

Requests and Apologies: A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP)¹

SHOSHANA BLUM-KULKA

Hebrew University, Jerusalem

ELITE OLSHTAIN

Tel Aviv University

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper reports on an ongoing project concerned with a cross-cultural investigation of speech act realization patterns. The goals of the project are to compare across languages the realization patterns of two speech acts—requests and apologies—and to establish the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns in these two acts in each of the languages studied within the project. The theoretical and methodological framework for this investigation has been developed as a result of close collaboration among the participants of the project, who have all followed the same approach in data collection and data analysis. The paper will outline the theoretical framework for the project, present the methodology developed, and illustrate our procedures for analysis by giving examples from the data in some of the languages studied.²

1.1 *Theoretical considerations*

In recent years, the relevance of pragmatics has become increasingly clear to applied linguists. Though the scope of pragmatics is far from easy to define, the variety of research interests and developments in the field share one basic concern: the need to account for the rules that govern the use of language in context (Levinson 1983). One of the basic challenges for research in pragmatics is the issue of universality: to what extent is it possible to determine the degree to which the rules that govern the use of language in context vary from culture to culture and from language to language? Answers to this question have to be sought through cross-cultural research in pragmatics. For applied linguists, especially for those concerned with communicative language learning and teaching, cross-cultural research in pragmatics is essential in coping with the applied aspect of the issue of universality: to what extent is it possible to specify the particular pragmatic rules of use for a given language, rules which second language learners will have to acquire in order to attain successful communication in the target language?

The issue of universality is especially relevant in the context of speech act studies. A number of studies have established empirically (Cohen and Olshtain 1981; Kasper 1981; House 1982; Wolfson 1981; Blum-Kulka 1982; Thomas 1983) that second language speakers might fail to communicate effectively (commit pragmatic failures), even when they have an excellent grammatical and lexical command of the target language. In part, second language speakers' pragmatic failures have been shown to be traceable to cross-linguistic differences in speech act realization rules, indicating in Widdowson's terms (Widdowson 1978) that learners are just as liable to transfer 'rules of use' (having to do with contextual appropriacy) as those of 'usage' (related to grammatical accuracy).

The methodological framework set up for the study of requests and apologies

is based on the assumption that observed diversity in the realization of speech acts in context may stem from at least **three different types of variability**: (a) intra-cultural, situational variability; (b) cross-cultural variability; (c) individual variability.³ Thus, there might be systematic differences in the realization patterns of speech acts, depending on social constraints embedded in the situation. For example, requests addressed to superiors might tend, in a given culture, to be phrased in less direct terms than requests addressed to social inferiors, or vice versa. On another dimension, within the same set of social constraints, members of one culture might tend to express a request more or less directly than members of another culture. Finally, individuals within the same society might differ in their speech act realization patterns, depending on personal variables such as sex, age, or level of education. In order to investigate the nature of variability on each of these dimensions, and in order to be able to determine their relative role as compared to each other, we need to study speech act realization patterns in a variety of situations within different cultures, in cross-culturally comparable ways, across similar situations, preferably involving different types of individuals. Furthermore, in order to establish the ways in which second language speakers' patterns of use differ from those of native speakers, we need to establish first how the different intra-cultural sources of variability (situational and individual) account for actual use in the two languages, the learner's native language and the learner's target language.

1.2 *The goals of the project*

The CCSARP project was initiated in a joint attempt to pursue this line of research. The project focuses on two speech acts (requests and apologies) in eight languages or varieties, divided among the participants as follows:

- 1 Australian English—Eija Ventola⁴
- 2 American English—Nessa Wolfson and Ellen Rintell
- 3 British English—Jenny Thomas
- 4 Canadian French—Elda Weizman
- 5 Danish—Claus Faerch and Gabriele Kasper
- 6 German—Juliane House-Edmondson and Helmut Vollmer
- 7 Hebrew—Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Elite Olshtain
- 8 Russian—Jenny Thomas

For each language, data are being collected from both native and non-native speakers.

The goals of the project are:

- 1 To establish native speakers' patterns of realization with respect to two speech acts—requests and apologies—relative to different social constraints, in each of the languages studied (**situational variability**).
- 2 To establish the similarities and differences in the realization patterns of requests and apologies *cross-linguistically*, relative to the same social constraints across the languages studied (**cross-cultural variability**).
- 3 To establish the similarities and differences between native and non-native realization patterns of requests and apologies relative to the *same* social constraints (**individual, native versus non-native variability**).

2. THE METHOD USED FOR DATA COLLECTION

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, we needed an empirical design that would allow us to account for cross-cultural variability, situational variability, and individual variability (of learners) in the realization patterns of the same speech acts.

2.1 *Instrument*

In order to ensure cross-cultural comparability, it was decided to obtain the data by the use of a controlled elicitation procedure. The instrument used is a **discourse completion test**, originally developed for comparing the speech act realization patterns of native speakers and learners (Blum-Kulka, 1982). The test consists of incomplete discourse sequences that represent socially differentiated situations. Each discourse sequence presents a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, the social distance between the interlocutors and their status relative to each other, followed by an incomplete dialogue. Informants are asked to complete the dialogue, thereby providing the speech act aimed at in the given context.

In the following examples of test items, (1) is constructed to elicit a request, and (2) to elicit an apology.

1 *At a students' apartment*

Larry, John's room-mate, had a party the night before and left the kitchen in a mess.

John: Larry, Ellen and Tom are coming for dinner tonight and I'll have to start cooking soon; _____

Larry: OK, I'll have a go at it right away.

2 *At the professor's office*

A student has borrowed a book from her teacher, which she promised to return today. When meeting her teacher, however, she realizes that she forgot to bring it along.

Teacher: Miriam, I hope you brought the book I lent you.

Miriam: _____

Teacher: OK, but please remember it next week.

From the answers given to (1) we can learn the preferences native speakers have for realizing a request for action among familiar equals; a cross-linguistic comparison of the answers provided for the same item will tell us whether there are differences in the type of strategy chosen to realize the act under the same social constraints *across* languages. From the answers to (2) we can tell whether speakers in a given culture consider it appropriate to apologize in the specific situation, and if they do, what strategies they use for realizing the act, as compared to members of other cultures.

Situational variation: The test is also designed to capture possible variability *across* social constraints. There are eight items eliciting requests, and eight items eliciting apologies, which vary on the social parameters of \pm social distance and \pm 'dominance'.⁵

Individual variation: Theoretically, it would be possible to capture individual variability along personal variables such as age, sex, level of education, type of occupation, etc., by seeking out different types of populations of informants in each language. In practice, our design at this stage allows for only one dimension

of possible personal variance in native use (sex differences), and aims at an otherwise homogeneous population for both native and non-native speakers. On another level, individual variation is being studied by seeking out native and non-native informants for each of the languages studied.

2.2 *Population*

The group of informants for each language totals 400, and comprises an equal number of male and female university students in their second and third years of study in any subject but linguistics. Half of the informants are native speakers, and half non-natives.

2.3 *Procedure*

The first version of the discourse completion test in English, prepared in collaboration by the research team, was pilot-tested with a group of fifty native English speakers at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The goal of the pilot test was to establish the contextual appropriateness of the items in eliciting the speech acts under study, i.e. to check whether the completion items indeed elicited requests and apologies. Dialogues that did not prove to be sufficiently delimited contextually were slightly changed, and the resulting version was administered to another thirty-five native English-speaking students. This version proved to be reliable in eliciting the speech acts under study; it became the master version for the project and was distributed among the members of the research group for translation into each of the respective languages. In the process of translation, each researcher was free to introduce slight cultural and stylistic modifications, as long as the main features of the social context presented by each item remained intact. For example, the university teacher in (2) above is referred to in Hebrew as 'marçe' (lecturer), in the German version as 'Professor' and in the English version as 'teacher'. In addition to such cultural modifications, it was also necessary to differentiate stylistically between different English versions of the test, so as to adapt the style to the different English dialects studied. To date, the test has been administered in seven target languages (except Russian) to two hundred native speakers and two hundred learners. The analysis of the results, now under way, is based on a coding scheme prepared in collaboration by the research team. In the following sections, we shall present the basic categories of the scheme, illustrating them with examples from actual data in different languages.

3. DESIGNING THE FRAMEWORK FOR CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SPEECH

ACT PATTERNS: THE CODING SCHEME

The analysis of the data yielded by the responses to the discourse completion test is based on an independent evaluation of each response according to a number of dimensions. These dimensions have been given operational definitions, presented in the form of a coding scheme. The scheme comprises two main parts—one for apologies and one for requests—and each of these in turn is subdivided into relevant major categories for analysis, further subdivided into sub-classifications.

The process of developing a coding scheme with its major categories and sub-classifications is a major challenge for research of this kind. Originally, the categories were defined on the basis of general theoretical considerations and previous work in the field by members of the team. This scheme was then further modified

and refined so as to fit the data yielded in the different languages. The main categories or dimensions of the scheme (as will be subsequently described) were kept constant, since they proved to be valid for analysing the data in the languages investigated. The sub-categories, however, are still undergoing modification as fresh data are coming in.

3.1 *Requests*

3.1.1 *Defining units for analysis.* The unit of analysis for both requests and apologies in the discourse completion test is the utterance or sequence of utterances supplied by the informant in completing the test item, provided it realizes (or contains a realization of) the speech act under study.

The first problem in looking at the sequence is in deciding whether all of its parts are of equal importance or serve equal functions in realizing the speech act aimed at. In the procedure adopted, the problem is dealt with by analysing the sequence into the following segments: (a) Address Term(s); (b) Head act; (c) Adjunct(s) to Head act.⁶ The segmentation is meant to delimit the utterance(s) that constitute the nucleus of the speech act (the 'Head act'), i.e. that part of the sequence which might serve to realize the act independently of other elements. For example, consider (3):

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| A | B | C |
| 3 | Danny / could you lend me £100 for a week / I've run into problems with the rent for my apartment.(F) ⁷ | |

The sequence in (3) would be broken down into three parts:

- a. 'Danny' Address term
- b. 'Could you . . . etc.' Head act
- c. 'I've run into problems . . .' Adjunct to Head act

The distinction between Address terms and Head acts is evident and hence will not be elaborated on any further here. The issue of separating Head acts from Adjuncts, on the other hand, is a more problematic one. Consider the following:

4 *Between room-mates in a student apartment*

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| | A | B |
| 4a | A: Would you mind cleaning up the kitchen? / You left it in a mess last night.(F) | |
| | B: OK, I'll clean it up. | |
| 4b | A: You left the kitchen in a mess last night. | |
| | B: OK, I'll clean it up. | |

The point to be considered in contrasting (4a) and (4b) is that the same words (i.e., 'you left the kitchen in a mess last night' (utterance B in (4a) and A in (4b)) might in one case serve only to strengthen or support an act realized by other verbal means, while in another case, this utterance constitutes the act itself. Thus, utterance B is redundant from a strictly illocutionary point of view in (4a), while the same utterance realizes the request in (4b). It follows that the segmentations in Head acts and Adjuncts is based on sequential, as well as contextual and functional criteria.

3.1.2 *Strategy types.* Examples (4a) and (4b) illustrate different options in terms of the level of 'directness' chosen for the realization of the request. There have

been several attempts in theoretical, as well as empirical work on the speech act of request (Searle 1975, 1979; Ervin-Tripp 1976; House and Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka 1984) to set up a classification of request strategies that would form a **cross-linguistically valid scale of directness**.

On theoretical grounds, there seem to be three major levels of directness that can be expected to be manifested universally by requesting strategies;

- a. **the most direct, explicit level**, realized by requests syntactically marked as such, such as imperatives, or by other verbal means that name the act as a request, such as performatives (Austin 1962) and 'hedged performatives' (Fraser 1975);
- b. **the conventionally indirect level**; procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language (these strategies are commonly referred to in speech act literature, since Searle 1975, as *indirect speech acts*; an example would be 'could you do it' or 'would you do it' meant as requests);
- c. **nonconventional indirect level**, i.e. the open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act ('Why is the window open'), or by reliance on contextual clues ('It's cold in here').

On the basis of our empirical work on requests in different languages (House and Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka, Danet, and Gerson 1983), we have subdivided these three levels into nine distinct sub-levels called '**strategy types**', that together form a scale of indirectness. The categories on this scale are expected to be manifested in all languages studied; the distribution of strategies on the scale is meant to yield the relative degree of directness preferred in making requests in any given language, as compared to another, in the same situation. The nine strategy types are presented in Table 1.

Requests are by definition face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1978), by making a request, the speaker impinges on the hearer's claim to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. The variety of direct and indirect ways for making requests seemingly available to speakers in all languages is probably socially motivated by the need to minimize the imposition involved in the act itself. One way in which the speaker can minimize the imposition is by preferring an indirect strategy to a direct one, i.e. by activating choice on the scale of indirectness. But even after the speaker has decided on the level of directness for performing the act, s/he still has a variety of verbal means available with which to manipulate the degree of imposition involved. As suggested by Faerch and Kasper (this volume) such manipulations might take the form of either 'internal' or 'external' modifications. **Internal modifications are achieved through devices within the same 'Head act', while the external modifications are localized not within the 'Head act' but within its immediate context.** In neither case does the modification affect the level of directness of the act, nor does it alter its propositional content. In the following, we shall outline the dimensions of both types of manipulations as captured by the coding scheme.

3.1.3 **Point of view operation**.¹⁰ Many request realizations include reference to the requestor ('I' the speaker), the requestee ('you' the hearer), and the action to be performed. The speaker might choose different ways to refer to any of these

Table 1: Request strategy types—definition of coding categories and tokens

<i>Types</i>	<i>Tokens</i>
1 Mood derivable The grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request.	(5) Leave me alone (S3, AUE) ^a (6) Clean up this mess, please (S1, BE)
2 Explicit performatives The illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named by the speakers.	(7) Avekšex lo lehaxnot kan et haoto (I'm asking you not to park the car here) (S11, H) (8) Ich bitte Sie den Platz sofort freizumachen (S11, G)
3 Hedged performative Utterances embedding the naming of the illocutionary force.	(9) Tišma, hayiti roca levakeš mimxa šetakdim et haharçaa šelxa bešavua (I would like you to give your lecture a week earlier) (S15, H)
4 Locution derivable The illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution.	(10) Madam, you'll have to move your car (S11, AUE) (11) Entschuldigen Sie, aber Sie müssen diesen Platz freihalten (S11, G)
5 Scope stating The utterance expresses the speaker's intentions, desire or feeling <i>vis à vis</i> the fact that the hearer do X.	(12) I really wish you'd stop bothering me (S3 AUE) (13) Ich möchte von Ihnen in Ruhe gelassen werden (S3 G)
6 Language specific suggestory formula The sentence contains a suggestion to X.	(14) Why don't you get lost? (S3, AUE) (15) How about cleaning up? (S1, AUE) (16) So, why don't you come and clear up the the mess you made last night!? (S1, BE) (17) Wie wärs wenn Du die Küche aufräumen würdest? (S1 G)
7 Reference to preparatory conditions Utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed) as conventionalized in any specific language.	(18) Could you clear up the kitchen, please? (S1, BE) (19) Would you mind moving your car, please? (S11, AUE)
8 Strong hints Utterance contains partial reference to object or to elements needed for the implementation of the act (directly pragmatically implying the act).	(20) You've left this kitchen in a right mess (S1, BE) (21) Fahren Sie nicht auch in die gleiche Richtung! (S7, G)
9 Mild hints Utterances that make no reference to the request proper (or any of its elements) but are interpretable through the context as requests (indirectly pragmatically implying the act).	(22) I'm a nun (in response to the persistent boy, S3, AUE) (23) Ich bin verheiratet und habe zwei kleine Kinder (same situation as above, S3, G)

elements, manipulating by his or her choice the perspective s/he wishes the request to take. For example the difference between 'could you do it' and 'could we have it done' is one of perspective—'could *you* . . .' emphasizes the role of the hearer in the speech event, while 'could *we* . . .' stresses that of the speaker. Given the fact that in requests it is the hearer who is 'under threat', any avoidance in naming the addressee as the principal performer of the act serves to soften the impact of the imposition. We call this dimension of the analysis *request perspective* and distinguish between the following categories:

- a. *Hearer oriented*
(24) Could *you* tidy up the kitchen soon? (S1, BE)
- b. *Speaker oriented*
(25) Do you think *I* could borrow your notes from yesterday's class? (S1, AUE)
- c. *Speaker and hearer oriented*
(26) So, could *we* please clean up? (S1, AUE)
- d. *Impersonal* (The use of people/they/one as neutral agents, or the use of passivation)
(27) So it might not be a bad idea to *get it cleaned up*. (S1, AUE)

3.1.4 *Syntactic downgraders*. Mitigating the speech act of request might also be achieved by purely syntactic means (compare 'Do it'/'Will you do it?'). Hence we included in the analysis a dimension of *syntactic downgraders*, which enabled us to account for language specific surface structure variations in form independently of strategy type. For example:

- a. *Interrogative*
(28) Could you do the cleaning up? (S1, BE)
- b. *Negation*¹¹
(29) Look, excuse me. I wonder if you *wouldn't mind* dropping me home? (S7, AE)
(30) Könnten Sie Ihr Referat *nicht schon* nächste Woche halten? (S15, G)
- c. *Past tense*
(31) Račiti levakeš dxiya (I *wanted* to ask for a postponement; S13, H)
(32) Ich *wollte* mich erkundigen, ob noch etwas frei ist (S9, G)
- d. *Embedded 'if' clause*
(33) I would appreciate it if you left me alone (S3, AUE)
(34) Wie wäre es, wenn Du vorher die Küche aufräumtest? (S1, G)

The use of syntactic mitigation can indicate several different attitudes. For example, the speaker might wish to indicate that s/he is pessimistic with regard to the outcome of the request (certain negative usage) or that s/he feels hesitant about making the request (marked modals, such as 'might' instead of 'can'). Syntactic manipulations also serve as distancing elements (past tense) and as hedging devices (embedded 'if' clause).

3.1.5 *Other downgraders*. The phenomenon analysed on this dimension relates to kinds of modifications available to the speaker for achieving different effects of 'softening' the act, a phenomenon widely discussed in speech act literature (Lakoff 1973; Labov and Fanshel 1977; Brown and Levinson 1978). The classification we adopted is based on Edmondson (1981), Edmondson and House (1981) and House and Kasper (1981). The classification is a pragma-linguistic one, i.e., it

attempts to capture the pragmatic functions played by various linguistic elements in the discourse. Examples of categories are:

a. **Consultative devices.** Elements by means of which the speaker seeks to involve the hearer and bids for his/her cooperation, in addition to other strategy types. Frequently these devices are ritualized formulae:

(35) *Do you think* I could borrow your lecture notes from yesterday? (S5, BE)

b. **Understaters.** Elements by means of which the speaker minimizes parts of the proposition, such as the required action or object, as in:

(36) Could you tidy up *a bit* before I start? (S1, BE)

(37) Könntest du bitte *etwas* Ordnung schaffen? (S1, G)

c. **Hedges.** Elements by means of which the speaker avoids specification in making a commitment to the illocutionary point of the utterance, in naming the required action, in describing the manner in which it is to be performed, or in referring to any other contextual aspect involved in its performance:

(39) It would really help if *you did something* about the kitchen (S1, AUE)

d. **Downtoner.** Elements by means of which the speaker modulates the impact his/her utterance is likely to have on the hearer, achieving the modulation via devices signalling the possibility of non-compliance:

(40) Kannst du den Mist *vielleicht* mal eben *wegräumen*? (S1, G)

(41) Tuxlu *ulay* lehasia oti? (Will you be able *perhaps* to drive me? (S7, H)

3.1.6 **Upgraders.** Besides the options for decreasing the impact of the speech act, speakers also have available means by which to increase its compelling force. This function of *aggravating* the request can again be achieved through internal modifications. For example:

a. **Intensifiers.** Elements by means of which the speaker over-represents the reality denoted in the propositions:

(42) Clean up this mess, *it's disgusting* (S1, BE)

(43) Hören Sie, Sie werden *unverschämt*! (S3, G)

b. **Expletives.** Lexical intensifiers by means of which the speaker explicitly expresses negative emotional attitudes:

(44) You still haven't cleaned up that *bloody* mess! (S1, BE)

(45) Mäch gefalligst Deine *Scheisse* weg! (S1, G)

3.1.7 **Adjuncts to the Head act.** The modifications analysed so far are all internal, i.e., operate within the 'Head act'. In addition to or instead of internal modification, the speaker might also choose to support or aggravate the speech act by external modifications. **External modification does not affect the utterance used for realizing the act, but rather the context in which it is embedded, and thus indirectly modifies illocutionary force** (Faerch and Kasper, this volume). Our classification of Adjuncts to Head act draws heavily on Edmondson (1981), Edmondson and House (1981) and House and Kasper (1981).¹² Some of the categories are:

a. **Checking on availability.** The speaker prefaces his/her main speech act with an utterance intended to check if the precondition necessary for compliance holds true.

- (46) *Haim atem nosim lexivun hair?* veim ken, haim efšar lehictaref? (Are you going in the direction of the town? And if so, is it possible to join you? S7, H).
- (47) Entschuldigen Sie, wohnen Sie nichtauch in der x Strasse Wäre es möglich dass Sie mich mitnehmen? (S7, G)
- b. **Getting a precommitment.** The speaker precedes the act by an utterance that can count as an attempt to obtain a precommittal.
- (48) *Ata muxan la'asot li tova?* Ulay ata muxan lehašil li et haršimot šelxa lexama yamin? (*Will you do me a favor?* Could you perhaps lend me your notes for a few days? S5, H).
- (49) *Könnten Sie mir wohl einen grossen Gefallen tun?* Ihr Referat passt viel besser nächste Woche und . . . (S15, G)
- c. **Grounder.** The speaker indicates the reasons for the request. (Grounders may precede or follow the Head act)
- (50) Judith, *I missed class yesterday*, could I borrow your notes? (S5, BE)
- (51) Excuse me, *I've just missed my bus and you live on the same road*. I wonder if I could trouble you for a lift? (S7, BE)
- d. **Sweetener.** By expressing exaggerated appreciation of the hearer's ability to comply with the request, the speaker lowers the imposition involved.
- (52) *Yeš lax ktav yad nehdar*, efšar lekabel et haxomer lekama yamin? (*You have beautiful handwriting*, would it be possible to borrow your notes for a few days? S5, H)
- e. **Disarmer.** The speaker indicates his/her awareness of a potential offense, thereby attempting to anticipate possible refusal.
- (53) Excuse me, *I hope you don't think I'm being forward*, but is there any chance of a lift home? (S7, BE)
- f. **Cost minimizer.** The speaker indicates consideration of the 'cost' to the hearer involved in compliance with the request.
- (54) Pardon me, but could you give me a lift, *if you're going my way*, as I just missed the bus and there isn't another one for an hour (S7, BE)

To summarize the procedure of analysis for request, consider (54) again:

Pardon me, but could you give me a lift if you're going my way, as I've just missed the bus and there isn't another one for an hour (S7, BE).

This sequence would be coded as follows:

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Element</i>
1 Address term	Attention getter	'Pardon me'
2 Request perspective	Hearer dominant	'Could you'
3 Request strategy	Preparatory	'Could you give'
4 Downgraders	—	none
5 Upgraders	—	none
6 Adjuncts to Head act	1 Cost minimizer 2 Grounder	'if you're going my way' 'as I've just missed'

3.2 Apologies

The speech act of apologizing is rather different from that of requesting, since apologies are generally *post-event acts*, while requests are always *pre-event acts*: requests are made in an attempt to cause an event or change one—apologies signal the fact that a certain type of event has already taken place (or the speaker might be aware of the fact that it is about to take place). *By apologizing, the speaker recognizes the fact that a violation of a social norm has been committed and admits to the fact that s/he is at least partially involved in its cause.* Hence, by their very nature, apologies involve loss of face for the speaker and support for the hearer, while requests might involve loss of face for both interlocutors.

There are three preconditions (see also Faerch and Kasper, this volume) which must hold true for the apology act to take place:

- a. S did X or abstained from doing X (or is about to do it).
- b. X is perceived by S only, by H only, by both S and H, or by a third party as a breach of a social norm.
- c. X is perceived by at least one of the parties involved as offending, harming, or affecting H in some way.

In order for the apology to materialize when these three preconditions exist, S must be aware of all the preconditions and infer the need for him/her to apologize. By performing the apology S pays tribute to the social norm (recognizes precondition (b)) and attempts to placate the hearer (recognizes precondition (c)).

If the violation has not yet been committed or if H is not as yet aware of it, S has various ways in which to break the news to H. In our study we have excluded such cases and have concentrated on situations in which the offence is known to both H and S.

3.2.1 Strategy types. The linguistic realization of the act of apologizing can take one of two basic forms, or a combination of both:

a. The most direct realization of an apology is done via an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID),¹³ which selects a routinized, formulaic expression of regret (a performative verb) such as: *(be) sorry; apologize, regret; excuse*, etc. The IFID fulfills the function of signalling regret (on the S's part) for X (the violation), and thus is intended to placate the H. Our earlier work on apologies (Olshtain and Cohen, in press; and Olshtain and Blum-Kulka, 1983) seems to indicate that for each language there is a scale of conventionality of IFID realizations. Thus, in English, the most common form is '(be) sorry', while in Hebrew the word 'slixa', which means literally 'forgiveness' is the most conventional realization of an apology. In our cross-cultural study we will develop a scale of conventionality for each language based on the data analysed. Table 2 presents coding categories for English apology IFIDs.

b. Another way in which one can perform an apology (with or without an IFID) is to use an utterance which contains reference to one or more elements from a closed set of specified propositions. The semantic content of these propositions relates to the preconditions (mentioned earlier) which must hold true for the apology act to take place. Thus, an utterance which relates to: (a) the cause for X; (b) S's responsibility for X; (c) S's willingness to offer repairs for X or promise forbearance (that X will never happen again) can serve as an apology.

Table 2: *Apology IFID Types*

<i>Type (performative verb)</i>		<i>Examples</i>
1	(be) sorry	(55) I'm sorry (that) I'm so late (S10, AUE)
2	excuse	(56) Excuse me for being late again (F)
3	apologize	(57) I apologize for coming late to the meeting (F)
4	forgive	(58) Forgive me for coming late (F)
5	regret	(59) I regret that I can't help you (F)
6	pardon	(60) Pardon me for interrupting (F)

In Olshtain and Cohen (in press) we suggest the notion of an 'apology speech act set' to encompass the potential range of apology strategies, any one of which (i.e. an IFID or reference to preconditions (a)-(c)) may count as a realization of an apology. Thus, in addition to the IFID, the apology speech act set includes four potential strategies for performing the act of apologizing: (1) an explanation or account of the cause which brought about the offence; (2) an expression of the S's responsibility for the offence; (3) an offer of repair; (4) a promise of forbearance. In studying apologies, we are, therefore, concerned on the one hand with the selection of an IFID and on the other with an open-ended variety of utterances which must, however, contain reference to the specified set of propositions.

As we have seen so far, the difference in nature between requests and apologies is such that documentation of verbal realizations requires different criteria for each of these two speech acts. For requests, the continuum between direct and indirect means available for realizing the act includes for every language a finite set of conventional (indirect) strategies, which are realized in linguistically fixed ways. For apologies, on the other hand, there is no distinct set of mutually exclusive categories comparable to the request strategy types. Instead, we need to establish the presence or absence of the IFID and of each one of the four potential strategies which make up the speech act set. Accordingly, the general procedure for coding apologies used here is based on a series of independent, dichotomous questions: (a) does the utterance in question contain an IFID? (b) does it contain an explanation? (c) does it express S's responsibility? (d) does it convey an offer of repair? or (e) does it contain a promise of forbearance? If the answer to any of these questions is affirmative, then the utterance is assigned that category according to a list of sub-classifications. (See Table 2 for a subclassification of IFIDs.)

Taking on responsibility. The first strategy analysed is that of S's responsibility. In the attempt to placate H, S often chooses to take on responsibility for the offence which created the need to apologize. Such recognition of one's fault is face-threatening to S and intended to appease H. The sub-categories for this strategy may be placed on a continuum from strong self-humbling on S's part to a complete and blunt denial of responsibility. Thus, the acceptance of responsibility would be viewed by H as an apology, while denial of responsibility would be intended as S's rejection of the need to apologize. In our coding scheme we allow for various degrees of 'taking on responsibility'. Some of the sub-categories are:

- a. *S expresses trait of self-deficiency* (thus accepting responsibility)
 - (61) I'm so forgetful (S4, AUE)
 - (62) You know me, I'm never on time (S10, AUE)

b. *Explicit self-blame*

(63) It's my fault/mistake (S12, AUE)

c. *Denial of fault* (rejecting the need to apologize)

(64) It's not my fault that it fell down (S16, AUE)

Explanation, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance, the three strategies which have not yet been discussed in detail, are inherently situation-dependent and are therefore closely related to the type of violation which occurred. Thus, when S intends to justify the offence as resulting from external factors over which s/he has no (or very little) control, then an explanation or account of the situation fulfills the function of an apology. Such an explanation may be explicitly related to the offence or it may present the 'state of affairs' in a general way, thus relating implicitly to the offence. In situations where the damage or inconvenience which affected H can be compensated for, S can choose to offer repair in a specified or general manner, intending this as an apology. Lastly, there are offences for which S feels the need to promise forbearance. This, in a way, is also admitting responsibility without necessarily stating it explicitly. Examples of the coding categories for the three strategies discussed are:

a. *Explanation or account of cause*

i explicit: (65) The bus was late (S10, AUE)

ii implicit: (66) Traffic is always so heavy in the morning (F)

b. *Offer of repair*

i specified: (67) I'll pay for the damage (S12, AUE)

ii unspecified: (68) I'll see what I can do (S8, AUE)

c. *Promise of forbearance*

(69) This won't happen again (S10, AUE)

3.2.3 *Apology intensification*. Apology intensification can be brought about by any one of the following devices:

- a. an intensifying expression within the IFID;
- b. expressing explicit concern for the hearer—externally to the IFID;
- c. using multiple strategies (\pm IFIDs and any one or more of the four other strategies).

These three different manners of intensification are not mutually exclusive and could all be used simultaneously.

The intensification which operates within the IFID is usually expressed via an intensifier, as seen in the following:

a. *Intensification*adverbials: (70) I'm *very* . . . sorry (S16, AUE)repetition (or double intensifier): (71) Ani *nora nora* mictaeret (I'm terribly, terribly sorry, S4, H)

Externally to the IFID, intensification can be brought about by an expression of concern for the hearer:

b. *Concern for the Hearer*

(72) Have you been waiting long? (S6, AUE)

There are a number of different factors which affect the S's decision to apologize in order to further restore the H's face, even at high cost to S's face. Perhaps the most significant of these factors is the degree of violation or the seriousness of the offence, as perceived by S. Furthermore, there may be cultural, personal, and contextual elements that influence the decision to apologize, and affect the strategy selection. Culturally, for instance, coming late to a meeting might be perceived as a more serious offence in an American setting than in a comparable Israeli one, and therefore Americans, as a group, will tend to apologize more intensely in this situation. On the individual level, some people tend to apologize more than others.

On the contextual level, the physical setting may be such that an offence can be perceived as more or less serious. Thus, bumping into someone in a crowded bus might be viewed as a considerably lower offence than bumping into someone in an open space. Faerch and Kasper (this volume) describe the degree of offence as being assessed in terms of the extent to which it violates norms of behavior in a given socio-cultural structure and how it affects the interlocutors' role and relationship.

Social parameters of distance, power, and age might also contribute, within the cultural setting, to intensification of the apology. Thus, in some cultures the need to apologize to an older person or to a superior may be very pronounced.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The CCSARP Project was initiated in an attempt to investigate intra-language and inter-language (cultural) variability in the realization patterns of requests and apologies, with special emphasis on the comparison between native and non-native usage. We would like to conclude this paper by considering some of the basic theoretical and empirical implications raised by this type of research.

One of the central issues in the study of speech acts in general is the question of universality: to what extent is it possible to reveal basic pragmatic features for given speech acts, expected to be manifested in any natural language? The analytical framework for the investigation of speech acts developed for this study is based on a series of working hypotheses regarding what constitutes possible candidates for universal features of requests and apologies.

For requests, three such working hypotheses regarding universal features guided our work: (a) in requesting behavior it is possible to distinguish among central phenomena such as strategy types as different from internal and external modification; (b) requesting behavior is inherently based on choices from a variety of options ranging from direct to indirect ones; (c) the scale of indirectness encompasses at least three main types of options (direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect).

For apologies, two working hypotheses are relevant: in apologies it is possible to delimit linguistic markers of pragmatic force (IFIDs); and (b) additionally (or alternatively) to IFIDs, apologies can be realized by reference to a set of specified propositions.

The above hypotheses have been translated into operational dimensions for data analysis. The classification of the CCSARP data along these dimensions is thus a constant challenge to the possible universality of the pragmatic feature captured by each dimension.

Another facet of the issue of universality relates to the degree and nature of possible cross-cultural variance in speech act realization. The use of the same

empirical framework for the analysis of data from the CCSARP languages is expected to reveal this degree of variance. Thus, for example, the distribution of request strategy types for the situations represented by the test will enable us to determine general cultural preferences along the direct/indirect continuum. Furthermore, cross-linguistic comparison of the distribution of request strategy types along the same social parameters should reveal the differential effect of these parameters on strategy selection.

The nature of cross-linguistic variance is expected to be revealed by further analysis of the data, via the sub-classifications within each dimension. These sub-classifications represent a repertoire of pragmalinguistic options; languages might differ in the range of options included in the repertoire, in the degree to which these options are realized and in the manner in which they combine to realize the speech act in actual use. It should be added that the full nature of language specific pragma-linguistic features will probably be revealed only by further qualitative analysis of the request and apology data in each of the languages studied.

The analysis of CCSARP data so far seems to be in line with the basic assumptions underlying the study. Namely, on the one hand the phenomena captured by the main dimensions are validated by the observed data, and thus might be regarded as potential candidates for universality; on the other hand, the cross-linguistic comparative analysis of the distribution of realization patterns, relative to the same social constraints, reveals rich cross-cultural variability.

The CCSARP project, as outlined in this paper, is admittedly an ambitious undertaking. Hence a word of caution is called for; the phenomena captured by the analytical framework of the project are not to be regarded as an exhaustive description of requests and apologies, but rather as reflecting our present understanding of the speech acts studied. Subsequent stages of the project will, we hope, deepen this understanding.

NOTES

¹ CCSARP stands for Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns. The project participants are: Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Hebrew University, Jerusalem; Claus Faerch, University of Copenhagen; Juliane House-Edmondson, University of Hamburg; Gabriele Kasper, University of Aarhus; Elite Olshtain, Tel Aviv University; Ellen Rintell, University of Massachusetts; Jenny Thomas, University of Lancaster; Elda Weizman, Hebrew University; Nessa Wolfson, University of Pennsylvania; Eija Ventola, University of Sydney; Helmut Vollmer, University of Osnabrück.

² Particular contributions to the presentation here were made by Claus Faerch, Gabriele Kasper, and Juliane House-Edmondson. For more details on the research design and methodology, see also Faerch and Kasper *et al.* (1984).

³ Two other variables that might influence choice of request strategy in context are: (a) the goal of the request and (b) the degree of imposition involved. Thus, it might be expected that requests for permission, since by definition they occur between unequals, will tend to be less direct than requests for action. The results of an ethnographic study on the language of requesting in Israel, based on close to 500 request tokens, showed requests for action as being the most direct, and requests for permission as the most indirect, with requests for goods and for information clustering in between the two extremes (Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson, 1983). In the CCSARP project, the goal of the request is built into the description of the situation and hence can be taken into account in the analysis of the data, though at this stage it is not being manipulated systematically. Degree of imposition is a difficult variable to control for cross-culturally, since it might be the case that the same request, such as asking for a small

loan, is considered in one culture more of an imposition than in another. In order to come to grips with this issue, we have been experimenting in Hebrew with a separate questionnaire, which contains the CCSARP project discourse sequences with completed dialogues. A group of judges has been asked to rate the degree of imposition involved in each request situation, presented to the judges in the form of questions such as 'How difficult do you think it was to make the request?' and 'How would you estimate the chances of the request being complied with?'. The results indicate significant inter-situational variation in the ratings given by native speakers of Hebrew. The rating questionnaire is now in the process of being adapted for use in the other languages involved in the project.

⁴ The data have been analysed (so far) by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain.

⁵ The following role constellations are represented on the test: (a) [+SD], [$x > y$]; (b) [-SD] [$x = y$]; (c) [-SD] [$x > y$]; and (d) [+SD] [$x < y$].

⁶ The terms 'Head act' and 'Adjunct' have been introduced by Ervin Tripp and David Gordon in the coding manual for analysing requests within the framework of the 'Social Development and Communication Strategies Project' (David Gordon, personal communication).

⁷ The letter in parenthesis following the examples stands for data source: F—fabricated; AE—American English; AUE—Australian English; BE—British English; CF—Canadian French; D—Danish; G—German; H—Hebrew. S stands for number of situation on the discourse completion test. Thus, S3, AUE, means that the utterance in question was supplied by a native speaker of Australian English in completing the dialogue in situation 3.

⁸ Situation 3. Australian English. The key to the situations represented in the test is provided in Appendix A and B.

⁹ For the distinction between Strong Hints and Mild Hints, see House and Kasper (1981) and also Wilson and Sperber (1981).

¹⁰ The notion of 'point of view operations' here relates to the more general issue of the ways in which sentences in natural language embed certain aspects of the context of the situation. Fillmore (1971, 1975) has shown the different ways in which sentences encode such reference to context, and Brown and Levinson (1978) have demonstrated how the deictic references can be manipulated for politeness functions in speech act realization. The term 'point of view operations' is borrowed from Brown and Levinson.

¹¹ Excluding clear propositional negation, such as 'don't do it'.

¹² Edmondson *et al.* use the term 'Supportive Move'. The term 'Adjunct' is preferred here, because it leaves room for the possibility of both aggravating and supporting external modifications of requests, instances of which occurred in the CCSARP data. For example, a threat added to a request would be an aggravating Adjunct.

¹³ The term 'illocutionary force indicating device' is taken from Searle (1969, p. 62).

APPENDIX A: REQUEST SITUATIONS

- S1 A student asks his room-mate to clean up the kitchen which the other left in a mess.
- S3 A girl tries to get rid of a boy pestering her on the street.
- S5 A student asks another student to lend her some lecture notes.
- S7 A student asks people living on the same street for a ride home.
- S9 Applicant calls for information on a job advertised in a paper.
- S11 A policeman asks a driver to move her car.
- S13 A student asks a teacher for an extension for finishing a seminar paper.
- S15 A university teacher asks a student to give his lecture a week earlier than scheduled.

APPENDIX B: APOLOGY SITUATIONS

- S2 A university professor promised to return the student's term paper that day but didn't finish reading it.

- S4 A student borrowed her professor's book, which she promised to return that day, but forgot to bring it.
- S6 A staff manager has kept a student waiting for half an hour for a job interview because he was called to an unexpected meeting.
- S8 The waiter in an expensive restaurant brings fried chicken instead of *bœuf à la maison* to a surprised customer.
- S10 A notoriously unpunctual student is late again for a meeting with a friend with whom she is working on a joint paper.
- S12 A driver in a parking lot backs into the hearer's car.
- S14 The speaker offended a fellow worker during a discussion at work. After the meeting, the fellow worker mentions this fact.
- S16 The speaker has placed a shopping bag on the luggage rack of a crowded bus. When the bus brakes, the bag falls down and hits another passenger.

REFERENCES

- Austin, J. 1962. *How to Do Things With Words*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1982. 'Learning to say what you mean in a second language: a study of the speech act performance of Hebrew second language learners'. *Applied Linguistics* III/1:29-59.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1984. 'Interpreting and performing speech acts in a second language: a cross-cultural study of Hebrew and English' in N. Wolfson and J. Elliot (eds.). *TESOL and Sociolinguistic Research*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Blum-Kulka, S., B. Danet, and R. Gerson. 1983. 'The Language of Requesting in Israeli Society'. Paper presented at the Language and Social Psychology Conference, Bristol.
- Brown, P. and S. Levinson. 1978. 'Universals of language usage: politeness phenomena' in E. Goody (ed.). *Questions and Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cohen, A. D. and E. Olshtain. 1981. 'Developing a measure of socio-cultural competence: the case of apology'. *Language Learning*: 31:1.
- Edmondson, W. 1981. *Spoken Discourse. A Model for Analysis*. London: Longman.
- Edmondson, W. and J. House. 1981. *Let's Talk and Talk About It*. Munich: Urban and Schwarzenberg.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. 1976. 'Is Sybil there? The structure of some American English directives'. *Language in Society* 5/1:25-66.
- Faerch, C. and G. Kasper, et al. 1984. 'CCSARP—A Project Description'. University of Copenhagen (mimeo).
- Fraser, B. 1975. 'Hedged performatives' in P. Cole and S. L. Morgan. *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 3. New York: Academic Press.
- Fillmore, C. 1971. 'Towards a theory of deixis'. *The PCCLLU Papers* 3/4:219-41 (Department of Linguistics, University of Hawaii).
- Fillmore, C. 1975. 'Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis (1971)'. Indiana University Linguistics Club (mimeo).
- House, J. 1982. 'Conversational strategies in German and English dialogues' in G. Nickel and D. Nehls (eds.). *Error Analysis. Constructive Linguistics and Second Language Learning* (Special Issue of *IRAL*). Heidelberg: Julius Groos.
- House, J. and G. Kasper, 1981. 'Politeness markers in English and German' in F. Coulmas (ed.). *Conversational Routine*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Kasper, G. 1981. *Pragmatische Aspekte in der Interimsprache*. Tübingen: Gunther Narr.
- Labov, W. and D. Fanshel. 1977. *Therapeutic Discourse*. New York: Academic Press.

- Lakoff, R. 1973. 'The logic of politeness: or minding your p's and q's'. *Proceedings of the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*.
- Levinson, S. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olshtain, E. and A. Cohen 1984. 'Apology: a speech act set' in N. Wolfson and J. Elliott (eds.). *TESOL and Sociolinguistic Research*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Olshtain, E. and S. Blum-Kulka. 1983. 'Degree of Approximation'. Paper presented at Language Input in Second Language Acquisition Conference, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Searle, J. 1969. *Speech Acts—An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. 1975. 'Indirect speech acts' in Cole and Morgan (eds.). *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Searle, J. 1979. *Expression and Meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, J. 1983. 'Cross-cultural pragmatic failure'. *Applied Linguistics* 4/2:91-112.
- Widdowson, H. 1978. *Teaching Language as Communication*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, D. and D. Sperber, 1981. 'On Grice's theory of conversation' in Werth (ed.). *Conversation and Discourse*. London: Croom Helm.
- Wolfson, N. 1981. 'Compliments in cross-cultural perspective'. *TESOL Quarterly* 15/2.