsibility is much less face-threatening to the speaker but presents the risk that the apology will not be accepted by the hearer and harmony will not be restored. In this delicate balance between cost for speaker and benefit

for hearer, the speaker, far, blaming himself for the offence; in such a situation, the hearer might begin to move in the equilibrium direction.

These two strategies, which are inherently related to the violation, can be used in different ways. The other three strategies, *of forbearance*, *of concern*, and *of the situation*.

In addition to the ways in which there are ways in which intensifying it or being stronger, creating a stronger speaker. The routine *IFID* (internal intensification) such as "very" or "really" concern for the hearer, minimizing either the offence or the downgrading the offence.

In studying the ways in which affect speaker and hearer, the others in the parameters such as *contextual factors* significance since *contextual factors* perceived obligation.

A cross-linguistic study of offense and obligation as an object of study in

It was made a study of apologies in every range of apology categories calling

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A: "Sorry"

B: "Hi, Dave"

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for hearer, the speaker might also carry the expression of responsibility too far, blaming himself or herself out of proportion for the occurrence of the offence; in such a case, instead of achieving harmony between interlocutors hearer might begin to feel indebted to the speaker, who over-apologized, and the equilibrium is once again distorted, but this time in the opposite direction.

These two strategies (*IFID* and *taking on responsibility*), which are inherently related to the speaker's willingness to express an apology for a violation, can be used across all situations which require the act of apology. The other three strategies, *the explanation*, *the offer of repair*, and *the promise of forbearance*, are situation-specific and will semantically reflect the content of the situation.

In addition to the main strategies which make up the speech act set, there are ways in which the speaker can modify the apology by either intensifying it or by downgrading it. Intensification would make the apology stronger, creating even more support for hearer and more humiliation for speaker. The routinized intensification is the one which occurs internally to the *IFID* (internal modification) in the form of a conventional intensifier such as "very" or "really". External modification can take the form of added concern for the hearer which intensifies the apology or a statement, minimizing either the offence or the harm it may have caused, thus downgrading the apology.

In studying apologies, a major research question relates to the factors which affect speaker's decision to choose any one realization of the act over the others in the potential set of such realizations. The *social factors* include parameters such as social power (status), social distance, sex and age. The *contextual factors* include situational features which carry pragmatic significance since they affect realization choices. In the case of apology the contextual factors relate to the severity of the violation and to the culturally perceived obligation of the speaker to carry out an explicit act of apologizing.

A cross-linguistic study of apologies may reveal that the notions of offense and obligation are culture specific and must, therefore, become an object of study in themselves.

It was made an attempt to examine the actual conditions which elicited apologies in everyday interactions in American English and to discover the range of apology-inducing circumstances. These are some of the many categories calling for apologies in American English.

The obligation to keep a social or work-related commitment or agreement, e.g.:

An employee arriving an hour late for work, greets his boss with:

A: "Sorry"

B: "Hi, Dave".

The obligation to respect the property of others, e.g. a woman walks into her friend's house, holding the door for the cat to go out, then, seeing her friend's expression, says:

CONTENSIVE C

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A: "Isn't the cat allowed out?"

B: "No, we keep him inside."

A: "Oh, I'm sorry – I'm so used to letting my cat out. I didn't even think. Shall I try and get him back?"

The obligation not to cause damage or discomfort to others, e.g. in a car:

A: (stopping suddenly while driving so that passengers lurch forward) "Shit. Sorry."

The obligation not to make others responsible for one's welfare. For example, after complaining about personal problems the day before, a woman said to a close friend:

"I'm sorry I was in such a bad mood yesterday. I shouldn't have bothered you with my troubles." (She felt that even a long-standing friendship did not entitle her to unlimited attention).

Speakers also shared an obligation not to appear to expect another person to be available at all times. This obligation operates in a wide range of situations.

A woman making a telephone call to a friend begins by saying:

A: "Nancy? Hi, this is Helen. I'm sorry to bother you but..."

In American English apologies are made as recognition of a speaker's own failure to meet an implicit or explicit obligation to another. These failures, intentional or not, ranged from the breaking of a piece of property to the breaking of a social contract. A cross-linguistic study of apologies may reveal that the notions of offense and obligation are culture specific and must, therefore, become an object of study. Situations which elicit apologies in one language could easily fail to do so in another.

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Резюме

Міжмовне порівняння мовленнєвої поведінки залишається в центрі уваги лінгвістів. В статті зроблено спробу дослідити умови та обставини ситуацій, що спричиняють мовленнєвий акт вибачення в американській культурі. Проведено аналіз стратегічного інструментарію даного мовленнєвого акту.