

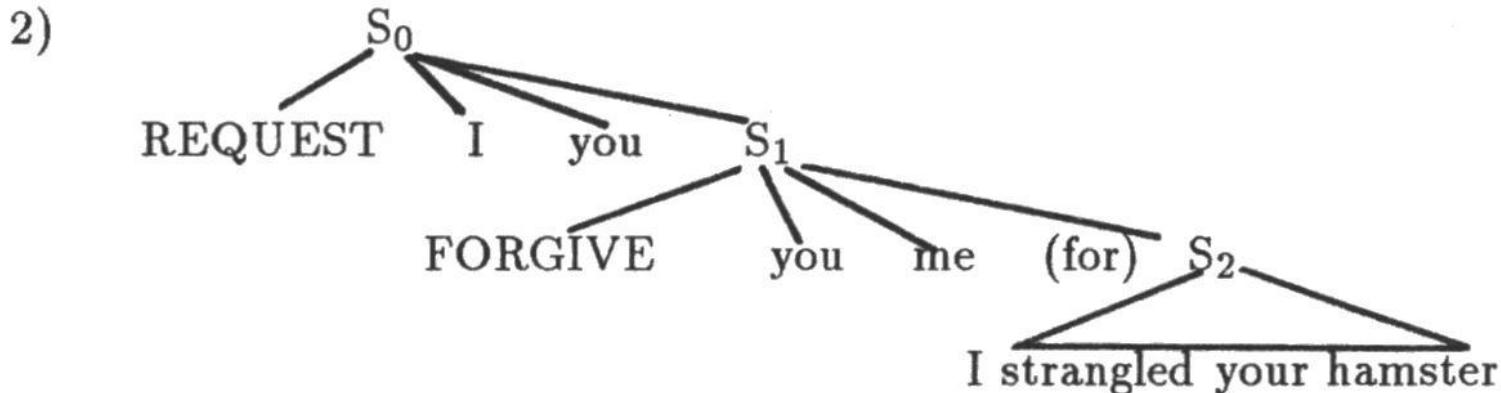
"Sorry!"

Remarks on the Semantics and Pragmatics of Apology

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The Fillmore/McCawley model

- explicit performative "I apologise" central form for apologies REQUEST [FORGIVE]
 - 1) I apologise for strangling your hamster



Are all apologies requests for forgiveness?

Variation in type, implicature and expression, within and across languages and cultures. The choice of form has implications for meaning and function.

Austin on apologies

- Apologies: "Behabitives," "... include the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes, and of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct."
- BUT
- An apology is not a reaction, attitude or expression to *another person's* behaviour or conduct, but to *one's* own.
- **apologise** only member of the behabitive class which reflects speaker-, not hearer-behaviour in its complement.

Time reference and fit

- Typically, apologies refer to past behaviour presupposed, not future behaviour or present mental states asserted;
- "pre-emptive apologies," e.g. "*I'm afraid (that),*" "*I fear (that)*" or "*Excuse me, (but)*" pseudo-apologies word-to-world direction of fit, "real" apologies have no direction of fit.

Searle and Fraser on apologies

- Searle: "Expressives" "The illocutionary point (i.e. specific perlocutionary goal of this class is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content"
- Fraser: "An apology expresses speaker regret at an earlier act."

Psychological dimension for successful congratulation

3) Congratulation

- propositional content Some event, act, etc. E related to H
- preparatory E is *in H's interest* and S believes E is in H 's interest
- sincerity S is pleased at E
- essential Counts *as an expression of pleasure at E*
- "Congratulate" is similar to "thank" in expressing its own sincerity condition.

Psychological dimension for successful apology

- 4) **Apology**
 - propositional content Some event, act, etc. E related to S
 - preparatory E is to H 's detriment and S believes E is to H 's detriment
 - sincerity S feels regret/sorrow at E
 - essential Counts as an expression of regret/sorrow at E
- *Apologise* is similar to "*congratulate*" and "*thank*", amongst others, in expressing its own sincerity condition, although this formulation fails to account adequately for the psychological dimension, along which the sincerity condition is frequently violated.

Fillmore/McCawley vs Searle

- **Fillmore/McCawley:** perlocution primary - apology *impositive* act: hearer should ***do*** something as a result
- **Searle:** perlocution secondary - apology *indicative* act: the hearer should ***believe*** something as a result

Fillmore/McCawley: parallels in French and German:

- 5) (Je vous demande) pardon...
- 6) (Ich bitte um) Verzeihung...
- 7) (Ich bitte um) Entschuldigung...
- 8) I beg your pardon ...
- BUT
 - 9) I apologise (for ...)
 - 10) Je m'excuse (de ...)
 - 11) Ich entschuldige mich (für ... /dafür, dass...)
- not for acts of request for forgiveness but for acts which require no feedback (realised perlocutionary goal) for their success
- apologies ***rituals***, for form and convention's sake.

The status of an apology

- **Norrick:** "... expressive illocutionary acts do not backfire when the sincerity condition is not met."
- Request for forgiveness does not achieve its perlocutionary goal until granted.
- An apology, once made in appropriate circumstances, stands. It may or may not be accepted, but, couched in the form of an explicit performative, it is still an apology. Forgiveness here is almost immaterial.

A cowardly example?

- 12) Hugo: I've already said I was sorry.
Carlotta: No, my dear. You *apologised*.
It isn't quite the same thing.
- 12a) Carlotta: If any of the things I have
said have hurt you, *I'm sorry. I don't*
apologise. I'm just sorry. I'm also sorry
for having kept you up so late.
(Noel Coward, "Song at Twilight")

Cognition vs. command 1

Searle: apology a cognitive, rather than a requestive act.

Norrick: “apologising expresses regret whether it is felt or not.”

Fillmore/McCawley: psychological/affective dimension not present, more mechanistic light, dealing with operant behaviour rather than with emotional state or change.

Cognition vs. command 2

- **Request[forgive]** : some element of negative evaluation, but personal involvement does not figure largely.
Psychological arena - problems of lexicalising a feature-complex or a hierarchical semantic/syntactic structure.
pragmatic need to evade issue: does *S* feel pleasure, joy, admiration or wonder, for example at *H*'s act *E*?

Sincerity in apology?

- **Sorrow, contrition or regret when constrained to apologise?** Sorrow more affectively marked than regret: speaker's suffering and contrition
- **Regret** less heart than calculation: was *E* really to *S*'s advantage?

Apologies under constraint

- **Potential of expressive acts for misuse** on the grounds of social convention: going through the motions for the sake of social conformity or peace and quiet, sincerity condition possibly not satisfied, with the tacit cognisance and acquiescence of all parties.
- 13) Say you're sorry (for poisoning Auntie's goldfish)
- **Impossible to influence emotional state other than by physical or psychological violence.**

Amended provisions

- **Preparatory conditions for expressive speech acts** need provision

14) *H* (or in the case of apologies, *S*) has done something *E* which conventionally would cause an emotional state *A*. Not to react in a manner conventionally conditioned by *E* would create a breach of social etiquette (or worse).

- **Sincerity condition** needs clause:

15) *S* feels emotion *A* (*as a result of action E*), which may be suspended if the speech act is perverted (i.e. insincerely performed).

Factivity

- **Expressive predicates are factive:** truth of the embedded proposition presupposed.
- **Fillmore/McCawley:** factivity in semantic reading of gerundive complementation.
- **Norrick:** presupposed proposition marked by the gerundive structure is psychological cause of performance of expressive act.
- **Searle:** act *E* vaguely speaker-related
- **Norrick:** causing the speech act's performance. The relationship less direct: speaker's assumed responsibility for the act *E* engenders in the speaker the evaluative negative emotion *A*, and then triggers the act of apology. The motivation for the act resides in 14) and 15) respectively: not semantic but pragmatic, not emotive but cognitive.

Taking stock

- Apologies, though not explicitly performative ones in English, may be as a class either indicative or impositive. Where impositive, they demand a response (Austin's AI condition: "a certain conventional effect").
- Apologies may be impositively operant (that is, they are designed to effect an adjustment in the social climate) or indicatively emotive (i. e. express a feeling)
- Where apologies are emotively coloured, there is difficulty in ascertaining with any precision what that colour is: true emotion (sorrow) or expediency (regret), indicative perhaps of the speaker's attitude towards the hearer's welfare or his/her own.
- Apologetic acts may often — as may all expressive acts — be perverted for expediency.
- Apologetic acts may be used in pursuance of a conventional social rather than interpersonal function.
- Apologetic acts imply the presupposition of - or ascription of truth to - an underlying indirectly causative proposition.

Exponents of apology 1

- **Apologies are not all the same within and across cultures and languages:** varying truth and felicity conditions, variety of social purposes. Position along continuum surfaces in selection of lexical items and syntactic structures for the performance of any given act of apology, but no direct one-to-one form-function.
Illocutionary potential of exponents.
- **Example expressions employed in English to perform apologies:** *apologise, be sorry, beg pardon; imperative/requestive excuse, pardon and forgive; marginally regret.* 'Pseudo-apologies' - e.g. 'fear' predicates *fear, be afraid* not considered.

Exponents of apology 2

- ***Apologise usually performatively used:***

- 16) I apologise for crashing your Beetle.
declarative form, performative function, also in
 - 17) I beg your pardon (for crashing your Mini)

- **Parallels in French and German:**

- 18) Je te demande pardon d'avoir démolí ta 2CV.
 - 19) Je m'excuse de...
 - 20) Ich bitte um Verzeihung (dafür, dass ich deinen Käfer kaputtgefahren habe)
 - 21) Ich bitte um Entschuldigung,...
 - 22) Ich entschuldige mich ...

Mental states and speech acts

- **Choice of form leaves no option on interpretation of utterance:** the act is committed, has ritual significance, but arguably little relation to verifiable or falsifiable truth.
- Is voicing regret is the same as thereby regretting? *Regret* essentially denotative of a mental state, not designative of a speech act.

Truth-functional analysis and sincerity

- 23) No, you don't.
anomalous following explicit performative
 - 24) I apologise for treading on your bunions.
unexceptionable following constative
 - 25) I regret having trodden on your bunions
 - Affective side of nonperformative declaratives recognisable in the real world.
 - Counter-evidence: gesture, facial expression, body posture, etc.
 - grinning while expressing regret belies emotional state
 - grinning whilst apologising: apology is insincerely performed, but act of apologising not vitiated the.
 - Overt expressions of sorrow require verification from immediate context for recognition as valid apologies
- 26) I'm sorry.
Are you really?

Performativeness and truth-functionality

- Performative form: rituality raises it above conditions of overt truth or falsity: sincerity possibly violated, but act untouched. Ellipsis of forms of performative origin further rituality and thus relative indifference to sincerity
 - 27) Pardon!
 - 28) Verzeihung!
 - 29) Entschuldigung!
- also elliptical copular adjectival apology
 - 30) Sorry.

Copulas and ellipsis

- **German and French:** no copular adjectival structures for apologies, no abbreviated form of such structures verbal structures, no ellipsis in French. Adjectivally derived structures: no assumption of guilt or attribution of responsibility:
 - 31) Ich bin traurig, dass...
 - 32) ?Traurig!
 - 33) Je suis malheureux/désolé...
 - 34) ?malheureux!/désolé !
 - 35) Ich bedauere, dass ...
 - 36) Bedauere!
 - 37) Je regrette que ...
 - 38) ?Regrette!

Imperative apologies

- Apologies in grammatical imperative resistant to overt falsification, cf. performative apologies. Pragmatically requestives, more tentative than commands associated with imperatives. Combinability with ***please*** marks them as tentative impositives:
- 39) Excuse me, please.
- 40) Pardon me, please
- 41) Forgive me, please
- 42) Excusez-moi, s'il vous plait
- 43) Pardonnez-moi, s'il vous plait
- 44) Entschuldigen Sie bitte.
- 45) Verzeihen Sie bitte
- Cline of decreasing overt sincerity and increasing rituality for acts of apology, declarative statement of affect, requestive imperatives, performatives and elliptical expressions.
- **Subdivisions of responsibility-related affect in apologies.** Performative use implies but does not stipulate corresponding emotion. Declarative use states presence of corresponding emotion, does not necessarily signal accepted responsibility.

Affect in apologies

- **Subdivisions of responsibility-related affect in apologies.** Performative use implies but does not stipulate corresponding emotion. Declarative use states presence of corresponding emotion, does not necessarily signal accepted responsibility. Statement of affect does not imply apology:

- 46) I'm sorry about your illness.
- 47) I'm sorry for you.
- 48) I'm sorry about your hedgehog.
- 49) I'm sorry for your hedgehog
- 50) I'm sorry for hurting you
- 51) I'm sorry I hurt you.

Regrets, apologies and excuses

- *Regret, bedauern, regretter* can signal acceptance of responsibility, generally speaker-expedient: act committed is in some way detrimental to speaker, too.
 - German *Leid tun* similar ambivalence, more biased towards sincerity and acceptance of responsibility. Syntactic form excludes it from class of explicit performatives
 - Imperative *excuse* and *pardon* not so much an acceptance of responsibility: rather attempt to achieve absolution - pragmatically expedient and deferential.
 - *Excuse* and *pardon* used to perform acts of apology also wider time-frame than past-bound *apologise, regret* and *forgive* - Discourse strategy aiming at absolution for the consequences of present or future act, forms bridge with pre-emptive pseudo-apologies as expressed by 'fear'-predicates:
- 52) Excuse me.
- 53) Excuse (me for) my intrusion.
- 54) Excuse me, but I'm going to have to assassinate you.
- 55) Excuse me, but aren't you Arnold Schwarzenegger?
- 56) Pardon me.
- 57) Pardon my interruption.
- 58) Pardon me for interrupting
- 59) Pardon me, but where did you get that darling little rucksack?

More excuses!

- *Excuse, pardon* & French and German correlates:
discourse strategy, deference, social responsibility for intrusion, interruption and time lost.
- Literal translations of German equivalents:
 - 60) Verzeihen Sie → excuse me/pardon me [for same mishap].
 - 61) Entschuldigen Sie → absolve me from blame [for intrusion, gastric impropriety].
 - 62) Es tut mir Leid → it causes me pain/suffering
- No cognate structural pattern with English or French, frame of emotion and sincerity, to a great extent of responsibility, though not exclusively or canonically .
- Statement of sorrow or regret falsifiable. Imperative pre-emptive direction:
- certain items predict certain formal categories, with clines of overt sincerity and accepted responsibility.

Apologies and responsibility

- Apologies have speaker-related factive presuppositions correlated with the speaker's assumption of responsibility for the offending act which triggered the apology.
- Responsibility for the consequences taken on fully with explicit performative:
63) I apologise for upsetting your hamster.
- Declarative expression of affect may vary in allocation or assumption of responsibility:
64) I'm sorry I broke your nose.
65) I'm sorry I broke your nose. It should have been your neck.
66) I'm sorry about your sad loss.
67) I'm sorry you couldn't be there.
68) I'm sorry for Tony. Imagine having to start telling the truth!
69) I'm sorry for Slobodan. It must be hard being a monster and not knowing it.
70) I'm sorry we ever met, Jezebel.
- With the exception of 64), hardly any blame or responsibility is being accepted in these examples, which indeed barely count as apologies at all.
- In direct contrast with *apologise*, *sorry* shows a cline of responsibility directed towards the hearer

Non, je ne regrette rien

- Apologies aren't all the same.
- Choice of item and form are reflective of content, sincerity and social attitude, linked with variance in purpose and illocutionary potential
- I'm sorry if I've bored you. If I have, I apologise