

## THE STRATEGIC REALIZATION OF THE 'REDRESSIVE' SPEECH ACTS

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*The article is aimed to investigate the effect of social variables on the realization patterns of apology speech act within specific speech communities; the linguistic realization of the act of apologizing and potential range of apology strategies are analyzed.*

Speech acts have been claimed by some [1; 8; 9] to operate by universal pragmatic principles, and claimed by others to vary in conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages [4; 10]. Their modes of performance carry heavy social implications [3] and seem to be ruled by universal principles of cooperation and politeness [2; 6]. Culturally colored interactional styles create culturally determined expectations and interpretative strategies, and can lead to breakdowns in intercultural and interethnic communication [5].

Despite the extreme richness of the findings in all these disciplines, the diversity of theoretical approaches and methodological frameworks employed in the study of speech acts leaves many of the central issues unanswered. Therefore, the study of speech acts is to remain a central concern of pragmatics.

Leech distinguishes between *pragmalinguistics*, the linguistic end of pragmatics which refers to "the particular resources that a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions," and *sociopragmatics*, the sociological interface of pragmatics, which studies the ways in which pragmatic performance is subjected to specific social conditions [6, 11]. Variations in the use of speech acts may thus be subject to the effect of social parameters, as is the case with all variation in linguistic behaviour.

Which aspects of social relations are important in determining variation in speech acts? One of the major findings that emerges from studies in this area is that degrees of social distance and power between participants are among the most important factors, yet their relative importance can interact with other situational factors and might be subject to cultural variation.

Apology is face-threatening act, in Brown and Levinson's terms, and calls for redressive action, and it concerns events that are costly to the hearer. The apology, as an attempt by the speaker to make up for some previous action that interfered with hearer's interests, counteracts the speaker's face wants. By apologizing, the speaker acknowledges that a violation of a social norm has been committed and admits to the fact that he or she is at least partially involved in its cause. Apologies signal the fact that the event has already taken place.

The linguistic realization of the act of apologizing can take one of two basic forms or a combination of both:

1. The most explicit realization of an apology is via an explicit *illocutionary force indicating device* (IFID) [8,64], which selects a routinized formulaic expression of regret such as: (be) sorry, apologize, regret, excuse, etc. The IFID fulfills the function of signaling regret; the speaker asks forgiveness for the violation that motivated the need to apologize, thereby serving to placate the hearer.
2. Another way is to use an utterance which contains reference to one or more elements from a closed set of specified propositions the semantic content of which relates directly to the apology preconditions.

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggest the notion of an apology speech act set to encompass the potential range of apology strategies, any of which may count as an apology. The apology speech act set includes five potential strategies:

1. an IFID (be sorry; apologize; regret; excuse etc);
2. an explanation or account of the cause which brought about the violation;
3. an expression of the speaker's responsibility for the offence;
4. an offer to repair;
5. a promise of forbearance.

When the speaker decides to express an apology verbally, he or she may choose one of the above-specified strategies or any combination of them.

The main categories include the following:

***Ifid.*** Coded by language specific realizations.

***Taking on responsibility.*** In the attempt to placate the hearer, the speaker often chooses to express responsibility for the offence which created the need to apologize. Such recognition of one's fault is face-threatening to the speaker and intended to appease the hearer. The subcategories for this strategy may be placed on a continuum from strong self-humbling on the speaker's part to a complete and blunt denial of responsibility. The acceptance of responsibility would be viewed by the hearer as an apology, while denial of responsibility would testify to the speaker's rejection of the need to apologize. Examples of the *self-humbling* end of the scale are expressions of self-deficiency ("I'm so forgetful"), and explicit self-blame ("It's my fault"), while the *rejecting responsibility* end of the scale would be represented by a complete denial of fault.

***Explanation or account.*** A common reaction to the need to apologize is a search for self-justification by explaining the source of the offence as caused by external factors over which the speaker has no control. Depending on the situation, such an explanation can act as an apology. Explanations vary by specificity and relevance: being late can be explained by reference to the specific event that caused it ("The bus was late") or by a general statement which is implicitly brought forth as relevant to the situation ("Traffic is always so heavy in the morning").

***Offer of repair.*** In situations where the damage or inconvenience which affected the hearer can be compensated for, the speaker can choose to offer repair in a specified or general manner, intending this as an apology; e.g. "I'll pay for the damage" in the case of an accident caused by the speaker is specific enough to count as an apology.

***Promise of forbearance.*** In some situations the feeling of responsibility is so strong that the speaker feels the need to promise forbearance. Promise of forbearance is usually expressed by a promise that something will never happen again.

***Intensification.*** The illocutionary force of the apology can be intensified or downgraded. Intensification usually takes one or more of the following:

- a) an intensifying expression within the IFID,
- b) expressing explicit concern for the hearer – external to the IFID or the other strategy used, and
- c) the use of multiple strategies.

***Downgrading.*** Downgrading of an apology results from the speaker adding to the strategy which he or she uses, a minimization of the offence (when arriving late, saying “Sorry, but we never start on time anyhow”), or a query concerning one of the preconditions of the apology (“Sorry, but you shouldn’t be so sensitive” on being accused of offending a friend).

The decision to perform the act of apologizing and then the decision to choose one or more strategies is affected by a number of different factors. Some of these are socio-cultural and relate to the performance of speech acts in general, such as social distance, social power, and age. Other factors are closely connected to the situational context bringing about the need to apologize. Thus, the severity of the violation of some norms and the perceived obligation of the speaker to apologize are, most probably, very significant factors in the choices made by the speakers.

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#### *Анотація*

*Розглянуто вплив соціальних змінних на лінгвістичну реалізацію мовленнєвого акту вибачення, а також стратегічний інструментарій даного мовленнєвого акту.*

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