

## Contrastive Analysis of the Means of Expressing Modality in the Speech Act of Apology in Contemporary Bulgarian and English

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**Abstract:** *This paper focuses on the means of expressing modality in the speech act of apology in contemporary Bulgarian and English. Speech act realization patterns of apologies, typical for native speakers of Bulgarian in different situations, have been compared and analyzed with similar speech act realization patterns, made by English speakers. Conclusions, concerning grammatical and lexical means of expressing modality in the SA of apology in both languages, have been made*

**Key words:** *speech etiquette, speech formulas/pragmatic clichés, modal means, politeness, apologies, intensifiers*

### INTRODUCTION

Assuming that **politeness** is "a system of interpersonal relationships which aim to facilitate communication and to help minimize the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in human interactions" [Konduktorova 2001: 72], then the speech acts of gratitude and **apology** can be considered as its most characteristic expression [Ignatova Tsoneva, 2007: 28].

Taking into consideration the fact that **apologies** are:

- **Expressive illocutionary acts** the goal of which coincides with the social goal of maintaining harmony between hearer and speaker [Edmondson, 1981: 280; Leech, 1983: 125].
- They have the effect of paying-off a debt, thus compensating the victim for the harm done by the offence [Searle, 1976: 12].
- An apology is called for when social norms have been violated, whether the offence is potential or real [Olshtain-Cohen, 1983:20].

And **modality** according to some researchers is connected with **the illocutionary force of the SA**: 'the communicative purpose with which a sentence is used to perform a speech act' [James 1986: 14]; '**modalities**... have been treated primarily in terms of modal meaning' (Koktová 1998: 600). **Modality** may be expressed through **verbs, adjectives, nouns, adverbs, particles, intonation**, classified as **phonetic** (intonation), **grammatical** (verbal forms, moods, word order etc.), **lexical** (word-combinations and phrases), and **lexico-grammatical** (modal verbs, modal words and modal particles) means of expressing modality. The **aim of this paper** is to **analyze the means of expressing modality in the speech act of apology** in contemporary Bulgarian and English.

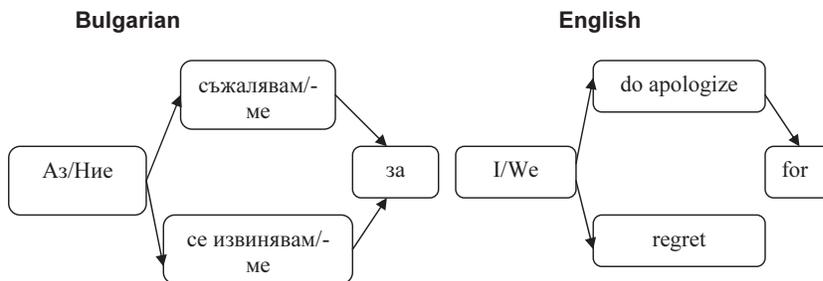
### GRAMMATICAL MEANS OF EXPRESSING MODALITY IN THE SA OF APOLOGY IN BULGARIAN

Depending on how the person who caused the interactional friction perceives his or her own actions, along with other variables such as age or familiarity of the interlocutors, apologies take different forms:

- Performative apologies: **Аз/Ние се извинявам/-ме** (I/we apologize) **Съжалявам/ -ме** (I/we regret)
- Imperative/requestive apologies: **Извинявай/ Извинете** (Excuse me), and rarely **Прощавай/ Простете** (I'm Sorry / Forgive me), **Sorry, Pardon**

#### 1. Performative apologies

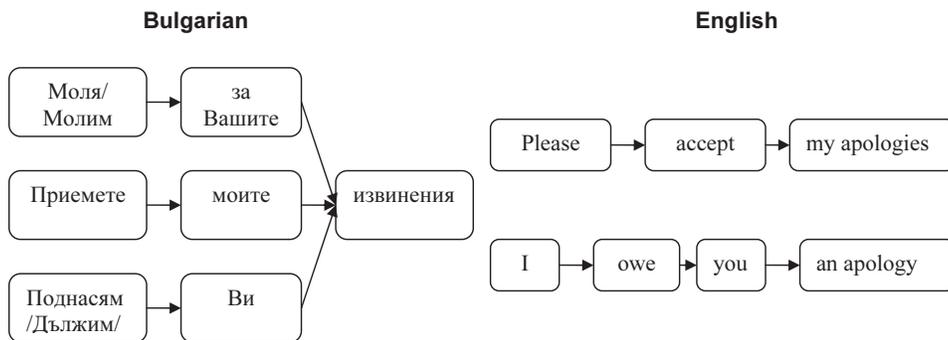
As other SA, the SA of apologies are often expressed in Bulgarian and English with the help of a **performative verb**



**Figure 1. Models of the pragmatic clichés for offering an apology/apologies in Bulgarian and English with a performative verb**

As shown in Fig. 1 an apology/apologies can be made with the following speech formulas: A personal pronoun in the 1st person sg. or pl. (Аз/Ние/ I/We), a performative verb in present tense, 1st person sg. or pl. (съжалявам/-ме/ се извинявам/-ме/ do apologize/regret) in both languages. Both patterns occur only in formal situations or business correspondence.

Since speech stereotypes are polite forms of set phrases organized on a thematic lexico-semantic level - around a "core area, lying on performativity", there are other phrases such as *Моля за извинение; Приемете моите извинения; Поднасям Ви извиненията си* (Please) accept my apologies, I offer you my apologies, etc. [Formanovskaya 1987:61] that are all logically grouped around the performative verb (and its derivatives):



**Figure 2. Models of the formulas of offering an apology/apologies in Bulgarian and English using a verb and a noun**

On Fig.2 are presented similar models of this SA in both languages. Apologies in Bulgarian can be made by the following speech formulas: **Моля/Please**, a verb 2nd person pl. imperative form (**приемете/accept**), and a noun (**извинения/apologies**); or a verb in 1st person sg. or pl. (**поднасям/-ме/дължа/-им/owe**) present tense, a personal pr. 2nd per. pl. form, objective case, and a noun (**извинения/apologies**). These models exist in English, as well.

## 2. Imperative/requestive apologies

In the Bulgarian speech etiquette the most commonly used speech etiquette formulas or pragmatic clichés for offering an apology are **Извинявай/ Извинете** (Excuse me), and rarely **Прощавай/ Простете** (I'm Sorry / Forgive me). Both formulas are **imperatives** and their aim is to make the addressee alter or modify his/her attitude toward the speaker - that is to apologize (to take the blame or to forgive him/her). These stereotyped formulas represent an **indirect request**, which is confirmed by the fact that they are frequently accompanied by the word **Моля/Молим** (please).

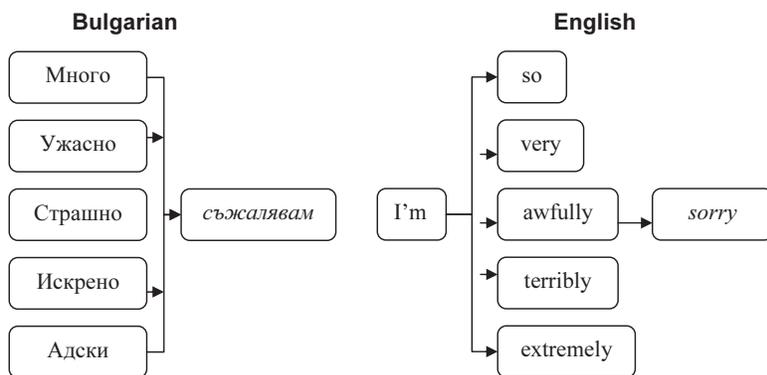
**Извинете/Извинявайте** (*Excuse me*) is frequently used in Bulgarian communication when the speaker addresses the hearer in order to ask for something or to ask for a favor: *Извинете, кой тролей да взема за центъра? Извинявайте, ще ми помогнете ли с багажа? Извинете, къде има наблизно банка?* (*Excuse me, what trolley should I take to the city centre? Excuse me, would you help me with my luggage? Excuse me, where is the nearest bank?*)

These forms of the verb in Bulgarian have the same meaning as **Excuse me** in English and are used to attract attention.

Another pragmatic cliché for offering an apology in contemporary Bulgarian is with the word **Съжалявам** (*sorry*). Apparently the changed socio-economic conditions and the globalization of the world influenced the speech formulas of apologies by adopting forms of other languages and finding a Bulgarian equivalence. [Stoichkova, 2012]

## LEXICAL MEANS OF EXPRESSING MODALITY IN THE SA OF APOLOGIES IN BULGARIAN

A preferred way of offering apologies in contemporary Bulgarian is with the verb **Съжалявам** (*sorry*), accompanied by other signs of emphasis. **Emphasis** is achieved mostly with **modality markers** such as adjectives, adverbs, verbs, particles, among which the most frequently used is the quantitative enhancer **много** (*very*). With similar function are the modifiers **ужасно**, **страшно**, **искрено**, **адски** /**съжалявам**/, (**terribly**, **awfully**, **extremely**, **really** / **Sorry** ) which make pragmatic clichés more expressive and reveal the intensity of the speaker's feelings. [Stoichkova 2012].



**Figure 3. Models of the SA of apology in Bulgarian and English expressed by a performative verb and intensifiers**

Fig. 3 presents models of the pragmatic clichés for making apologies with **adverbs acting as intensifiers and performative verbs**. These speech stereotypes have similar structures in both languages.

The dynamics of everyday life, the globalization of the world, the quick development of the contemporary economic and political situation, and the need for adequate language response of the Bulgarian language speakers to all these changes influences the "sustainable system" of our language-specific speech formulas. Consequently the most common formulaic expression **Sorry** for offering an apology in English is often used by the young generation in Bulgaria.

Another expression that is still used by the specialists of Roman languages is "**Pardon**", a form that was used in Bulgarian at the time when the system of pragmatic clichés was not established.

One of the main features of the speech formulas of apologies is their predictability: the pragmatic cliché *Извинете (Excuse me)* in Bulgarian presupposes a 'cue-response - "**Няма за какво/Моля (You're welcome/ Not at all or "please")**".

The most typical speech stereotypes used in accepting an apology in Bulgarian, as well as in English, are formulas that emphasize the insignificance of the occasion, e.g.: (**Няма за какво/ Не си заслужава да се извинявате / Не си заслужава за това да говорим / Но как така, моля Ви, няма нужда от извинение**) (*Not at all / No need of apologizing / Don't mention it*), and also clichés to assure the speaker that nothing serious has happened and the harmony of the relationship is not violated: (**За нищо / Всичко е наред**) (*That's (It's) all right / No problem / Never mind*). The last forms have entered the Bulgarian language under the influence of English.

But in Bulgarian communication, unlike in English, the addressee may not be so inclined to accept the apology and may even meet the request with a remark (often in asymmetrical relationships):

**Извините за закъснението – Добре. Влизай. Но повече не закъснявай.**  
(ученик и учител). / Sorry for being late - Good. Come in and take a seat. But no more delays. (a student and a teacher);

**Моля те, прости ми.** — Добре. Но това да ти е за последен път. (майка и син).

/Please forgive me. - Good. But this is your last time. (a mother and a son)/.

**Извинете.** — Друг път гледай къде ходиш. (на улицата).

/Sorry – Next time look where you're going (at the street)/.

## CONCLUSIONS

The contrastive analysis of the means of expressing modality in making and accepting apologies in contemporary Bulgarian and English shows that:

1. In both languages there is a wide variety of modal means for offering an apology. Part of the speaker's communicative strategy, they can express his/her intentions directly or indirectly. Each choice can be relevant or completely irrelevant to the situation of communication. Consequently, the choice of the correct pragmatic cliché, and the appropriate grammatical and lexical means of expressing the right modality depend entirely on the communicative competence of both interlocutors and their knowledge of the speech etiquette. [Ignatova Tsoneva 2007: 28].

2. Offering an apology is a compulsory part of **the speech etiquette** in English and Bulgarian, and therefore it is especially important in language learning attention to be paid to the specifics of the pragmatic clichés and the related communicative behavior connected with the studied language. The non-native speakers of English should know that:

- The English make apologies **more often** and **more expressively** than the Bulgarians

- The Bulgarians offer apologies **more rarely** and in a **more restrained manner**, especially when there is a reason for an apology, and they pay more attention to the content rather than the form
  - In comparison to Bulgarian, English speech formulas for making apologies appear **more ritualized** as their main pragmatical goal is to maintain harmony between interlocutors
  - In the English communication in case of invasion of privacy **both communicators apologize**, while in Bulgarian, **generally the one who violated** the other's space
  - In English communicative culture the apology is not only **an expression of regret**, but also it is commonly used as courtesy to the addressee, an **official marker of politeness**.
3. In English there is a **wider variety of grammatical and lexical means of expressing modality** while offering an apology
4. In Bulgarian there are relatively more linguistic patterns for making **direct apologies**

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**The paper is reviewed.**