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Making appropriate speech act of apology in target language.

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Abstract: The article deals with how to make the speech act of apology appropriately in international setting. The situations in which one has to apologize from someone else occur unintentionally quite often. So it is essential for language learners to be aware of the strategies of apologizing to avoid from face threatening act whenever they are guilty for something. The article informs the ways, strategies and helpful expressions which should be employed in saying sorry accompanied with some exercises that help the learners to consolidate what they have learnt.

Key words: face threatening act, intensifiers, etiquette, infraction, repair for the offence, maintain.

In American English, people typically use apologies for a variety of reasons such as:

1. To say that they are sorry
2. To explain why the offense happened
3. To make a repair for the offense and maintain a good relationship with the addressee

Complex speech acts like apologies actually consist of a set of routinized patterns or strategies typically used by native speakers of the language. There are five possible strategies for making an apology (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981. pp. 119-125).

- A. An expression of an apology.** The speaker uses a word, expression, or sentence containing a verb such as "sorry," "excuse," "forgive," or "apologize." Languages have certain words that are used to express an oral apology more than others. For example, in American English, "I apologize..." is found more in writing than it is in oral language. An expression of an apology can be intensified whenever the apologizer feels the need to do so. Such intensification is usually accomplished by adding intensifiers such as "really" or "very" -- e.g., "I'm really sorry."
- B. Acknowledgement of responsibility.** The offender recognizes his/her fault in causing the infraction. The degree of such recognition on the part of the apologizer can be placed on a scale. The highest level of intensity is an acceptance of the blame: "It's my fault." At a somewhat lower level would be an expression of self-deficiency: "I was confused/I didn't see/You are right." At a still lower level would be the expression of lack of intent: "I didn't mean to." Lower still would be an implicit expression of

responsibility: "I was sure I had given you the right directions." Finally, the apologizer may not accept the blame at all, in which case there may be a denial of responsibility: "It wasn't my fault," or even blaming of the hearer: "It's your own fault."

- C. **An explanation or account.** The speaker describes the situation which caused him/her to commit the offense and which is used by this speaker as an indirect way of apologizing. The explanation is intended to set things right. In some cultures this may be a more acceptable way of apologizing than in others. Thus, in cultures where public transportation is unreliable, coming late to a meeting and giving an explanation like, "The bus was late," might be perfectly acceptable.
- D. **An offer of repair.** The apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage resulting from his/her infraction.

If someone is late for an appointment with a friend s/he might say something like,

"How can I make it up to you -- why don't I buy you lunch on Friday?"

Or someone who fails to make it to an appointment might say,

"Would you be willing to reschedule the meeting?"

- E. **A promise of non-recurrence.** The apologizer commits him/herself to not having the offense happen again, which is again situation-specific and less frequent than the other strategies.

The five major patterns or strategies that make up the apology speech act are available to speakers across languages, yet preference for any one of them or for a combination of them will depend on the specific situation within the given language and culture group.

Perhaps equally as important as knowing which strategies to use when, is knowing how to modify these strategies in a given situation. Factors that may affect how you would deliver an apology in your native language (and ideally in the target language as well) include:

- your familiarity with the person being apologized to (intimate to very formal)
- the intensity of the act (its gravity, seriousness, or importance)
- the relative authority that each of you has
- your relative ages
- your sex and that of the other person

- the place where the exchange takes place

Here is an example of an apology situation calling for modification of the speech act since the offense is relatively severe and the recipient is a friend:

In a cafeteria, you accidentally bump into a friend who is holding a cup of hot coffee. The coffee spills all over your friend, scalding his/her arm and soaking his/her clothing. Your friend shouts, startled: "Oooh! Ouch!"

As an American speaker of English, you may appropriately select the strategy of expressing an apology, you are likely to say "I'm really sorry," or "I'm really very sorry" in order for it to sound sincere enough. You would probably not say just "Sorry!" or "I'm very sorry." Although this might be a textbook answer, there actually is a difference in American English between "very" and "really," with "really" implying more regret and "very" more etiquette. Thus, this latter apology may not sound very sincere to your friend. Your friend is probably expecting something more like, "I'm really sorry. Are you O.K.?" (Cohen, Olshtain, & Rosenstein, 1986, pp. 66-67)

Intensifiers

Not only could an intensifier play an important role, but even an interjection like "Oh!" could have an important role. In fact, there could be times when a well-placed "Oh!" and an offer of repair could take the place of an expression of apology in American English: e.g., "Oh! Here, let me help get something on that burn and clean up the mess," as opposed to, "I'm very sorry that I bumped into you."

Preparation task.

Put the phrases (a–h) in the correct group (1–2).

Groups Phrases

1. Apologising
 2. Accepting an apology
- a. Honestly, it's fine.
 - b. I'm so sorry.
 - c. It was my fault and I'm sorry.
 - d. That's all right.

e. Don't worry about it.

f. That's OK.

g. I'm really sorry.

h. I want to apologise.

Task 1. Listen and do the tasks.

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Are the sentences true or false?

Answer 1. Noelia is trying to go quickly.

2. Paul thinks it's funny that Noelia falls over.

3. They both apologise. 4. Noelia is hurt.

5. The laptop breaks when Noelia falls over.

6. Bob walks on the laptop by accident.

Task 2 Complete the dialogue.

OK, really, so, sorry, right, about, fine, fault. Too.

Paul: Noelia! I am (1)..... ! Are you
(2).....? Noelia: I think so. That was lucky.

Paul: I'm (3)..... sorry! I didn't see you!

Noelia: That's all (4)..... . I shouldn't have been running.

Paul: Still, it was my (5)..... and I'm sorry.

Noelia: I'm sorry (6)..... . It was both of us. Honestly,
it's (7)..... . Don't worry
(8)..... it.

Discussion. When was the last time you said sorry for doing something?

Reference:

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