

MSC 2020**International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.
COMMUNICATION»****SPEECH ACT OF APOLOGY IN THE CROSS-CULTURAL
COMPARATIVE ASPECT**

Oksana Bogemova (a)*, Elena Petrova (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Pskov State University, Pskov, Russian Federation, Boguemova@mail.ru
(b) Pskov State University, Pskov, Russian Federation, Elenpetrov23@yandex.ru

Abstract

This paper is focused on the topic of Apology Speech Act in different cultural contexts: English, French, and Russian. Apologies are not all the same within and across cultures and languages. Due to its frequent use, the speech act of apology has received much attention in intercultural pragmatic studies. This study aims to identify what strategies are used by speakers in the English, French, and Russian contexts to produce the speech act of apology. Data for the study were taken from fiction. In this paper, the following research methods are used: descriptive method, method of Pragma linguistic analysis, comparative method, survey, statistical method, method of continuous sampling. An apology as an expressive speech act aimed at achieving or restoring social harmony between the speaker and the addressee is realized in the context of a speech situation that has some specificities. In the implementation of the communicative intention of apology in a speech situation, among other components, there is always a harm factor, since it determines its occurrence in interpersonal communication. Apology can be linguistically realized with conventional language means, conventional speech means, and nonconventional speech means. The results of the study revealed that when apologizing speakers prefer “direct apology strategies” (conventional language and speech means) to “indirect apology strategies” (nonconventional speech means).

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, language groups have different systems of value orientations. Each language collective expresses itself through communication; each culture creates its own cultural reservoir (Dobrikova, 2019). Forming its own system of values, which distinguishes its carrier from the subject of other cultures, it determines the uniqueness and originality of the entire linguistic collective (Kotlyarova & Bermus, 2019). The most important means of preserving and developing culture is communication. Any word uttered during the communication process has a certain effect (Pastukhova, 2018).

An apology occupies a certain place in the cultural space of each ethnos. G. Williams points to the widespread use of the speech act of apology in everyday life, believing that modern English-language culture is widely apologetic, and apologies are used both for the most minor domestic violations and for more serious ones (Williams, 2018). The relevance of publicly acknowledging their mistakes and official apologies has not declined, and Western standards of behavior are becoming increasingly common in Russia (Reitmeier, 2003).

An apology is defined as a recognition of the existing imbalance in the relations between the communicants, as well as an attempt to restore harmony between them (Leech, 2016). Currently, apology is becoming the subject of research in various fields of humanitarian knowledge and it is considered from the standpoint of etiquette, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, etc. The interdisciplinary approach is widely used in the framework of pragmalinguistic studies, which make it possible to understand how, why and for what purpose a person pronounces a particular phrase (Shurupova et al., 2019).

Studying an apology from the perspective of pragmalinguistics allows us to describe its pragmatic determinants, the conditions for successful functioning, the implementation of an explicit or implicit statement, its variety, as well as the relationship of this speech act with the basic principles of speech communication (Bogemova, 2019).

Pragmalinguistic studies of apology are conducted on the basis of different languages. Therefore, on the material of the English language, Deutschman, studying the functions of a speech act of apology, the ways of expressing an apology and their influence on the addressee, conducted a study (Deutschmann, 2003). With the involvement of the Russian language, Reitmeier (2003) considered the apology, describing them as directive speech acts. Vetrinskaya et al. (2019) who analyzed communicative strategies of politeness, used the material of German and French.

The novelty of this study is that the study of the speech act of apology is carried out in the framework of intercultural pragmatics based on a comparison of three linguistic cultures.

2. Problem Statement

Current trends indicate the need to study the speech act of apology in an intercultural comparative aspect, which will reveal the order of the correct speech behaviour of the speaker, which is necessary during speech interaction with a representative of another language culture.

3. Research Questions

The main issues of this study include the following:

- 3.1. Correlation of the category of politeness and apology in different language cultures;
- 3.2. The volume of the inventory of the speaker's speech repertoire, representing a particular language culture.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the pragmalinguistic features of the expression of apology in three modern linguistic cultures: Russian, English, and French.

5. Research Methods

The material for practical analysis was text specimens of fiction, representing the pragmalinguistic context of the apology. The following research methods were used in this work: 1) a descriptive method, 2) a pragmalinguistic analysis method, 3) a comparative method, 4) a survey, 5) a statistical method, 6) a continuous sampling method.

6. Findings

An apology as an expressive speech act aimed at achieving or restoring social harmony between the speaker and the addressee is realized in the context of the speech situation, and many authors propose different schemes for implementing this speech act (Yaseen & Yavuz, 2017). When implementing an apology in a speech situation, among other components, a harm factor is always present, since it is that determines its occurrence. Thus, the scheme of the speech situation of apology can be represented as follows in (Figure 01).

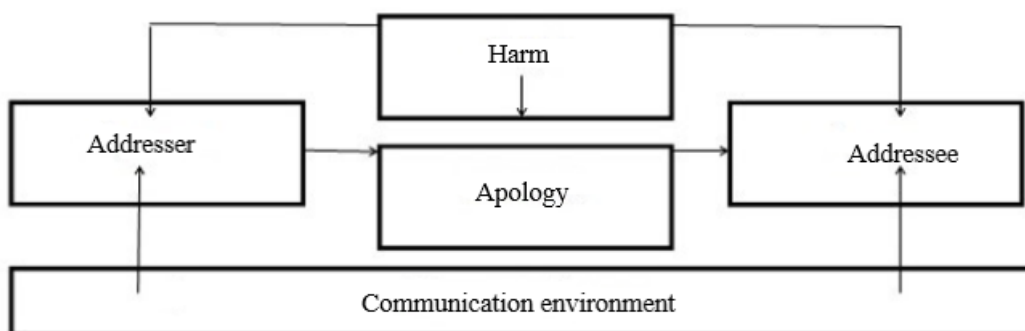


Figure 1. Apology speech situation structure

Figure 01 reflects the essential features of the speech situation of apology and the relationship of the components in its structure. Firstly, the fact of harm affects the communication environment, creating an apology situation. Secondly, the size of the harm caused affects the interlocutors, determining their emotional state and speech behavior. Thirdly, the speaker, being influenced by constant and variable factors, affects the listener. At the same time, by constant factors, we mean gender, age, place of birth, upbringing, professional affiliation, education, and belonging to a particular linguistic culture; the most significant of these factors seems to us to be the latter. To the variable factors, we attribute those that change in each individual case: the features of the particular communication environment and the degree of harm caused.

Let's pay attention to such a constant component of the social role of the speaker as belonging to the language culture, which determines, in particular, the understanding of the relationship between the category of politeness and the speech act of apology. Courtesy rules exist everywhere, but different countries have their own characteristics. To determine the characteristic features of understanding this category in the Russian-speaking, English-speaking and French-speaking cultures, a small survey was conducted on the site "interpals penpals". The survey involved 60 people aged 20 to 60: 20 representatives of each language culture. The respondents were asked to answer the following question: "What qualities does a polite person have?"

Different opinions were expressed on this issue, but Russian respondents indicated such qualities as friendliness, affability, respect for other people. Representatives of the French-speaking culture noted mainly kindness, patience, calmness, interest, respect, benevolence. The lexeme "affection" was repeatedly mentioned, which has several meanings in Russian: "tenderness", "loyalty", "love", "respect". The following features were also noted: a polite person is always friendly, does not interrupt during a conversation, expresses gratitude for the help provided, always apologizes for the inconvenience caused, uses polite words in speech, does not shout, uses the correct language regardless of who he is talking to, does not focus on the nationality of the interlocutor. The representatives of the English-speaking countries considered the following qualities of a polite person to be the main ones: kindness, benevolence, patience, calmness, modesty. It is clarified that a polite person always apologizes after making a mistake and causing harm. As the survey has shown, in the understanding of the category of politeness, speakers of different languages have both common features and significant differences.

Let us compare the speech repertoire of speakers - representatives of three different linguistic cultures. If it is described in its most general form, then it is similar in its composition because it includes three types of means of formalizing the speech act of apology: conventional linguistic means, conventional speech means, and unconventional means.

By conventional linguistic means, we mean forms, the illocutionary force of which corresponds to their linguistic, systemically fixed semantics. The main means of this group are the imperative mood and the performative.

Let's consider the features of the use of the imperative in three linguistic cultures. Native Russian speakers mostly use the verbs "excuse" and "forgive", which have similar semantics: to show condescension, not to blame anything. The most frequently used verb is "forgive" (42%), and the verb

“excuse” is used three times less often (15%). Often the speech act of apology is accompanied by argumentation.

Representatives of the English-speaking culture use the forms “excuse”, “forgive” and “apologize” more often than other means of expressing an apology. Of these, the verb “excuse” (33%) is the most frequent, and the verb “forgive” (2%) is the least commonly used. In contrast to the Russian language, in English argumentation is often formalized using the construction “verb + for + gerund”.

In French, to express an apology, the verbs “excuser” (52%), “pardonner” (14%) are used. They have some peculiarities in their semantics. “Excuser” implies the commission of actions aimed at destroying the consequences of an error, and “pardonner” implies a request for leniency for the damage caused, sincere regret about what happened, and the realization of one’s mistake. The construction with the noun “pardon”, which is used in 17% of cases, is also noteworthy. All three means can be used in conjunction with argumentation with including an infinitive construct.

When analyzing statements containing an act of apology, we drew attention to the fact that an apology can be enhanced with the help of lexical means (adverb) and syntactic (intensifying construction). In Russian, the most common adverb is “very”, in English - “so”, “really”, “please”, and in French - the adverbs “comme”, “beaucoup”, “bien”, “vraiment” and intensifying construction “c'est ... qui / que”.

The performative is another conventional linguistic tool used in three linguistic cultures to form the speech act of apology. In Russian, the pure performative “I beg your pardon” and the performative construction “I have to / want to apologize” are used; this tool is used quite often - in 13% of cases.

For the realization of the same illocutionary force, French offers a number of forms: pure performatives “Je demande pardon”, “Je demande d'excuser”, “Je prie d'accepter les excuses / excuser” and performative constructions “Je voulais / voudrais m'excuser / demander pardon”. They are used in 9% of the total number of speech situations expressing an apology. Performatives, while the most powerful of the means in the speaker's repertoire, are often accompanied with elements that reinforce the illocutionary meaning of apology. Among them, we find lexical means (interjections), grammatical means (conditional mood of the verb) and speech tactics (argumentation, expression of hope for forgiveness).

Analysis of the material shows that conventional linguistic means prevail in the speech of speakers - representatives of all three linguistic cultures (Table 1). They are mostly present in the speech repertoire of Russians: their share is 70% of the total amount of all means, of which 57% are imperative, and 13% are performative. The French and the British use approximately the same number of language means: 62% and 61%, respectively, of which 54% and 52% are the use of the imperative.

Unlike linguistic means, the illocutionary force of apology in conventional speech means is not a direct consequence of their linguistic semantics, as it was the case with performative and the imperative, but is determined with the convention or tradition of use, therefore they serve as standard speech means of expressing this illocutionary force.

In the Russian-speaking culture, the generally accepted forms for expressing an apology are the following: “It's a pity”, “I didn't want”, “I'm guilty”, “My mistake”. Statements structured with using these means acquire the illocutionary force of an apology when they are implemented in a speech situation, which includes the component “harming the speaker”. The fact that they acquired such an illocutionary meaning

is explained with the fact that these forms regularly accompany the speech act of apology, structured with the help of linguistic means, as argumentation, and therefore retain this illocution when used independently.

The repertoire of a representative of the English-speaking culture includes the following forms from conventional speech means: “It’s my fault”, “my bad”, “I didn’t want to”, through which the speech act of apology is also drawn up.

The repertoire of a native French speaker from conventional speech means includes the following: “Je suis désolé (e)”, “C’est ma faute”, “Je regrette”, “Je ne voulais pas”. The most common of these is the first form, which can be accompanied with means to enhance the illocution of apology. These include lexical means (adverbs), syntactic means (intensifying construction), speech tactics (use of appeals, argumentation, accompanying speech act of persuasion, acceptance of blame).

Thus, the composition of the means is similar in all three linguistic cultures. The difference lies in the frequency of use. To a lesser extent, the use of conventional speech means is characteristic of the speech of a Russian-speaking speaker, who uses them in 18% of cases. An intermediate position in this indicator is occupied by the repertoire of a native English speaker who uses these means in 32% of utterances. The most frequent use of conventional speech means is distinguished by the representative of the French-speaking culture, who uses them in 34% of situations of expressing an apology.

Another type of means used by the speaker is non-conventional speech means, which are characterized with the fact that their illocutionary power does not correspond to the linguistic semantics of forms, is not fixed with the tradition of use in a given speech community, but is entirely determined with a specific speech situation and has an individual character. In this regard, it is impossible to single out individual grammatical forms, lexical units, syntactic constructions or speech clichés. Therefore, when we talk about unconventional means, we mean mainly the speech tactics used by the speaker in a situation of expressing an apology.

A native speaker of the Russian language, expressing the corresponding illocution implicitly, mainly uses three speech tactics, which are based on an explanation of the reason for involuntary damage to the interlocutor: 1) a reference to objective circumstances, 2) a reference to lack of time, 3) a reference to poor state of health. In English-speaking culture, the implementation of an implicit apology occurs through the objectification of the following tactics: 1) reference to objective circumstances, 2) expression of regret, 3) justification for an involuntary violation of the rules of etiquette, 4) take the blame upon oneself. In the repertoire of a representative of French-speaking culture, when implementing an indirect speech act of apology, the following speech tactics are frequent: 1) a reference to poor state of health, 2) a negative assessment of one's own act, self-abasement, 3) an increase in the authority of the interlocutor, 4) admission of damage.

Thus, the analysis of practical material allowed us to clarify the volume of unconventional speech means in the speech of representatives of different linguistic cultures: 12% in Russian, 6% in English and 5% in French. The repertoire of a native Russian speaker mainly includes the following speech tactics: 1) reference to objective circumstances, 2) reference to lack of time, 3) reference to poor state of health. The representative of the English-speaking culture mainly uses such tactics as 1) reference to objective circumstances, 2) expression of regret, 3) justification of an involuntary violation of the rules of etiquette, 4) take the blame upon oneself. For a French speaker, many speech tactics are acceptable: 1) a reference to

poor state of health, 2) a negative assessment of one's own act, self-deprecation, 3) an increase in the authority of the interlocutor, 4) admission of damage.

Table 1. Using the means of drawing up the speech act of apology in the speech of representatives of three cultures

Means of formalizing of the speech act of apology		Frequency in Russian	Frequency in English	Frequency in French
Conventional language means	Imperative	7%	54%	52%
	Performative	3%	8%	9%
	Conventional speech means	8%	32%	34%
	Unconventional speech means	12%	6%	5%

7. Conclusion

Thus, the speech act of apology is a complex speech action aimed at realizing the main communicative goal - apologizing for the harm caused. The analysis of the material showed that the apology is a universal ethical norm. However, the linguistic implementation of an apology is enshrined in specific rules of conduct and linguistic formulas specific to each culture.

The degree of perception and understanding of a given speech act largely depends on the context. An apology can be formalized with the help of both conventional language and speech means, forming a direct speech act, and unconventional means, realizing an indirect speech act. The analyzed examples indicate the presence of peculiarities in the procedure for using the listed means in different linguistic cultures. The greatest similarity in their application is observed in the English-speaking and French-speaking cultures, which can be explained with historical, geographical and political reasons.

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