On Apologising in Negative and Positive Politeness Cultures

Eva Ogiermann
On Apologising in Negative and Positive Politeness Cultures
On Apologising in Negative and Positive Politeness Cultures
by Eva Ogiermann
On Apologising in Negative and Positive Politeness Cultures

Eva Ogiermann
University of Portsmouth

John Benjamins Publishing Company
Amsterdam / Philadelphia
# Table of contents

Abbreviations, figures, tables .......................... IX
Preface ................................................. 1

## CHAPTER 1
Cross-cultural pragmatics ............................ 7
1.1 Ordinary language philosophy ........................ 7
1.2 Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory ............ 11
1.3 Problems with and alternatives to Brown and Levinson’s theory ........................ 12
1.4 Postmodern theories vs. cross-cultural research ........................ 17
1.5 The present study .................................. 20

## CHAPTER 2
The culture-specificity of politeness ................. 23
2.1 Culture in politeness research ....................... 23
2.2 Defining culture .................................... 25
2.3 Culture-specific perception of social variables .......... 27
2.3.1 Social power ..................................... 29
2.3.2 Social distance .................................... 31
2.3.3 Social variables and address forms .................. 33
2.4 Positive vs. negative politeness cultures .......... 35
2.4.1 In-directness and im-politeness .................... 36
2.4.2 Cultural values .................................... 38
2.4.3 The semantics of politeness ....................... 40

## CHAPTER 3
The speech act of apologising .......................... 45
3.1 Classifying apologies ................................ 45
3.2 Defining apologies ................................... 47
3.3 Applying Brown and Levinson’s theory to apologies .................. 49
3.4 Analysing apologies ................................ 56
CHAPTER 4

Literature review

4.1 Cross-cultural research on English apologies 61
4.2 Research on Polish and Russian apologies 62
4.2.1 Speech act studies in Poland and Russia 62
4.2.2 Polish and Russian apology studies 65

CHAPTER 5

Methodological considerations

5.1 DCTs vs. naturally occurring speech 67
5.1.1 Limitations of written data 68
5.1.2 On the sequential organization of speech acts 70
5.1.3 On collecting large quantities of data 71
5.2 Alternative ways of collecting spoken data 74
5.2.1 Field notes 74
5.2.2 Linguistic corpora 75
5.2.3 Role plays 76

CHAPTER 6

Data collection

6.1 Designing the DCT 81
6.2 Translating the DCT 86
6.3 Testing and refining the DCT 88
6.4 The subjects and the data 89

CHAPTER 7

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices: IFIDs

7.1 Definition 93
7.2 Distribution across languages 93
7.3 IFID realisations across languages 95
7.3.1 English IFIDs 95
7.3.2 Polish IFIDs 97
7.3.3 Russian IFIDs 100
7.4 IFID realisations contrasted 102
7.4.1 Classificatory problems 103
7.4.2 Culture-specific preferences 105
7.5 Apologies across cultures 107
7.5.1 The expression of regret 107
7.5.2 The performative 108
7.5.3 The request for forgiveness 110
7.5.4 The remaining IFID categories 111
7.6 Syntactic frames 113
  7.6.1 The English expression of regret 113
  7.6.2 The Polish performative 114
  7.6.3 The Russian request for forgiveness 115
  7.6.4 Syntactic vs. pragmatic considerations 117
7.7 Intensifiers 121
  7.7.1 Definition and distribution 121
  7.7.2 Adverbial intensifiers and please 121
  7.7.3 Other forms of intensification 124
7.8 Evaluation 125

CHAPTER 8
Accounts 131
8.1 Apologies and the acceptance of responsibility 131
  8.1.1 Previous classificatory schemes 132
  8.1.2 Considerations underlying the present taxonomy 137
  8.1.3 Classification of account types 138
  8.1.4 Importance of context in classifying and interpreting accounts 147
8.2 Accounts across scenarios 150
  8.2.1 Category I 150
  8.2.2 Category II 157
  8.2.3 Category III 161
  8.2.4 Category IV 168
8.3 Evaluation 174

CHAPTER 9
Positive politeness apology strategies 179
9.1 Definition 179
9.2 Offer of repair 180
  9.2.1 Distribution across languages 181
  9.2.2 Linguistic realisations 182
  9.2.3 Offers of repair across scenarios 188
9.3 Promise of forbearance 196
9.4 Concern for hearer 198
9.5 Evaluation 201
CHAPTER 10
On the culture-specificity of apologies 205
10.1 Beyond the speech act set 206
   10.1.1 Apologies and responsibility acceptance 207
   10.1.2 Strategy combinations – IFIDs vs. responsibility 210
10.2 Contextual conditions and strategy choice 216
   10.2.1 IFIDs across categories 216
   10.2.2 Accounts across categories 223
   10.2.3 P and D across cultures 227
   10.2.4 Testing Brown and Levinson’s weightiness formula 230
10.3 Positive vs. negative face in apologising 234
   10.3.1 IFIDs 235
   10.3.2 Accounts 237
   10.3.3 Approach vs. withdrawal 246
   10.3.4 Positive politeness apology strategies 249
10.4 Evaluation 255

CHAPTER 11
Conclusion 259
11.1 Main findings 259
11.2 Suggestions for future research 262

Appendices 269
Notes 275
References 279
Index 295
Abbreviations, figures, tables

Abbreviations used in the text

P  Social Power
D  Social Distance
R  Ranking of Imposition
S  Speaker
H  Hearer
FTA  Face Threatening Act

List of figures

Figure 1. Brown and Levinson’s strategies for doing an FTA (p. 69)
Figure 2. Face considerations involved in remedial interchanges
Figure 3. Distribution of direct (bottom) and indirect (top) offers of repair across scenarios and languages
Figure 4. Preferences for IFIDs across categories and languages
Figure 5. Preferences for intensifiers across categories and languages
Figure 6. Preferences for upgrading vs. downgrading accounts across categories and languages

List of tables

Table 1. Contextual variables embedded in the 8 offensive situations
Table 2. IFID repetition and positioning across languages
Table 3. IFID categories and their realisations across languages
Table 4. Frequencies of IFID realisations across languages
Table 5. Frequencies of the conjunction but co-occurring with IFIDs across languages
Table 6. Linguistic realisations of intensifiers across languages
Table 7. Preferences for account types across languages
Table 8. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 1
Table 9. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 2
Table 10. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 3
Table 11. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 4
Table 12. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 5
Table 13. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 6
Table 14. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 7
Table 15. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 8
Table 16. Distribution of positive politeness apology strategies across languages
Table 17. Total numbers of apology strategies and intensifying devices across languages
Table 18. IFIDs and responsibility acceptance across languages
Table 19. Combinations of IFIDs with face-saving strategies across languages
Table 20. Strategies introduced by an IFID followed by the conjunction but across languages
Table 21. Distribution of IFIDs across categories and languages
Table 22. Preferences for the long and short form of the English expression of regret across categories
Table 23. Preferences for the two variants of the Russian request for forgiveness across categories
Table 24. Intensifiers across categories and languages – total numbers and percentages of intensified IFIDs
Table 25. Distribution of upgrading accounts across categories and languages
Table 26. Distribution of downgrading accounts across categories and languages
Table 27. Formal vs. informal forms of address across languages
Preface

“I have been seriously told that ‘Poles/Russians/etc. are never polite’”

(Leech 1983: 84)

Since the first systematic accounts of politeness have emerged from pragmatic theory in the late 70s and early 80s, politeness research has been continuously gaining in popularity and broadening its scope. However, although empirical studies have provided insights into politeness in numerous cultures, up to the present day, little is known about polite behaviour of “Poles/Russians/etc.”

In recent years, many politeness researchers have moved away from pragmatic theory and towards social theory while adopting a postmodern approach to the study of politeness. Interestingly, it seems that the longer politeness is studied the more ambiguous and less transparent this term becomes and the more difficult it appears to capture culture-specific features of politeness. While pragmatic theories view politeness as a set of strategies used to redress face and culture as a factor influencing strategy choice, postmodern theories emphasise the unpredictable nature of politeness and the heterogeneous nature of culture.

Both pragmatic and social politeness theories have been developed by Western researchers, and thus influenced by the Western, notably Anglo-Saxon understanding of politeness. Brown and Levinson’s theory has been most influential in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics, and it has been as widely criticised as it has been applied. While many Non-Western researchers point to a cultural bias in their framework, much of the criticism directed at their framework in recent years has come from postmodern politeness theorists. However, the alternative view on politeness they offer does not provide a framework for a cross-cultural comparison.

The present study carries out such a cross-cultural comparison and it is based on Brown and Levinson’s theory, while taking a critical approach to and introducing a new perspective on some of their concepts. It attempts to integrate cultural values underlying the perception of what constitutes polite behaviour into their potentially universal framework, while focusing on Polish and Russian cultures. What makes the study of Polish and Russian particularly interesting is not only the fact that these two languages have received little attention in previous politeness research, but also the political isolation of the two countries, the Iron Curtain
shielding them from the influence of Western culture and the process of cultural
globalisation for over forty years.

The present study focuses on responses to offensive situations, their most
polite variant taking the form of an apology. By choosing a speech act which is
inherently polite, I attempt to avoid the common view of politeness underlying
Brown and Levinson’s theory as a set of strategies employed to minimise imposi-
on the hearer’s right to non-distraction.

The first chapter of the introduction outlines the theoretical background of
cross-cultural pragmatics. Brown and Levinson’s theory (1987) is discussed as the
theory underlying most research conducted in this field and assessed in the light
of the criticism it has received – in particular from the proponents of the post-

The second chapter evaluates how the notion of culture has been dealt with
in previous politeness research and describes some culture-specific features of the
communicative styles prevalent in the two Slavic cultures under investigation,
while linking Brown and Levinson’s theory with Hofstede’s dimensions of cul-
tural comparison (1991). I argue that the variables of social power and distance
can be interpreted in relation to Hofstede’s dimensions of power distance and
collectivism vs. individualism, and that the latter is also closely related to Brown
and Levinson’s distinction between positive vs. negative politeness cultures. By
linking the two types of politeness with cultural values, I show that culture-spe-
cific aspects of politeness can be accommodated within Brown and Levinson’s
universalistic theory.

Chapter 3 narrows down the discussion of politeness to the speech act of
apologising and examines the applicability of Brown and Levinson’s theory to
apologies. I discuss the face considerations motivating the formulation of an
apology while taking into account the speaker’s and the hearer’s positive as well
as negative face needs, which can be expected to carry different weight across
cultures. I then show that the social function of apologies, the restoration of
social equilibrium, depends on the mutuality of the interlocutors’ positive face
needs. Consequently, contrary to Brown and Levinson classification of apolo-
gies as negative politeness devices, I define remedial apologies as positive po-
liteness strategies, while restricting Brown and Levinson’s classification to dis-
arming apologies.

Chapter 4 offers a review of previous research on apologies, illustrating the
wealth of cross-cultural studies contrasting English with numerous languages as
well as the scarcity of studies on Polish and Russian apologies. Particular atten-
tion is devoted to the status of speech act studies in Poland and Russia and the
parallels between Austin’s speech act theory (1962) and Bachtin’s theory of speech
genres (1979).
Chapter 5 explains the choice of the data collection method used in this study by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the methods employed in cross-cultural pragmatics, with a focus on naturally occurring data, role plays and questionnaires. I show that none of the disadvantages of the discourse completion test (DCT) discussed in the literature interferes with a cross-cultural comparison of general patterns in speech act realisation. I argue that the DCT is indispensable when it comes to collecting large corpora of comparable data and analysing under-researched languages for which no previous classification of strategies exists.

Chapter 6 describes the design of the DCT: the choice of scenarios describing six personal and two legal offences, the social variables incorporated into them, and the procedure of translating and testing the DCT. The introduction ends with a description of the population and the considerations underlying the categorisation of the data.

The first part of the analysis is organised according to the strategies identified in the data. In Chapter 7, which analyses Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), I discuss the repertoire of IFID formulae established for each of the languages and classify them according to their illocutionary forces. Since all three languages have at their disposal the full range of linguistic formulae and each of them exhibits a strong focus on one conventionalised apology formula, I discuss the cultural implications underlying these diverging preferences.

Another insight into cross-cultural differences in the use of IFIDs is provided by examining the syntactic frames in which they occur and linguistic devices upgrading their illocutionary force, such as adverbial intensifiers and exclamations. I show that although IFIDs tend to be used without reflection upon their semantic meaning, conventionalised formulae provide an insight into culture-specific concepts of politeness.

The analysis of the remaining apology strategies takes into account that they reflect the circumstances of the offence, which makes it necessary to examine them in relation to the scenarios that have elicited them. Chapter 8 begins with a discussion of the role responsibility acceptance plays in performing an apology and of taxonomies of strategies denoting the speaker’s responsibility suggested in pragmatics and sociology. I then propose an alternative classificatory scheme, depicting a continuum stretching from acceptance to denial of responsibility and distinguishing between five upgrading and five downgrading account types. Differences in portraying the offence and assuming responsibility across contexts and languages are shown to reflect a focus on positive vs. negative face as well as culture-specific perceptions of the need to restore the hearer’s damaged face and to protect one’s own.

Chapter 9 is devoted to the analysis of positive politeness apology strategies, with offers of repair being the most frequent of these strategies. After examining
the distribution of offers of repair across languages as well as their linguistic realisations and the intensifying devices accompanying them, the analysis proceeds with an investigation of the various forms offers of repair take in relation to the offences they are intended to remedy.

Considering the limited applicability and low occurrence of the two remaining positive politeness strategies, namely promise of forbearance and concern for hearer, their analysis is restricted to providing definitions of their functions and briefly outlining their distributions and linguistic realisations.

While the first part of the analysis provides a detailed discussion of each of the strategies, the second part looks for culture-specific features of apologising and politeness in general. It places the results within Brown and Levinson's and Hofstede's frameworks by interpreting them in terms of preferences for positive and negative politeness and examining the impact of contextual variables on strategy choice.

In the first part of Chapter 10, I return to the issue of the role responsibility acceptance plays in apologising. I examine the responses according to whether they include an IFID and whether they accept responsibility, while devoting particular attention to responses combining IFIDs with downgrading strategies. The analysis of the distribution of strategies in relation to the social variables of distance and relative power shows that the English responses are least and the Polish most sensitive to these contextual factors. These results are interpreted within Hofstede's theory of cultural comparison and in the light of the predictions as to the impact of social variables on strategy choice made by Brown and Levinson's weightiness formula.

The last part of Chapter 10 takes a closer look at the exact formulations of the strategies and attempts to classify them as instances of positive and negative politeness. Tendencies towards preferences for these politeness types can be best established on the basis of the formulations of accounts accepting responsibility, avoiding its acceptance and providing mitigating circumstances. One of the key factors in assigning these strategies to positive politeness is a high degree of involvement, as evidenced by the willingness to deal with the situation. Negative politeness, on the other hand, seems to be operative where any unnecessary reference to the offence is avoided. Finally, the discussion addresses some features of interactional styles going beyond the use of apology strategies, such as the use of diminutives and formal vs. informal address forms.

An evaluation of the analysis conducted in Chapter 10 leads to a general conclusion in Chapter 11, summarising the main findings of the study, evaluating Brown and Levinson's framework – as well as the usefulness of the modifications introduced and tested in this study – and making suggestions for future research.
I would like to express my gratitude to those who have made this book possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank the German National Academic Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes). The trust they have placed in me by funding my work was an enduring source of confidence and motivation. Since this book originated as a PhD thesis, thanks are also due to the Doctoral Committee and my colleagues at the University of Oldenburg for their helpful comments on earlier versions of (parts of) this book. Finally, this book would have never come into existence without the data on which it is based, and which several people in three countries have helped me collect. My most sincere thanks to: Clare O’Donoghue, Adam Jaworski, Maria Peisert, Marek Bielski, Henryk Kardela, Pavel Kromenko, Oleg Kudrjavcev, and Dmitrij Dobrovol’skij.
Cross-cultural pragmatics is a subdiscipline of pragmatics that closely follows the original thought of ordinary language philosophy. Austin’s, Searle’s and Grice’s contributions to the development of the field of pragmatics are also central to the politeness theories on which most research conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics is based.

1.1 Ordinary language philosophy

Austin’s “How to do Things with Words” (1962 – based on his lectures delivered in 1955) is generally regarded as the first attempt at a systematic account of language use.1 His observation that when people talk, they do not just make statements but often perform actions led him to suggest the distinction between constatives and performatives, with truth-conditions applying to the former and felicity conditions to the latter. By arguing that for a performative utterance to be felicitous “the circumstances in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, appropriate” (1962 [1975: 8]), Austin drew attention to an aspect of meaning beyond the scope of semantics.

As he developed his theory, Austin first expanded the category of performatives to utterances which do not include a performative verb and ultimately arrived at the conclusion that all utterances are potentially performative. He therefore abandoned his initial dichotomy and replaced it with a threefold distinction applicable to all utterances and comprising the locutionary act (the words uttered), illocutionary act (the force behind them), and the perlocutionary act (their effect on the hearer). This distinction shows that Austin was not only aware that there is no one-to-one correspondence between illocutionary force and linguistic structure and that speech acts can be performed by a potentially unlimited range of forms, but also that they only become complete with the effect they have on the hearer – as evidenced by the inclusion of the perlocutionary act.

Unfortunately, Austin does not elaborate on these ideas. Instead, he proceeds by developing a taxonomy based on performative verbs, which he identifies by prefacing their first person singular forms with the word ‘hereby’. His focus on illocutionary acts and their classification is then adopted by Searle who
continues and systematises Austin's work. Searle's main objective is to improve Austin's taxonomy and to move away from his focus on performative verbs by extending the concept of felicity conditions to a set of rules necessary for a successful performance of a speech act. At the same time, however, he argues that "to study the speech acts of promising or apologizing we need only study sentences whose literal and correct utterance would constitute making a promise or issuing an apology" (1969: 21), which leads him back to performative (English) verbs.

Whereas Searle views the performance of speech acts as a "rule-governed form of behaviour" (1965 [1971: 40]), Grice focuses on the speaker's intention. His distinction between natural and non-natural (intentional) meaning (1957), foreshadows, as do Austin's concepts of locutionary and illocutionary acts, the distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

In "Logic and Conversation" (1975 – based on his lectures delivered in 1967), Grice further develops the intentional aspect of meaning and introduces the term 'implicating', as opposed to 'saying'. His theory of conversational implicatures, which he proposes in this paper, is widely considered to be the most influential step in the development of pragmatics. The basis for this theory is provided by an 'apparatus' of rules underlying communication, which Grice terms the Cooperative Principle (CP), and which says: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (1975: 45). The four maxims that the cooperative principle is composed of function as guidelines for rational and efficient language use: Utterances adhering to the CP are generally truthful (maxim of quality), adequately informative (quantity), relevant (relation), and clear (manner).

Grice thus constructs a model of an ideally cooperative conversation, "an 'unmarked' or socially neutral (indeed asocial) presumptive framework for communication", as Brown and Levinson put it (1987: 5). At the same time, he points out that in everyday interaction, speakers violate the maxims; opt out of them, find themselves facing a clash between two maxims, and occasionally even blatantly flout them. The intentional non-observance of the maxims, in particular, is central to Grice's theory since it generates conversational implicatures, which, unlike conventional implicatures, convey an implicit meaning not derivable from their conventional use.

The theory of conversational implicatures offers a useful alternative to Searle's rule-based approach to speech behaviour. While Searle confines his classification of illocutionary acts to their most prototypical realizations, Grice draws attention to cases in which people communicate without adhering to or even by breaking the rules – be they felicity conditions or maxims of the CP. Searle identifies such
cases, but clearly underestimates their importance when claiming that "nonliter- 
alness, vagueness, ambiguity, and incompleteness – are not theoretically essential to linguistic communication" (1969: 20).

Grice, in contrast, recognises that such uses of language constitute a large part of everyday communication and provides a framework within which they can be analysed. Moreover, whereas Austin's and Searle's concept of context does not go beyond the conditions necessary for the successful performance of speech acts, Grice can be credited with drawing attention to the role situational context plays in interpreting utterances, including factors such as the relationship between the interlocutors and the mutual knowledge they bring to conversation (1975: 50).

It seems that only in his article on "Indirect Speech Acts" (1975), Searle acknowledges the importance of Grice's work, admitting that “meaning consists in part in the intention to produce understanding in the hearer” (1975: 60) and arguing that indirect speech acts rely on shared background information as well as the interlocutors’ “general powers or rationality and inference” (1975: 61). In this article, Searle applies Grice’s notion of intentional, i.e. indirect meaning to the study of speech acts. His attempt at explaining indirect speech acts in terms of rules, however, does not convince (see Owen 1983: 124–126). He claims, for instance, that in performing an indirect speech act, the speaker “means what he says, but also means something more.” (1975: 59 – emphasis added).

The coexistence of primary and secondary illocutionary forces suggested by Searle is problematic since the recognition of the indirect illocutionary force of a speech act presupposes the rejection of its literal illocutionary force (see Edmondson 1981b: 28). A request in the form of a question, for instance, will only be understood as such when the hearer realises that it is not a question. Searle’s main argument to support his claim is that “responses that are appropriate to their literal utterances are appropriate to their indirect speech act utteranc- es” (1975: 70), which can be safely dismissed as wrong (see Levinson 1981: 481 for counterexamples).

Searle’s systematisation of speech act theory and contribution to the development of the field of pragmatics remains controversial. His taxonomy has been criticised for being inconsistent (e.g. Levinson 1983, Burkhardt 1990, Thomas 1995) and relying too heavily on English verbs (Edmondson 1981b, Owen 1983, Leech 1983). Although speech act theory focuses on the function of language, it fails to provide a framework for analysing real language usage (see Searle 1992). While its reliance on intuitions leads to a focus on “full-blown, explicit” (Searle 1965 [1971: 47]) speech acts, when analysing empirical data “we seldom come across the ‘paradigm’ cases (if indeed we ever do)” (Edmondson 1981b: 21).

However, as the first systematic account of language use, speech act theory “raises important issues for pragmatic theory” (Thomas 1995: 93), and the speech
act as a unit of analysis has been taken up in most studies conducted in the fields of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. As does classical speech act theory, these studies rely on speech act taxonomies, the difference being that they are data driven.

Grice, on the other hand, despite the various alternatives and modifications to his CP that have been suggested over the years (e.g. Sperber and Wilson 1986, Levinson 2000, Terkourafi 2007), must be credited with laying the foundations for the empirical investigation of conversational behaviour and of linguistic politeness.

Although Grice acknowledges the existence of further maxims and their potential to generate conversational implicatures, while even explicitly naming “Be polite” (1975:47), he does not elaborate on this idea. Lakoff’s “Logic of Politeness” (1973) was the first paper to point out the necessity to complement Grice’s framework with a politeness principle. She distinguishes two rules of pragmatic competence: ‘Be clear’, which corresponds to Grice’s cooperative principle, and ‘Be polite’. She argues that politeness is usually given priority in conversation, since it is more important to avoid offence than to achieve clarity (1973:297).

Leech (1983) also recognises that “politeness is an important missing link between the CP and the problem of how to relate sense to force” (1983:104). He introduces an approach to pragmatics he terms ‘interpersonal rhetoric’, in which he distinguishes three principles: The cooperative principle (CP), which he adopts from Grice, the politeness principle (PP) and the irony principle (IP). While the CP is used to infer the speaker’s intentions, the PP is seen as the reason why a particular content or form is preferred over another. Although Leech regards the CP and the PP as coordinate principles, he agrees with Lakoff that “the PP has a higher regulative role”, namely “to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place” (1983:82).

The core assumption Brown and Levinson (1978 [1987]) adopt from Grice is the rational and efficient nature of talk against which “polite ways of talking show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in considerations of politeness reasons for the speaker’s apparent irrationality or inefficiency” (1987:4).

A major advantage of Brown and Levinson’s theory over Lakoff’s and Leech’s frameworks is that it incorporates concepts developed in social theory. Their claims to universality, on the other hand, backed up by empirical data, are probably the main reason why Brown and Levinson’s theory has been applied to nearly all research conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics, including the present study.
1.2 Brown and Levinson's politeness theory

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory combines speech act theory and Grice's theory of implicatures with Goffman's notion of face, defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (1955 [1972:319]). Rationality and face are characteristics attributed to “all competent adult members of a society” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61), and it is in everyone's interest to maintain each other's face, which can be threatened and damaged through interaction with others.

Brown and Levinson regard all speech acts as potentially face-threatening – either to the speaker's or the hearer's face, or to both. They further distinguish between positive and negative face, which they derive from Durkheim's positive and negative rites (1915 [1995]) and Goffman's distinction between supportive and remedial interchanges (1971). Whereas Brown and Levinson's negative face reflects the want that one's actions be unimpeded by others, their positive face is the want for one's wants to be desirable to others (1987: 62).

In selecting strategies for performing a face-threatening act (FTA), the speaker needs to take into account the degree of face threat which can be assessed according to the variables of social power (P) and social distance (D) and the imposition of the speech act (R). The two social variables have been adopted from R. Brown and Gilman (1960): D is a symmetrical variable representing the social distance between speaker and hearer, and it encompasses factors like degree of familiarity and frequency of interaction. P is an asymmetrical social dimension of relative power denoting the degree to which the speaker can impose his or her will on the hearer. The new variable introduced by Brown and Levinson, R, depicts the degree of imposition of the speech act on the hearer's wants of self-determination or approval. According to Brown and Levinson, all three social parameters contribute to the 'weightiness' of an FTA on a summative basis, resulting in the following formula (1987:76):

\[ W_x = D(S,H) + P(S,H) + R_x \]

The overall weightiness indicates the degree of face-threat involved in performing the FTA. The strategies available for doing an FTA are captured in a chart and numbered according to the amount of face-redress necessary for the FTA to be polite, as calculated by the weightiness formula.

A situation requiring maximum efficiency justifies the use of bald on record strategies, which focus on clarity and efficiency, conform to Grice's maxims, and pay no attention to face (Brown & Levinson 1987:95). In all other cases, the speaker will keep the face-threat to a minimum by choosing a 'higher-numbered'
strategy, the most face-saving option being to refrain from performing the FTA. *Off record* strategies focus on face redress and take the form of implicatures flouting the maxims of Grice's cooperative principle (ibid: 214). *On record* strategies combined with redressive action, in contrast, have the advantage of being clear and polite at the same time (ibid: 72). Redressive action could be viewed, on the one hand, as violating the maxim of quantity, on the other, as constituting a conventional rather than a conversational implicature. Brown and Levinson distinguish two types of redressive action, depending on whether it is directed towards positive or negative face. Their hierarchy of politeness strategies – which is supposed to correspond to the amount rather than type of face-redress – suggests that negative politeness is more polite than positive politeness.

Brown and Levinson portray the strategies for performing an FTA, the degree of face-redress they represent and their hierarchical order, as well as the factors determining their selection as universal. Their claims to universality are based on data from three very distinct languages, namely Tamil, spoken in South India, Tzeltal, spoken by the Mayas in Mexico, and both British and American English.

### 1.3 Problems with and alternatives to Brown and Levinson's theory

It is not surprising that a theory which has triggered off a considerable amount of research has been subject to criticism and various forms of modifications by those applying it. The universal character of Brown and Levinson's model, in particular, has proved problematic, its application to many typologically different languages providing counter-evidence to the authors' claims to universality.
Chapter 1. Cross-cultural pragmatics

A recurrent argument pointing to a cultural bias underlying Brown and Levinson’s understanding of politeness concerns their reinterpretation of Goffman’s concept of face. Although face, the desire to maintain it and to avoid face loss are generally regarded as universal (Janney & Arndt 1992: 27), Brown and Levinson’s reformulation of face as ‘wants’ emphasises the “self-claiming part at the expense of the other-assuming” part in Goffman’s original definition (O’Driscoll 2007: 467). While Goffman’s face is “on loan to him from society” ([1955] 1972: 322), Brown and Levinson’s face is something that individuals claim for themselves.

This individualistic notion of face has been mainly criticised by Asian researchers who have demonstrated that it cannot be applied to collectivist cultures whose members define themselves in relation to the social group they belong to (e.g. Matsumoto 1988, Gu 1990, Mao 1994, Yu 2001), and where the greatest face loss consists in one’s inability to live up to the group’s expectations. The concept of face originated in China, where it is understood as “the perception of self in relation to other” (Lee-Wong 1999: 24), a concept bearing resemblance to Brown and Levinson’s positive rather than negative face. The emphasis on individual needs and rights in their theory leads to an association of politeness with non-imposition, which is why negative face needs and negative politeness are given precedence over positive face and politeness:

> When we think of politeness in Western cultures, it is negative-politeness behavior that springs to mind. In our culture, negative politeness is the most elaborate and the most conventionalized set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress; it is the stuff that fills the etiquette books.

(Brown & Levinson 1987: 129–130, emphasis added)

Even though Brown and Levinson seem to be aware that negative politeness is characteristic of Western cultures, in their chart of strategies for performing an FTA negative politeness features as involving more face redress than positive politeness.

Although a theory favouring negative over positive face and politeness cannot be regarded as universal, the distinction itself has been taken up by many researchers and alternative – potentially culture-neutral – terms capturing the dichotomy of togetherness vs. apartness have been suggested: Janney and Arndt (1992) speak of ‘interpersonal’ and ‘personal’ face and Scollon and Scollon (1995) of ‘involvement’ and ‘independence’ face. Arundale (2006) introduces the terms ‘connection’ and ‘separation’ face, whereas Terkourafi (2007) suggests a distinction between ‘approach’ and ‘withdrawal’, which is phylogenetically primary and pre-conscious (2007: 323) and, therefore, universal. O’Driscoll not only retains Brown and Levinson’s terms positive and negative face, but also their mutually exclusive character, while regarding them as “two opposed directions of a single dimension” (2007: 473).
Whereas the distinction between positive and negative politeness has proved very influential in cross-cultural research, the central role Brown and Levinson assign to implicatures, leading to a view of politeness as strategic deviance from Grice’s cooperative principle, has met with criticism from Eastern and Western scholars alike. The strategic nature of Brown and Levinson’s politeness has been criticised for creating the impression that “speakers are only polite in order to realize their personal goals” (Eelen 2001: 128).

In cultures where face is regarded as a “regulatory principle promoting conformity with established norms” (Terkourafi 2007: 319), politeness is mainly associated with one’s duty towards the group (Bargiela-Chiappini 2003: 1466). This conceptualization of politeness is reflected in the languages spoken in those cultures, many of which have grammaticalized politeness forms. The use of honorifics in Japanese or Chinese, for instance, is dictated by social norms rather than individual choices (but see Kádár 2007 for examples of strategic use of honorifics in Chinese). In most Western languages, forms of address fulfil a similar function in that they carry social information reflecting the (perceived) status of the hearer.

The need to differentiate between strategic conflict avoidance and social indexing has been mainly voiced by Asian linguists, who have suggested various distinctions, such as that between ‘volitional’ and ‘discernment’ politeness (Ide 1989) and ‘strategic’ vs. ‘normative’ politeness (Lee-Wong 1999). On a similar note, Western researchers distinguish ‘tact’ from ‘social politeness’ (Janney & Arndt 1992). The adherence to social norms also underlies Fraser’s notion of politeness, for whom “politeness is a state that one expects to exist in every conversation” (1990: 233). Viewing politeness as the unmarked condition of communication precludes the possibility of equating it with implicatures which need to be inferred – an observation that has led several researchers to introduce the concept of ‘anticipated’, as opposed to ‘inferred’, politeness (e.g. Terkourafi 2001, Haugh 2003).

Even though English relies more heavily on implicatures in conveying politeness than do many other languages, Brown and Levinson’s equation of politeness with implicatures suggests that speech acts that adhere to the CP cannot be polite. However, speech acts that are beneficial to the hearer, such as offers or apologies, are inherently polite (see Edmondson 1981b, Leech 1983) and tend to be performed on record, i.e. in accordance with the CP. This shows another problematic aspect of Brown and Levinson’s theory, namely that all speech acts are seen as potentially face-threatening while inherently polite or face-enhancing speech acts receive very little attention.

The perception of politeness as something unmarked, reflected in the concepts of normative and anticipated politeness, is also central to Watts’ notion of politic behaviour, defined as behaviour that establishes or maintains the state of
equilibrium of personal relationships (Watts 1992: 50). Watts’ politic behaviour roughly corresponds to what Brown and Levinson regard as politeness, while for Watts, politeness constitutes marked behaviour going beyond politic behaviour. Accordingly, the use of the correct amount of face redress, as calculated by the weightiness formula, results in polite behaviour according to Brown and Levinson and politic behaviour according to Watts. The choice of a strategy that pays less attention to face than required would be impolite and a strategy involving more face redress than required would be polite in both theories. For Watts, however, who views politeness as behaviour aiming at the enhancement of one’s standing with respect to others (1992: 57), the latter would also be open to an interpretation as impolite.

According to Watts, the main difference between Brown and Levinson’s and his own approach to politeness is that Brown and Levinson’s theory deals with ‘second-order’ politeness, which is a “theoretical construct” (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 3), uncoupled from “praxis and being” (Watts 2005: xx). He asserts that the analysis of first-order politeness, defined as the ‘commonsense notion’ and ‘folk interpretation’ of politeness (1992: 3) is “the only valid means of developing a social theory of politeness” (Watts 2003: 9).

Brown and Levinson’s view of politeness as a system of linguistic devices used to redress face-threat and avoid conflict is compatible with Eelen’s definition of a theory of second-order politeness as non-evaluative and non-normative (2001: 48) and thus seems to fulfill the requirements of a universal theory of politeness. However, their focus on face-threat and individual rights reflects the authors’ cultural background, and so does their adaptation of Goffman’s and Grice’s frameworks.

Their reinterpretation of face, especially the emphasis on negative face, and the association of politeness with rational deviation from the cooperative principle provide counterevidence to their claims to universality. Their reliance on speech act theory, on the other hand, restricts the study of politeness to the analysis of isolated utterances. By taking the speech act as the relevant unit of analysis, they focus on the turn produced by the speaker and neglect the fact that communication generally takes place over several conversational turns. A central assumption underlying a model based on speech act production is that politeness consists in making appropriate linguistic choices.

The central role of the speaker producing polite utterances is not only problematic if one considers that politeness does not reside within linguistic structures (Watts 2003) but also because it fully neglects the hearer’s perspective, i.e. how these utterances are perceived. Although one could argue that in Brown and Levinson’s theory S’s linguistic choices are tailored towards H’s social status and expectations, H’s role consists solely in decoding the meaning encoded by the
speaker (Arundale 2006: 195). An analysis confined to the classification of speech acts according to their linguistic form does not take into account that utterances that are intended to be polite do not necessarily have to be perceived as such by the hearer, who still needs to “interpret them properly, but exactly how this happens is never addressed by Brown & Levinson” (Eelen 2001: 96).

In contrast to the Gricean concept of speaker meaning, which restricts the role of the hearer to inferring the speaker’s intention, in more recent work, intention has been “conceptualized as a post facto participant resource that emerges through interaction” (Haugh 2008: 104). Interestingly, Brown and Levinson recognize that politeness is constructed in interaction and only becomes “evident to both participants in the other’s uptake” (Arundale 2006: 208), and they even admit that their model cannot account for its dynamic nature:

Social interaction is remarkable for its emergent properties which transcend the characteristics of the individuals that jointly produce it; this emergent character is not something for which our current theoretical models are well equipped.

(Brown & Levinson 1987: 48)

In recent years, alternative frameworks for analysing politeness have been suggested which view and analyse politeness as a dynamic concept that “arises out of interaction” (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 11). Researchers like Eelen (2001), Mills (2003) and Watts (2003) break away from pragmatics, declare the Gricean approach to conversational cooperation to be inadequate as a basis for a model of linguistic politeness (Watts 2003: 116) and replace it by an “interactional achievement model of communication” (Arundale 2006: 207).

Politeness is viewed as a social rather than pragmatic phenomenon and the analysis is extended beyond isolated speech acts and based on longer stretches of discourse, thus shifting the focus towards a “process-oriented view of conversation” (Mills 2003: 38). The analysis no longer involves pre-established speech act categories, but the “evaluative moments observable in ongoing social interaction” (Watts 2003: 45).

This discursive view of politeness relies on postmodern concepts and is theoretically grounded in Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1990), in particular in his notion of habitus, whose main tenets are argumentativity, historicity and discursiveness (Eelen 2001: 247), and which “gives the individual in ongoing interaction the feel for the game” (Watts 2003: 149, Mills 2003: 35). Postmodern politeness theories emphasize the ‘chameleon-like’ nature of politeness (Watts 2003) and the heterogeneity of norms and practices within cultures (Mills 2003).

While cross-cultural pragmatic studies look at how politeness is realized in different cultures, which are treated as static and homogeneous entities, postmodern research examines language use in particular ‘communities of practice’
(Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992) or ‘emergent networks’ (Watts 2003), which are continually re-constructed through interaction. The speakers’ social identities and their relationships, as well as concepts such as face or social distance and power, that appear to be static in Brown and Levinson’s theory, are viewed as dynamic. The possibility that there are particular linguistic structures that can be used to make communication more polite is rejected and politeness becomes unpredictable.

1.4 **Postmodern theories vs. cross-cultural research**

Since postmodern politeness theories reject the basic premises underlying pragmatic theory, it would be exceedingly difficult to apply them to the research conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics. Whereas they emphasise the lack of homogeneity within cultures, focus on individual cases and avoid generalisations, cross-cultural pragmatics aims at establishing general patterns and the extent to which they are shared or differ across cultures. Although both fields are concerned with linguistic politeness, they have different theoretical backgrounds, pursue different research objectives and use different methods.

Cross-cultural pragmatics constitutes a branch of contrastive linguistics and has its theoretical roots in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. While contrastive pragmatics focuses on “how particular communicative functions are realised in different languages” (Barron 2003: 23), cross-cultural pragmatics is concerned with pragmalinguistics, defined as “the linguistic end of pragmatics” (Leech 1983: 11), as well as sociopragmatics, i.e. the “sociological interface of pragmatics” (ibid: 10).

Hence, one of the objectives of cross-cultural pragmatics is to establish the pragmalinguistic repertoires available in various languages for the realisation of particular speech acts and to “cross-linguistically identify the formal and functional equivalence relationship of politeness expressions” (Kasper 1990: 198). The investigation of the impact of social factors on language use, in contrast, continues the research tradition established in sociolinguistics. Strategy choice is correlated with social factors with the aim of identifying “the social conditions for carrying out speech acts appropriately and effectively” (Kasper 2004: 125) and the extent to which they differ across languages.

The contrastive analysis of empirical data from different languages allows for judgements on universality vs. culture-specificity of speech act realisation. Most researchers tend to acknowledge the universality of ‘basic phenomena’ of speech act performance, but allow for variation in their manifestations across languages (Blum-Kulka 1983: 37).
These cross-cultural differences help elucidate culture-specific values (O’Driscoll 2007: 464). While cultural values have a great impact on the way language is used, speakers have little influence over the cultural norms that they have internalised throughout their lives and that shape their language use even if they communicate in a different one. The culture-specificity of one’s linguistic choices only becomes apparent when communicating with people from other cultures. We not only perceive the others’ speech as different, but also lose control over the effect of our own words on our interlocutors, who will interpret them according to their cultural norms and may perceive them as inappropriate.

Cross-cultural research attempts to access information on culture-specific patterns of behaviour that “function below the level of conscious awareness and are not generally available for analysis” (Hall 1976 [1989: 43]). Even though these patterns are exceedingly difficult to capture, the tendencies emerging from cross-cultural data provide valuable insights into differences in politeness norms and communicative styles, and they can help further understanding across cultures.

The importance assigned to the evaluation of politeness in postmodern theories emphasises the potential of disagreement between speaker and hearer as to what constitutes politeness. In cross-cultural pragmatics, in contrast, the focus is on how speakers agree on what is polite and how they do so differently in different cultures. As Eelen points out “the interactional roles of speaker and hearer constantly change hands, with the same persons alternating between both positions, so obviously both should have similar characteristics” (2001: 110). In research into cultures rather than individual speakers, hearers and speakers sharing a particular cultural background and social norms become mutually interchangeable.

Cross-cultural pragmatics does not account for and is not interested in individual interpretations, while focusing on those conventionally associated with particular linguistic structures in a culture. Instead of analysing the evaluation of individual hearers, the most probable evaluation in a particular culture is established, with the less typical and less frequent interpretations being largely irrelevant.

The postmodern approach to politeness, with its focus on the heterogeneous nature of culture and dynamic aspects of social identity, emphasises individual variability in the production and perception of politeness. Cross-cultural pragmatics, on the other hand, aims at capturing the concept of politeness shared by members of a culture, which is why variability is approached systematically and analysed in relation to fixed social and cultural factors.

This leads directly to another major difference between cross-cultural pragmatics and postmodern politeness research, namely that the former relies on quantitative and the latter on qualitative analysis. Postmodern politeness studies draw on conversation analysis, which is concerned with the sequential organization of talk, and “typically reject experimental designs, coding, and quantitative analyses”
Cross-cultural pragmatics, in contrast, isolates “speech acts from their sequential habitat” (Kasper 2004: 125). To ensure comparability, the data are simplified and quantified, and their analysis involves classificatory coding and statistical analysis (Eelen 2001: 142).

While the reliability of the results of cross-cultural studies increases with the quantity of data, qualitative analysis looks at individual cases whose relevance is evidenced “by the displayed orientation of a co-participant to some feature of what a speaker has done” (Schegloff 1993: 101). Counterevidence provided by the analysis of other cases does not render this finding irrelevant for “the parties on that occasion, on which it was manifested” (ibid.). In cross-cultural pragmatics, however, a sufficiently large amount of counterexamples would classify that single case as untypical of the examined culture.

Schegloff questions the necessity and usefulness of quantification, but among the research questions that, in his opinion, do qualify for quantitative analysis are comparative studies (1993: 118). The study of cultures can involve qualitative or quantitative research methods, and their choice is closely linked with taking either an emic or an etic approach. The focus on one culture, typical of the emic approach, favours qualitative methods, while the etic approach involves the comparison of several cultures, for which comparable, ideally universal criteria are needed (Gudykunst 2000: 294).

Studies analysing how cultures differ in conveying particular illocutions in particular situations need to base their claims on sufficient amounts of comparable data that can be placed into categories and compared across languages. Postmodern theorists, however, reject the idea that politeness can be equated with linguistic structures or captured within stable categories, and they conceptualise it as an unpredictable concept constructed and negotiated in ongoing conversation.

Even though there is no systematic correlation between form and function and literal meanings are problematic in that additional meanings can always be implied and inferred (e.g. Levinson 1983: 274), a contrastive analysis of politeness phenomena cannot be conducted without a framework within which they can be compared. While theories in which everything is open to an interpretation as anything illustrate the infinite ways in which language can be used, cross-cultural speech act studies reveal culture-specific, conventionalised ways of using language.

Ultimately, cross-cultural studies avoid classifying the analysed utterances as polite, and the frequent use of a certain strategy in a particular language does not make that language more polite than others. Rather, the divergent linguistic preferences provide an insight into culture-specific concepts of politeness as well as areas of potential clashes between the examined cultures. While the focus on the evaluations of the hearer in postmodern theories makes the model
non-predictive and prediction undesirable (Eelen 2001: 249, Watts 2003: 160),
cross-cultural pragmatics makes generalisations and predictions about culture-
specific concepts of politeness.

Cross-cultural data can serve as a baseline for interlanguage pragmatic stud-
ies and as pragmatic input for teaching materials. In the context of second lan-
guage acquisition, prediction and prescription are highly desirable since they can
help the L2 learner avoid being unintentionally rude.

1.5 The present study

Despite the criticism Brown and Levinson’s work has received over recent years,
their theory continues to serve as the theoretical framework for most research
conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics, including the present study. Its popular-
ity among those applying it to their research and the attention it has received
from its critics suggest that “there must be some really good bits in it” (O’Driscoll

In fact, the criticism of Brown and Levinson’s theory and other pragmatic
politeness theories constitutes the most consistent and convincing part of post-
modern theories, while the alternatives they offer seem to be still in the making
(Holmes 2005, Terkourafi 2005, 2006). What they do not offer is a framework for
cross-cultural comparison. Brown and Levinson, in contrast, provide “a toolkit
to compare and interpret the ways in which speakers handle a range of different
speech events across a range of different cultures” (Watts 2003: 112).

Cross-cultural analysis requires parameters along which cultures can be mea-
sured, and Brown and Levinson’s distinction between positive and negative face
is one such parameter. It has been acknowledged that cultures differ as to when,
how, and to what extent face becomes threatened and how it is best redressed
(Eelen 2001: 159, O’Driscoll 2007: 469). More importantly, cultures differ in the
importance they assign to positive vs. negative face needs, and one of the main
objectives of this study is to examine how these preferences show up in speech
act data. By linking preferences for negative and positive politeness with cultural
values, I will further attempt to integrate culture-specific politeness norms into a
universalistic theory.

Similarly to face, the social variables of power and distance constitute dimen-
sions along which relationships vary across cultures and influence communicative
styles and linguistic choices. I hope that the present study can contribute to the
question of the extent to which cultural values determine the assessment of P and
D, preferences for positive or negative politeness, and the focus on ego’s vs. alter’s
face wants. Although these parameters are dynamic, to ensure comparability, they
will be treated as snap-shots capturing the conversational contract on entering the conversation (Fraser 1990).

Although speech act strategies provide a simplified view on politeness, they are an ideal unit of analysis when it comes to cross-cultural comparison. While bearing in mind that the communicative functions associated with certain speech acts can develop over several conversational turns, Bachtin's conceptualization of speech genres (1979) as being bounded by the change of speakers seems more suitable for a contrastive study. Consequently, the present study is restricted to speech act production and does not take into account the hearer's uptake. It is based on the assumption that a high degree of consensus among members of a culture on the use of particular linguistic structures in a given situation can be interpreted as indicative of what is regarded as appropriate in that culture.

More specifically, this study is devoted to a cross-cultural investigation of the speech act of apologising in British English, Polish and Russian. The analysis of two Slavic languages, which have not received much attention in previous research, allows for testing Brown and Levinson's claims to universality and contributes to the debate on universality vs. culture-specificity. The study will provide some insights into differences in conceptualising politeness in a negative and two positive politeness cultures, but also into the differences in realising positive politeness in Polish and Russian cultures. I argue against the correlation between indirectness and politeness characterising Brown and Levinson's work not only by applying their theory to two languages that rely less heavily on indirectness in conveying politeness than does English, but also by focusing on a speech act that does not become more polite through indirectness.

A detailed and critical discussion of Brown and Levinson's theory and a careful reinterpretation of some of their concepts not only show how their framework can be applied to the analysis of an inherently polite speech act, but also that their universalistic framework allows for analysing culture-specific features of politeness.
CHAPTER 2

The culture-specificity of politeness

2.1 Culture in politeness research

Considering that ‘culture’ is a component of the field’s name, relatively little attention has been devoted to its definition and conceptualisation in cross-cultural pragmatics. In most studies, culture is merely treated as a variable responsible for differences in the realisation and distribution of speech act strategies. This simplified view of culture seems to go back to the sociolinguistic background of the field, with cross-cultural pragmatics shifting the focus from comparison of different speaker groups within one culture to contrasting different cultures. In fact, the terms ‘culture’ and ‘language’ are often used interchangeably, with languages rather than cultures constituting the object of study in cross-cultural pragmatics.

Likewise, Brown and Levinson treat the terms ‘culture’, ‘society’ and ‘group’ as synonyms (1987: 242 ff). For them, culture is a factor responsible for varying assessments of social variables and differences in selection of politeness strategies resulting from these assessments. The strategies available to perform an FTA are regarded as universal – and so are the strategic choices made by Brown and Levinson’s rational ‘model person’. This “vacuous notion of culture” (Watts 2003: 101) forms an ideal basis for a universalistic theory of second-order politeness. First-order politeness, on the other hand, is a marked form of polite behaviour, which in turn is defined as behaviour “deemed to be socially and culturally appropriate in any given social activity” (Watts 1992: 48).

Eelen distinguishes two different aspects of first-order politeness: The action-related and the conceptual side (2001: 32). The latter appears particularly valuable for the cross-cultural study of politeness since lay members’ judgements can be expected to provide an insight into the concept of politeness in their culture. Postmodern theories, however, tend to focus on the action-related side, namely on how politeness arises and is evaluated in ongoing conversation. Accordingly, rather than attempting to arrive at culture-specific concepts of politeness (as does, for instance, Blum-Kulka 1992), postmodern theories emphasise the heterogeneous nature of politeness as well as culture.
However, for politeness to arise there needs to be a consensus about social norms and the linguistic forms representing them (see Haugh 2003:400), and even its construction in ongoing conversation relies on mutually agreed norms and conventions (Bargiela-Chiappini 2003:1465). While cultural assumptions remain relatively stable and are unconsciously reproduced in interaction, situational assumptions are merely “working hypotheses that people adopt on a moment to moment basis to orient themselves in the ongoing conversation” (Janney & Arndt 1992:32).

Eelen argues that while cultures share some broad features, the individual is “a unique variant of this shared culture” (2001:205). What postmodern analyses of politeness seem to take for granted when focusing on individuals is that these shared features immensely facilitate communication between members of the same culture and that communication becomes much more difficult when it takes place between individuals who come from different cultures. It has been suggested that while intracultural disagreement mostly occurs at the level of implicatures, “intercultural misunderstandings are due to false inferences caused by false explicatures” (Moeschler 2007:89).

Speakers sharing a native language and its underlying cultural assumptions can exploit their language and manipulate the politeness system to serve their needs or do ‘relational work’ (Locher & Watts 2005). Most non-native speakers, however, will never achieve the cultural competence allowing them to use the language as creatively or manipulatively as native speakers do. In intercultural encounters, where speakers bring divergent cultural assumptions to the conversation, knowledge of the broad features characterising the interlocutors’ culture can be exceedingly valuable. These broad features of language usage and the way they differ across cultures are the object of study in cross-cultural pragmatics.

Regrettably, most cross-cultural studies do not go beyond describing the differences in performing a particular speech act in the contrasted languages, and few attempt to interpret the data in terms of cultural values. The insights into the respective cultures gained from cross-cultural pragmatic research are, therefore, largely restricted to the studied speech acts.

Studies conducted in the field of intercultural communication, in contrast, tend to treat culture as an explanatory variable while referring to theories of cultural comparison (e.g. Hall 1976, Hofstede 1991, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997). These theories have developed dimensions along which cultures can be measured and which provide information on culture-specific communicative styles. Hofstede’s dimensions (1991) of power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance are the most widely studied ones. They are based on data collected from IBM employees in over 50 countries, providing assessments of ‘work-related values’, complemented with information on a number
of factors shaping the cultural dimensions, such as history, national wealth and population growth. None of the dimensions is directly related to the perception of politeness, but they measure factors that influence communicative styles and politeness norms. The dimensions of individualism and power distance have proved most influential in studies linking culture with verbal behaviour and they will also be dealt with in the present study.

2.2 Defining culture

While most cross-cultural studies do not attempt to define the term *culture*, those definitions that can be occasionally encountered in politeness studies tend to focus on the role of culture in acquiring politeness norms:

> By interacting with other members of the culture in different situations throughout their lives, people acquire broad frameworks of common knowledge, experience, expectations, and beliefs that enable them to be tactful.  

*(Janney & Arndt 1992: 30)*

Studies informed by theories of cultural comparison provide similar definitions, though they tend to conceptualise culture on a more global level:

> Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member’s behaviour and each member’s interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.  

*(Spencer-Oatey 2000: 4)*

As both definitions suggest, culture is generally viewed as a mixture of factors underlying human behaviour. These factors have been visualised by means of cultural layers, such as those of an onion (e.g. Hofstede 1991, Spencer-Oatey 2000) or an iceberg (e.g. Ting-Toomey & Chung 2005). The main advantage of such a conceptualisation of culture is that it allows for distinguishing noticeable and controllable factors from factors that are below the level of consciousness.

In Ting-Toomey and Chung’s model, the following four layers are distinguished (2005: 28):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surface-Level Culture:</th>
<th>Popular Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate-Level Culture:</td>
<td>Symbols, Meanings, and Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep-Level Culture:</td>
<td>Traditions, Beliefs, and Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Human Needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Popular culture is the most readily observable cultural layer and it refers to “cultural artefacts or systems that have mass appeal and that infiltrate our daily
life” (Ting-Toomey & Chung 2005: 29), such as music and fashion. Intermediate-Level Culture constitutes the next layer which encompasses symbols, meanings and norms, all of which are closely related to language use. Language is viewed as a symbolic system, where symbols convey meanings attached to them, whereas norms are “collective expectations of what constitutes proper or improper behaviour” (ibid: 32). Traditions, the first component of Deep-Level Culture, are rooted in a culture’s history. Beliefs are related to cultural assumptions and worldviews, and values are defined as the “motivational bases for actions” (ibid: 35).

What is of particular interest to cross-cultural pragmatics is the influence of Deep-Level Culture on Intermediate-Level Culture. The latter accommodates pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of language use; symbols and their culture-specific meanings can be viewed as referring to the pragmalinguistic representation of politeness and norms to context-appropriate language use. The culture-specific character of politeness is rooted in the layer of Deep-Level Culture. Values, in particular, determine what constitutes appropriate or polite behaviour: They determine the need for an apology and the choice of its linguistic form in accordance with social factors.

Universal human needs in Ting-Toomey and Chung’s model include “needs for security, inclusion, love/connection, respect, control, and creating meaning” (2005: 29). While their needs for ‘inclusion’ and ‘connection’ parallel positive face needs, and ‘respect’ comes closest to negative face needs, the remaining needs are not accounted for by Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory. The fact that human needs cannot be reduced to those pertaining to positive and negative face has been discussed as another point of criticism of Brown and Levinson’s model. O’Driscoll, for instance, points out that “shame, pride, embarrassment, confidence, approval, disapproval and so on do not in themselves involve either togetherness or apartness” (2007: 480, see also Tracy 1990 and Spencer-Oatey 2000).

An issue which is not explicitly addressed in Ting-Toomey and Chung’s model is that cultures are dynamic in that they constitute a “large-scale outcome of people interacting over time” (Eelen 2001: 246–247). In the past century, Poland and Russia faced a series of political, ideological and economic changes, all of which have had an impact on culture. Lubecka (2000) defines Polish culture as an amalgam of three different historical, political and social traditions. Its main element is Poland’s national heritage, which is “most deeply rooted in collective subconsciousness” (2000: 32), while the values introduced by the socialist regime constitute the second cultural layer. Finally, since the fall of the Iron Curtain, a third layer has been added to Polish culture, causing an increasing assimilation to Western lifestyle. Similarly, Bergelson describes Russian culture as a “rather chaotic conglomerate of significantly contradictory cultural pattern” (2003: 4).
and distinguishes three different co-existing layers: traditional, inherited from the Soviet system, and westernised.

The second layer of Polish and Russian cultures, referred to as ‘imposed culture’ (Lubecka 2000: 32), has emerged through the political and societal changes introduced by the socialist governments. Although this layer has always been perceived as alien to these two Slavic cultures, its impact on the mentality of Polish and Russian people cannot be denied. Western culture and life style, in contrast, which exerted relatively little influence on the countries behind the Iron Curtain until the end of the 80s, were quickly accepted and greatly appreciated once they found their way into Poland and Russia; though the initial enthusiasm has meanwhile given way to more critical attitudes.

Although it is mainly the popular layer that has been shaped by Anglo-Saxon culture, the data collected for the present study may yield some information as to how far it has also affected the deeper levels of Polish and Russian cultures. Western influence has not only replaced many of the values imposed by the socialist regime, but can also be expected to change the oldest layers of Polish and Russian cultures, contributing to the ongoing process of cultural globalisation. At present, the three layers coexist, and the extent to which each of them shapes interactional styles varies across social groups.

2.3 Culture-specific perception of social variables

The main element in Brown and Levinson’ theory that accounts for cultural variation is their weightiness formula. While the formula is universal, the “actual factors that go into assessing the size of these three social variables are of course culturally specific” (1987: 248). Brown and Levinson link the culture-specific assessments of D, P and R with their concept of ‘ethos’, which they define as “the affective quality of interaction characteristic of members of a society” (ibid: 243).

While the variables P and D define the relationship between the interlocutors and are explicitly described as pan-cultural (ibid: 76), R denotes the imposition of the FTA and is “culturally and situationally defined” (ibid: 77). What Brown and Levinson do not discuss is that the culture-specificity of R partly stems from the fact that “in order for the model person to be able to assess the value for R, s/he has to be able to calculate values for D and P first” (Watts et al. 1992: 9) – and since the assessments of P and D are culture-specific, so is R.

The dependence of R on the assessments of P and D provides counterevidence to Brown and Levinson’s claim that the three variables contribute to the weightiness of an FTA on a summative basis (1987:76). Another point of criticism frequently encountered in the literature concerns the composition of the weightiness
formula; the claim that the weightiness of an FTA can be captured by just three factors. Formality of the context, for instance, has been shown to have a decisive impact on speech act realisation (e.g. Holmes 1995: 19); though one could argue that this variable is closely related to social distance and power, for contexts tend to be formal when +D or +P are involved. Social power can also be seen as inherent in factors such as age and gender – another two variables which have been the object of analysis in sociolinguistics and cross-cultural pragmatics.

The presence of third parties is yet another factor that has been shown to influence speech act performance (e.g. Deutschmann 2003). The Russian linguist Zemskaja suggests a further valid distinction, namely that third parties can be made-up of “strangers as well as own people, accidentally or not accidentally becoming part of the situation” (“Это могут быть как чужие, так и свои люди, случайно или не случайно оказавшиеся ‘частью’ обстановки”) (1988: 24). For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that in addition to social distance, the social status of the person or people present is also likely to have an impact on the use of politeness.

It has further been suggested that the variable D should be subdivided into familiarity and affect / liking. Turnbull and Slugoski's (1988) study of compliments and indirect insults has shown that 'affect' is more decisive in interpreting these two acts than social distance, and according to Brown and Gilman (1989) 'liking' is the major factor increasing the use of politeness in Shakespearean tragedies. Ultimately, several factors that have an impact on communicative styles and the realisation of politeness were originally proposed by Hymes in “The Ethnography of Speaking” (1962).

Since the influence of social variables on strategy choice (sociopragmatics) is a central research question in cross-cultural pragmatics, some researchers, in addition to investigating how social variables correlate with the use of particular strategies, conduct assessment studies, in which these variables are rated by members of the examined cultures. While such assessments are confined to the situations under study, I would like to arrive at a more general picture of how social distance and power are conceptualised in Poland and Russia.

The following discussion will be limited to these two variables, partly because they have been most frequently tested in cross-cultural research, and partly because they are closely related to Hofstede’s (1991) dimensions of power distance and individualism. Hofstede's scores on these dimensions will be combined with descriptions of Polish and Russian interactional styles based on observations made by researchers who are either outsiders to the described culture (e.g. Richmond 1995, 2003, Rathmayr 1996) or members of the culture getting aware of its specificity by living in another (e.g. Wierzbicka 1985b, Klos-Sokol
1994, Ronowicz 1995) or by observing the changes their culture is undergoing (e.g. Zemskaja 1997, Kronhaus 2004, Nikolaeva 2000).

These observations, though necessarily subjective, are valuable in that they offer a perspective on culture which arises only through contact with other cultures, making them more reliable than descriptions provided by lay members. While people tend to take their culture for granted, confrontation with other cultures not only makes them aware of the specificity of foreign cultures but also of their own cultural identity.

2.3.1 Social power

Brown and Levinson attempt to categorise societies according to “whether they reveal a heavy emphasis on status differentiation, so that high P values are likely to be assessed, or alternatively an egalitarian emphasis, with low P values” (1987: 243). They further maintain that P “can be measured on a scale of 1 to \( n \)” (ibid: 76), which “should run only from 1 to 7 or so” (ibid: 287). This way of measuring P is problematic since it does not take into account that the suggested scale is necessarily biased towards the culture of the person employing it.

While P as a parameter determining the relative status between the interactants can be expected to be universal, in a culture with low P values, the highest assessment of this variable, defining the greatest possible discrepancy in the interlocutors’ status, will be necessarily lower than its highest assessment in a society with high P values. This actually means that not only would P be assessed differently in a particular situation, but also that the range of potential P values varies across cultures.

Consequently, comparisons of P values across cultures require a global, culture-independent scale, such as that established by Hofstede (1991), one of whose dimensions is power distance. This dimension depicts “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (1991: 28). The conceptual similarity between Hofstede’s power distance and Brown and Levinson’s social power is reflected in Scollon and Scollon’s definition of hierarchical politeness systems which are characterised by “social differences that place one in a superordinate position and the other in a subordinate position” (1995: 45). Unfortunately, Great Britain is the only country included in Hofstede’s original project, but scores for Poland and Russia are available on Hofstede’s webpage. Great Britain scores 35 (the lowest value being 11 and the highest 104) on power distance, Poland 68, and Russia 93.
The perception of status is shaped in early childhood (Hofstede 1991: 32–37), with the family system playing a central role in internalising cultural values (Ting-Toomey & Chung 2005: 85). In cultures characterised by small power distance, such as Great Britain, children tend to be treated as equals, are allowed to contradict their parents and become independent at a young age. At school, students are encouraged to take initiative, ask questions, and disagree with the teacher.

In large power distance cultures, children are obedient towards their parents and the elders. Teachers are treated with respect and their teaching methods are never questioned. The large power distance characteristic of Soviet Russia (see Richmond 2003: 101) seems to be gradually decreasing under the influence of Western culture, while in Poland, the central role of religion contributes to the respectful attitude towards parents, the elderly and teachers, thus preserving hierarchical structures in families and educational institutions.

Another aspect of the culture-specific perception of social power in Poland and Russia is rooted in their socialist past, which was marked by a general distrust of institutions and people in authority (Richmond 1995: 23). Ronowicz suggests that the unequal power distribution resulted in an opposition of *us* (*my*) versus *them* (*oni*) (1995: 19). Basically, anybody wearing a uniform was marked as a member of the *oni* group, which led to new power constellations. Paradoxically, the desolate economic situation allowed even people such as shop assistants to take on a superior status. This was possible because they “were the distributors of sought-after goods” which put them in a position to treat their customers “in a patronising or authoritarian manner” (Ronowicz 1995: 65). Zemskaja (1997) and Nikolaeva (2000) point out that in Russia this attitude was particularly marked towards the *intelligentsia*.

Even though the socialist times are over, people who used to hold ‘powerful’ positions generally retain their interactional styles. While older sales persons may still treat their customers as if they were superior to them, younger people are generally friendly, adhering to the ‘American way’ and the demands of market economy. Zemskaja notes that in Russian shops “shoots of politeness are coming through Soviet rudeness” (“skvoz’ sovetskiju grubost’ probivajutsja rostki vežlivosti”) (1997: 278). She points out, however, that the increase in politeness towards customers in Russia is likely to be instrumental, i.e. profit-oriented, rather than reflecting changing politeness norms in Russian society. The improved economic situation and the filled shelves in Russia’s and Poland’s shops have certainly deprived the sales persons of their ‘power’.
2.3.2 Social distance

As with social power, the universal nature of social distance suggested by Brown and Levinson seems to be restricted to the universal applicability of this variable when characterising relationships in various cultures. While it is rather obvious that in every culture people may be strangers or intimates, I would like to argue that the extent to which people form close relationships varies across cultures and that the perception of social distance is reflected in the interactional styles of a speech community.

The impact of social distance on interactional styles, being more readily observable, has received much more attention than social power in descriptions of Polish and Russian cultures. Ronowicz, for instance, maintains that relationships between Polish people are characterised by strong interpersonal ties and that the socialist times, and especially the negative attitude towards authority, have strengthened them even more (1995: 19). Richmond puts forward a similar argument while naming the unreliability of social services in the former Soviet Union as a decisive factor: “the bureaucracy is not expected to respond equitably to a citizen's request. Instead, Russians will call friends and ask for their help” (2003: 114). He describes Russian friendships as “all-encompassing” (ibid: 115) and argues that they involve mutual sacrifices (ibid: 109).

On a similar note, Lubecka opposes the Polish concept of friendship, which she associates with genuine and disinterested emotional involvement, allowing for “critical remarks, painful sincerity and often for lack of respect for privacy” (2000: 48) to the instrumental nature of American friendships, characterised by non-commitment, resulting from the big social and geographical mobility.

At the same time, most authors discussing Russian and Polish interactional styles emphasise the great disparity between the openness and warmness of Slavic people and the high degree of anonymity in encounters between strangers in both Poland (Klos-Sokol 1994) and Russia (Kronhaus 2004, Nikolaeva 2000), evidenced by lack of greetings, smiles or even eye-contact. The high social distance reflected in the absence of kinesic features, which are vital in establishing relationships or even acknowledging the other’s presence, leads to a perception of Poles and Russians as less polite to strangers by people with an Anglo-Saxon cultural background.

These observations suggest that in Polish and Russian cultures, it is not only the variable of social power that can be placed on a broader continuum than in small power distance countries such as Great Britain. The marked differences between interactional styles among strangers and friends in Poland and Russia suggest that the variable of social distance also allows for a greater discrepancy than in Anglo-Saxon cultures. Therefore, in order to provide assessments of social distance
in Polish and Russian cultures, the scale suggested by Brown and Levinson, which can be expected to accommodate the D values in Anglo-Saxon cultures, would have to be extended to range from $1-x$ to $n+x$.

Richmond argues that “Poles have two codes of behaviour, one public and the other private. In public, they can be pushy, demanding, distant, abrupt, and rude. In private, they are warm, generous, hospitable, and loquacious” (1995: 67). A similar characterisation of the “two separate and distinct lives” Russians lead is offered in the book he has devoted to the description of Russian culture (2003: 117). Russian public behaviour is described as “pushing, shoving, and elbowing – determined to gain access or obtain their share before whatever they seek is gone” (ibid: 112). Although this description is certainly exaggerated, it does allow an insight into what impact the bad economic situation of the socialist times had on public behaviour.

Incidentally, the described differences between public and private interactive styles are characteristic of collectivist societies, which leads us to another cultural dimension distinguished by Hofstede and related to social distance, namely individualism, which

pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism, as its opposite, pertains to societies in which people are integrated from birth onwards into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

(Hofstede 1991: 51)

In politeness research, the distinction between individualism and collectivism has been central to the discussion of the concept of face and the criticism of Brown and Levinson’s interpretation of face as individualistic and not applicable to collectivist cultures.

While Great Britain scores very high (89) on individualism (the lowest score being 6 and the highest 91), the score for Poland is 60, and 39 for Russia. Hence, Russian and, to a lesser extent, Polish culture can be classified as collectivist cultures, which are characterised by a great discrepancy in attitudes towards members of one’s own and other groups, also called particularism. Particularism is opposed to universalism, typical of individualism, in which everybody is treated alike (Hofstede 1991: 66). Ronowicz’s distinction between my and oni is clearly an example of particularism, while the way complete strangers treat one another in Poland and Russia may be due to their potentially being members of the oni group.

Collectivist tendencies begin in the family, as do nearly all aspects of culture: “individualism is associated with nuclear family structure and collectivism with an extended family structure” (ibid: 57). Families are generally bigger in Poland and Russia than they are in Great Britain, and ties among relatives are
stronger. Due to the desolate housing situation, particularly in Russia, up to four generations live together in small flats. Furthermore, the strong interpersonal ties mentioned by Ronowicz and the genuine concept of friendship described by Lubecka and Richmond confirm that “collectivist societies usually have ways of creating family-like ties with persons who are not biological relatives but who are socially integrated into one’s ingroup” (ibid: 61). The collectivist mentality is likely to be more dominant in Russia than in Poland, for Polish nobility culture is associated with strong individualism (Lubecka 2000: 49). Russian collectivism, in contrast, has not emerged within the socialist structures, but is deeply rooted in Russian history and the mir – a system of agricultural village communes.

2.3.3 Social variables and address forms

The impact of social distance and power (as well as other social variables) on language use is most evident in the case of normative politeness, as conveyed by the choice between V- and T-forms. According to R. Brown and Gilman, the asymmetrical use of V-forms is motivated by the interactants’ relative status and their symmetrical use by social distance: “Differences of power cause V to emerge in one direction of address; differences not concerned with power cause V to emerge in both directions” (1960: 257).

While the English language does not make T and V distinctions, speakers of Polish and Russian always need to take into account the status of and the familiarity with their interlocutors before addressing them. Even though the system is becoming more flexible (see 6.2), the critical attitudes towards this development show that the availability of both T and V forms and the (changing) cultural norms dictating their use make Polish and Russian people necessarily more aware of and attentive to status differences in everyday interaction than are British people.

Whereas in Russian, the V-form is equal to the second person plural, Polish has preserved a somewhat old-fashioned system of deferential forms of address which are represented by the third person singular combined with Pani [Madam] or Pan [Sir]. Lubecka describes these forms of address as ceremonious (1993: 93), while Wierzbicka argues that they differ semantically from the V-forms in most other languages “in having positive courtesy built into them” (1985b: 171). Since the Polish address forms are reminiscent of the old Polish gentry, the socialist regime attempted to “force the form wy on the population” (Wierzbicka 1992: 323, see also Lubecka 1993: 37 and Huszcza 1996: 11–12) in order to make the Polish language more egalitarian. These endeavours show that the role of language in shaping interpersonal relationships and the social system was recognised by the socialist regime and manipulated to serve their purposes.
Not only are Polish deferential address forms very formal, but there is also a tendency to overuse titles denoting professions and positions (Lubecka 1993: 64, 93, Huszcza 2005), suggesting that Poles tend to emphasise status differences more than do Russians. It seems that in Russian culture, the strong collectivist tendency can be more powerful than potential status differences among strangers, allowing for the use of T-forms, as in: “Friend! What time?” (“Drug! Kotoryj čas?”) (Zemskaja 1979: 222). In Polish, in contrast, polite attention getters directed to strangers are necessarily deferential, taking the form of proszę pana/pani [I beg you Sir/Madam] or the neutral przepraszam [excuse me].

The above discussion of Polish and Russian interactional styles clearly shows that when assessing interpersonal relationships, Britons, Poles and Russians assign divergent values to the variables P and D. The cross-cultural differences in the perception of social power and social distance suggest that it is not only their assessment which varies across cultures, but also that their underlying concepts are culture-specific.

Since Poland and Russia score high and Great Britain low on power distance, the two Slavic cultures allow for a greater discrepancy in status between interlocutors than does British culture. The same seems to be true of social distance, as Polish and Russian interactional styles range from a seemingly hostile attitude towards strangers to very intimate friendships, while in Anglo-Saxon cultures, strangers are usually friendly to each other, but friendships tend to be less intimate.

Whereas high P values already imply a low degree of mobility along the power continuum, Slavic cultures can be further characterised by a relatively great mobility along the D scale – especially at the high end. The lack of eye-contact between strangers does not hinder them from being very helpful when asked for directions. Similarly, a short train journey spent with a Russian may be taken as a good opportunity to tell one’s life story, while a longer train journey may result in an offer of overnight accommodation. Richmond observers that “conversations begin easily between complete strangers” (2003: 140) and illustrates his observation with a recurrent scenario of “older women volunteer[ing] advice to young mothers on the care of their children” (ibid: 19) in the streets.

So far, I have focused on the culture-specific perception of the two variables characterising social relationships in Brown and Levinson’s universal politeness theory. While viewing cross-cultural differences in terms of varying assessments, or as I have argued, diverging concepts underlying these variables, provides an insight into sociopragmatic aspects of polite behaviour, a pragmalinguistic approach requires an inquiry into what is considered polite and how politeness is conceptualised in a particular culture.
2.4 Positive vs. negative politeness cultures

Although the terms positive and negative politeness culture are widely used in cross-cultural pragmatics, they are extremely fuzzy and those employing them usually do not define them or explain what makes the culture they investigate a positive or negative politeness culture. The distinction goes, of course, back to Brown and Levinson who explain the distinction between these two culture types in terms of culture-specific assessments of social variables:

… ‘warm’, positive-politeness cultures have a subjective ideal of small values for D, R and relative P which give them their egalitarian, fraternal ethos, while the ‘standoffish’ negative-politeness cultures subscribe to a subjective ideal of large values for D, R and relative P which give them their hierarchical, paternal ethos. (1987: 246–247)

Linking these two culture types with the assessment of social variables is highly problematic if one considers that Brown and Levinson’s theory equates politeness with face-redress and that the amount of face-redress necessary for the FTA to be polite is estimated on the basis of the assessments of social variables.

In a cross-cultural perspective, this basically means that cultures that tend to assign small values to P, D and R generally use less face-redress when performing FTAs, which makes them generally less polite than cultures with high P, D and R values. Not surprisingly, the fact that negative politeness receives a higher number than positive politeness in Brown and Levinson’s chart of strategies for doing an FTA has been subject to much criticism from researchers investigating speech act realisation in positive politeness cultures. Indeed, the entire hierarchy of the chart has proved problematic, with empirical research providing counterevidence to the claim that off record strategies are the most polite option (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1987: 131).

Another problem concerning the above definition is that all variables receive either high or low values in a given culture, which goes hand in hand with Brown and Levinson’s assumption that the variables making up the weightiness formula work on a summative basis. The correlation between low P values and positive politeness does not apply to Poland and Russia which are characterized by high power values and have been classified as positive politeness cultures in previous research (e.g. Rathmayr 1996, Lubecka 2000). However, the preference for positive politeness, which has been defined as an “extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of wants” (Brown & Levinson: 1987: 103) is clearly related to the assessment of social distance, which is generally low in collectivist cultures.
Polish and Russian cultures combine features of collectivism with a preference for positive politeness while individualism and the focus on negative politeness are characteristic of Anglo-Saxon cultures and Brown and Levinson's theory. The central role they assign to the individual, their emphasis on negative face needs, and the view of all interaction as face threatening leads to an association of indirectness with politeness.

2.4.1 In-directness and im-politeness

The centrality of indirectness in conveying politeness is not only characteristic of Brown and Levinson's theory but of the field of pragmatics in general. According to Searle, “politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness” (1975:64), and Leech equates indirectness with politeness on the grounds that it increases the degree of optionality for the hearer (1983:108). Postmodern theories continue this Anglo-Saxon tradition by emphasising that politeness does not reside within linguistic structures while neglecting the fact that utterances do have literal, i.e. direct meanings.

Wierzbicka, who bases much of her argumentation against universality in speech act research on evidence from Slavic languages, links the high degree of indirectness in English with the concept of privacy, which she describes as characteristically Anglo-Saxon and absent from Slavic cultures (1991:47) – though it should be noted that this concept has meanwhile entered Polish and Russian cultures through their recent Western cultural layer.

In her much cited article (1985b), Wierzbicka discusses how Polish cultural values affect the performance of a selection of speech acts and contrasts them with Anglo-Saxon cultural values reflected in the English language. She identifies major differences in the linguistic realisations of questions, suggestions and requests. Whereas Anglo-Saxon speakers show a marked preference for hedges and tags, thus placing “special emphasis of the rights and autonomy of every individual” (1985b:150), Polish speakers favour direct forms. Similar discrepancies appear in the way opinions are expressed. In Anglo-Saxon cultures, they are voiced carefully and are explicitly marked as such, while Polish speakers present their opinions rather forcefully, making it difficult to distinguish them from statements of fact (ibid:160).

According to Rathmayr, there is a general distrust of negative politeness in Russia, where it is perceived as foreign (1996:26). Bergelson (2003) argues that while to Americans, directness can seem rude or imposing, Russians associate it with sincerity, cordiality, and solidarity. Imperative constructions, for instance, can serve as polite requests in both Polish (Marcjanik 1997, Lubecka 2000) and

An elaborate request that sounds perfectly polite to a British person may be viewed as increasing the degree of imposition with growing degree of indirectness by a Polish or Russian addressee. The reluctance to clearly formulate one’s wishes may be interpreted as an attempt to save S’s face while putting H in a position where he or she has to take the initiative for S’s wishes to be fulfilled. The increased degree of optionality suggested by Leech is illusive since once the slightest hint has been dropped, H feels compelled to take it up and offer what S is too reluctant to ask for. Ignoring such a hint would be impolite, therefore, an indirect request may put more pressure on the hearer than would a straightforward one.

Ermakova and Zemskaja, in their article on communicative failure, refer to indirect speech acts as “manipulative” (“manipuljativnye rečevye akty”) (1993: 51). One type of communicative failure for them is when the hearer understands that he or she is being manipulated and does not wish to “join the interlocutor’s game” (“podyglyvat’ sobesedniku”) (1993: 52).

Wierzbicka points out that where English relies on indirectness, Polish and Russian offer other possibilities of softening the illocutionary force of directive speech acts. Both languages have a “highly developed system of diminutives, involving not only nouns, but also adjectives and adverbs” (Wierzbicka 1991: 50). Diminutives not only soften the imposition of direct speech acts but also minimise social distance, thus serving as positive politeness devices (Bergelson 2003, Brehmer 2006).

Since Wierzbicka’s main aim is to demonstrate an Anglo-Saxon bias in politeness research, she focuses on the most striking differences between Polish and English (1985b). Hence, she does not devote much attention to the fact that both Polish and Russian offer a wide range of indirect constructions for the performance of directive speech acts (see Ogiermann 2009) and that diminutives are mainly used with intimates, friends, and children. In encounters between Polish or Russian strangers, their use is much more restricted and there is a greater preference for indirect forms.

Likewise, in Britain or the US, conversations among intimates are likely to be more direct than communication with strangers and status superiors. As Garfinkel’s (1969) experiments – in which he requested his students to behave in a particularly polite way to their family members – have shown, formality can be perceived as impolite among intimates. A high degree of indirectness not only serves as a distancing device when applied among intimates, but “overly polite utterances may appear sarcastic or facetious when they conflict with the degree of indirectness prescribed by the social relationship” (Turnbull & Słogoski 1988: 103).
On the whole, however, there is a high degree of consensus in the literature that members of positive politeness cultures tend to be more direct than members of negative politeness cultures. The association between directness and positive politeness, on the one hand, and indirectness and negative politeness, on the other, goes back to Brown and Levinson’s conceptualisation of positive and negative face and has been a recurring theme in politeness research, especially on Slavic as well as Mediterranean cultures.

Brown and Levinson view indirectness as a means of avoiding imposition, but it can be perceived as manipulative by members of positive politeness cultures. While they regard positive politeness and directness as honest and non-manipulative, Brown and Levinson associate it with urgency and lack of attention to face. Accordingly, direct formulations are generally more likely to be perceived as appropriate in cultures that place a stronger emphasis on positive face needs than in individualist cultures.

2.4.2 Cultural values

Research has amply illustrated that positive and negative face needs are weighed differently across cultures – and it is according to this criterion that cultures have been classified as positive or negative politeness cultures. The importance attached to these two types of face can be regarded as an element of cultural variability in Brown and Levinson’s theory. The distinction between positive and negative politeness becomes particularly valuable if these two types of politeness are defined in terms of cultural values, such as those discussed by Wierzbicka (see Kasper 1990: 195). Defining cultural values such as privacy as oriented towards negative face and cordiality as satisfying positive face needs allows for accommodating culture-specific politeness concepts into a universalistic theory.

Arundale voices the need for ethnographic research “that would help establish how members of a particular culture interpret these two types of politeness” (2006: 205), while Kasper points out that in order to understand cross-cultural differences in the selection of politeness strategies, “their intra-culturally determined values have to be considered” (1990: 198). Wierzbicka has tackled this problem by linking linguistic structures with cultural values, while Watts approaches it by emphasising the centrality of lay members’ conceptualisations of politeness.

Although the analysis of first-order politeness can help to capture culturespecific concepts of politeness, it should be borne in mind that “lay conceptualisations of politeness are frequently rather vague, since we take forms of politeness for granted” (Watts 2003: 30). This is why observations about a culture made by outsiders to that culture, who are more likely to notice what is different from
what they have been socialised into, constitute a valuable source of insights into culture-specific aspects of politeness.

While the association of indirectness with negative politeness and of directness with positive politeness are widely accepted, classifying “folk interpretations” of politeness and cultural values as representative of positive or negative politeness bears the danger of vagueness and subjectivity. In contrast to Watts, according to whom it is impossible to operationalise lay interpretations of politeness in empirical research (2005: xx), I would like to suggest that the interpretation of the data can be facilitated by resorting to the alternative terms for positive and negative face that have been suggested by Arundale (2006) and Terkourafi (2007). While positive and negative are terms that seem to merely indicate “end points on a scale” (O’Driscoll 2007: 474), first-order conceptualisations of politeness, or their underlying cultural values, can generally be ascribed a tendency to withdraw or separate from others or a tendency to approach or get connected with the group.

One element of Polish and Russian cultures reflecting the concepts of approach and connectedness is the vivid interest Poles and Russians take in one another’s lives and problems (Kronhaus 2004, Rathmayr 1996, Suszczyńska 1999, Lubecka 2000), accompanied by a tendency to ask personal questions (Nikolaeva 2000) and a much more restricted range of taboo topics than in Anglo-Saxon cultures (Rathmayr 1996). Richmond argues that Russians “seem compelled to intrude into the private affairs of others” (2003: 19), and Rathmayr characterises Russian culture as an “interfering culture” (“Einmischungskultur”) (1996: 213) – a term that has even been taken up by Russian linguists (e.g. Vereščagin & Kostomarov 1999: 18). She also points out that the Russian tendency to interfere has both a positive (helpful) and a negative (critical) aspect. This tendency is weaker in, but certainly not absent from, Polish culture, and although it is not entirely alien to Anglo-Saxon culture either, it is viewed more negatively within it. According to Wierzbicka, Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition “abhors interference in other people’s affairs” (1985b: 150).

The overbearing Slavic hospitality (Klos-Sokol 1994, Lubecka 2000, Rathmayr 1996) is another factor that has been used to classify Poland and Russia as positive politeness cultures. It is deeply rooted in Polish and Russian traditions, though currently changing under the influence of the West – unexpected visits, for instance, are becoming less welcome since time is increasingly regarded as a valuable commodity.

Another characteristic valued in Polish and Russian cultures that emphasises connectedness is emotionality, which is assigned “an entirely positive value, the more a person expresses his emotions, the better, more sincere, and more ‘open’ he is” (Tolstaja 1990: 4, quoted in Richmond 2003: 49). Wierzbicka further names cordiality and warmth as Polish cultural values, and argues that emotions are
shown more overtly in Slavic than in Anglo-Saxon cultures, in which they are perceived as embarrassing (1985b: 168).

In an attempt to define what is regarded as polite in Polish culture, Lubecka names respect, emotionality and modesty (2000: 54). She views respect as related to large power distance and associates emotionality with straightforwardness and interest in other. Modesty is linked with lack of assertiveness and a face-saving tendency oriented towards alter’s rather than ego’s face. On a similar note, Zemskaja (1997) names a set of cultural values likely to determine the perception of what is polite in Russian culture, including modesty, directness, and honesty as features of positive politeness.

Interestingly, modesty is not only named as characteristic of the Russian (Zemskaja 1997, Mamina 2003) and Polish (Lubecka 2000, Marcjanik 2001) concepts of politeness, but is also portrayed as typically British. Modesty constitutes one of the maxims of Leech’s PP, and its two components – “minimise praise of self” and “maximise dispraise of self” (1983: 132) – have been further specified by Fox as “negative” rules, such as prohibitions on boasting and any form of self-importance, and ‘positive’ rules, actively prescribing self-deprecation and self-mockery” (2004: 68). Although Leech demonstrates that the maxim of modesty is more powerful in some cultures than in others (1983: 137), the emphasis on the hearer’s face underlying the concept of modesty makes it a potentially universal element of politeness. Marcjanik offers the following definition of the role modesty plays in the Polish concept of politeness:

Polish linguistic politeness can be always identified with the position of a modest, dominated person – hiding one’s strengths and even exposing one’s shortcomings with the aim of enhancing the value of the partner. (Polską grzecznoscję językową zawsze jednak można utożsamić z postawą osoby skromnej, zdominowanej – ukrywającej własne walory lub wręcz eksponującej własne niedostatki celem dowartościowania partnera.) (2001: 202)

2.4.3 The semantics of politeness

While cultural values can be regarded as unconscious guideless for polite behaviour, the lexemes used to refer to politeness in a particular language can provide yet another type of insight into culture-specific concepts of politeness. Having drawn attention to the importance of commonsense interpretations of politeness, in his more recent work, Watts (2003) offers an etymological analysis of the English word politeness. He identifies the etymological roots of the terms polite and politeness – which go back to the Latin politus (polished) (2003: 36) – in the “notions of cleanliness, a smooth surface and polished brightness” (ibid: 33).
His analysis of the concept of politeness in 18th century Britain portrays it as a means to gain “access to high social status from which power could be exercised” (2003: 40). The association of politeness with power forms a central element of Watts’ definition of politeness, which he views as being:

...tied up with the most basic principles of human, socio-cultural organisation involving conceptualisations of appropriate individual behaviour, in particular linguistic behaviour, the structuring of interpersonal relationships within social groups and, above all, the nature and distribution of power.

(Watts et al. 1992: 11, emphasis added)

A question that inevitably arises at this point is whether a definition that has been influenced by the etymology of the English word ‘polite’ and its conceptualisation in 18th century Britain can be used to refer to politeness in cultures where true politeness “comes from the heart” (“vient du coeur”) (Rathmayr 1999: 75). While the English words polite and courteous link politeness with behavioural norms of court society, the Russian adjective vežlivyyj is derived from the verb vedat’ (to know). Hence, a polite Russian is knowledgeable while the lack of knowledge makes him or her a neveža, an ignorant person (Rathmayr 1996, Berger 2006).

The most common Polish adjectives denoting politeness are uprzejmy and grzeczny and both imply straightforwardness. The etymological roots of uprzejmy go back to the Old Church Slavonic *prěm-, meaning szczery (honest) and otwarty (open) (Brückner 1970: 594), while the word grzeczny was derived from k rzeczy (Brückner 1970: 162), which translates as ‘to the matter’ / ‘to the point’. According to Berger (2006), the concept of uprzejmy has been shaped by the upright behaviour characteristic of Polish gentry, while grzeczny depicts situation-appropriate behavior.

Watts maintains that the concept of first-order politeness is reflected in the various terms a language offers to refer to polite behaviour, and he names ‘considerate’, ‘thoughtful’, ‘well-mannered’ (2003: 35) as synonyms of the English ‘polite’ and ‘courteous’. One might even suggest that the less routinised terms provide a better insight into someone’s concept of politeness, since their use requires more reflection and is more context-specific than the most conventionalised terms.

Rathmayr conducted a survey in which she interviewed Russians about politeness (1996) and she arrived at a list of terms that her informants named as synonymous with ‘polite’ in Russian. The adjectives she lists can be subdivided into those defining people in terms of their attitude to others and those focusing on the person they describe. The former generally reflect the concepts of approach and connectedness, while the latter focus on non-imposition and display of good manners. Among those that include a reference to other are: predupreditel’nyj (obliging), obchoditel’nyj (affable), vnimatel’nyj (attentive), dobroželatel’nyj (benevolent), and
ljubeznyj (kind). Adjectives focusing on the described person, and reflecting the concept of withdrawal rather than approach include: spokojnyj (quiet), uravnovešennyj (balanced), sderžannyj (contained), kul’turnyj (cultured), vospitannyj (educated) (Rathmayr 1996: 25). According to Rathmayr’s informants, the central aspect of polite behaviour is “to treat others with respect” (“otnosit’sja s uvaženiem k drugim”) (1996: 23).

What is problematic about asking lay members to provide metapragmatic information on their concept of politeness is that they “tend to evoke normative descriptions of the phenomenon and engage, to a degree, in positive self-representation (a polite act in its own right) by coming up with what seems to them socially acceptable definitions” (Blum-Kulka 1992: 257). In order to avoid such a bias, potentially leading to an over-emphasis of aspects of formal politeness, in a study conducted by Suszczyńska and myself (2008), we inquired about the changes in the interactional styles of Polish and Hungarian people since the fall of the Iron Curtain. While describing how people used to interact with one another and how their conversational styles have changed, the Polish informants used a range of adjectives referring to politeness other than grzeczny and uprzejmy – without consciously reflecting on what constitutes politeness.

Interestingly, the most frequently used adjectives were all related to the concepts of approach and connectedness, namely otwarty (open), emocjonalny (emotional), serdeczny (cordial), wylewny (effusive), życzliwy (kind), and uczynny (helpful). While all these adjectives can be classified as oriented towards positive face, the nouns szacunek (esteem) and respekt (respect), which reflect distance and negative politeness, were almost exclusively named in relation to parents, elders, teachers, priests, and women.

In the above discussion I have tried to fill the terms positive politeness and negative politeness culture with content and have suggested a number of factors that can be invoked in assigning Polish and Russian cultures to the positive politeness type. Brown and Levinson’s conceptualization of positive and negative politeness cultures has been only partly confirmed: Polish and Russian cultures are characterized by low D and high P values – a combination that has been shown to apply to collectivist cultures, where power distance and individualism “tend to be negatively correlated: large power countries are also likely to be more collectivist” (Hofstede 1991: 54).

The distinction between positive face and negative face and the corresponding needs of approval and self-determination, very well captured by the concepts of approach and withdrawal, seems to be the one intuitively referred to by many authors classifying the cultures under investigation as positive or negative politeness cultures. The interpretation of indirectness as a manifestation of negative
politeness goes back to Brown and Levinson’s understanding of indirectness as a means of avoiding imposition, which they equate with politeness.

The perception of directness as polite presupposes low social distance, which implies approach and connectedness. The closeness expressed by directness and the extent to which it is regarded as appropriate or intrusive is culture-specific. Honesty, a cultural value named as characteristic of Russian politeness is clearly related to directness, but also the importance attached to traditions such as hospitality or the evaluations of certain characteristics such as emotionality provide valuable insights into culture-specific conceptualizations of politeness.

The present study deals with languages in which indirectness does not necessarily result in politeness and, at the same time, analyses a speech act which does not become more polite when realised indirectly. Rather than choosing a speech act that would exhibit cross-cultural differences in the level of directness, such as those discussed by Wierzbicka, I have selected a speech act which contradicts the implication underlying Brown and Levinson’s theory, namely that there is a positive correlation between indirectness and politeness. I will show that apologies are speech acts whose polite realisations adhere to the maxims of the Cooperative Principle and will discuss the role indirectness plays in apologising. I argue that remedial apologies are essentially positive politeness strategies and that the strategies used to perform them can be classified according to their orientation towards positive or negative face.
The speech act of apologising

Although politeness theories do not devote much attention to apologies, in cross-cultural pragmatics they are, along with requests, the most frequently studied speech act (see Chapter 4 for a review). A possible reason for their popularity is their vital social function of restoring and maintaining harmony. According to Norrick:

It is essential to the smooth working of society that there be standard means of admitting responsibility, implicating remorse, and forgiving. Without these we would probably be at one another’s throats much of the time. In this sense, acts of apologizing and forgiving are more basic and important to society than such acts as thanking and congratulating, which by comparison are its pleasant by-products rather than functional principles. (1978:284)

3.1 Classifying apologies

According to Austin’s classification of illocutionary forces, apologies belong to the category of ‘behabitives’, along with congratulating, commending, condoling, cursing, and challenging, which he defines as “a kind of performative concerned roughly with reactions to behaviour and with behaviour towards others and designed to exhibit attitudes and feelings” (1962 [1975:83]). In apologising the speaker performs:

A locutionary act S utters the words: I apologise (explicit performative) or I’m sorry (primary performative)

An illocutionary act S apologises

A perlocutionary act S placates the hearer (who accepts the apology and forgives)

The class of behabitives is the one Austin was least satisfied with, as evidenced by his own comment: “a shocker this” (1962 [1975:151]). He admits that it is too miscellaneous and that a “fresh classification altogether is needed” (ibid: 152). The need for a new taxonomy has also been recognised by Searle, who assigns apologies to the category of ‘expressives’, which further includes: thanking, congratulating, condoling, deploring, and welcoming. All these verbs “express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content” (1979:15).
An attempt at applying Searle’s felicity conditions to the speech act of apologising according to the rules proposed for the category of expressives (1969:67) would run as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositional content</th>
<th>Past act A done by S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory condition</td>
<td>S believes that A is an offence against H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincerity condition</td>
<td>S regrets act A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential condition</td>
<td>Counts as an apology for act A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The application of Searle’s conditions to the speech act of apologising is discussed in great detail by Owen (1983:117–126), who also demonstrates the impracticability of reconciling Searle’s rules for the class of expressives with his conceptualisation of indirect speech acts (Searle 1975).

Subsequent taxonomies shift the focus from felicity conditions to the social functions of speech acts. Bach and Harnish’s taxonomy of communicative illocutionary acts, for instance, has been developed according to the type of attitude expressed (1979:39). They adopt the term ‘acknowledgements’ over Austin’s ‘behabitives’ and Searle’s ‘expressives’ for apologies and other speech acts associated with the social functions of condoling, congratulating, greeting, thanking, accepting, rejecting, etc. Speech acts classified as acknowledgements “express, perfunctorily if not genuinely, certain feelings toward the hearer” (1979:51). They acknowledge the event by which the performed speech act was occasioned, one of the motivations for performing them being to satisfy a social expectation. In the case of apologies, the speaker acknowledges responsibility for committing an offence, and the apology is successful when the hearer recognises his or her intention of expressing regret.

According to Leech’s classification of illocutionary functions (1983), apologies can be assigned to the convivial speech act type, in which the illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal. In the case of apologies it is the goal of maintaining harmony between speaker and hearer, which makes them inherently polite.

Wierzbicka offers a description of the speech act of apologising while employing her culture-independent metalanguage (1983:130, translation mine):

Przeprosiny
I know that I did something that was bad for you
I think that you may feel something bad towards me because of it
I say: I regret having done it
I say it because I want you not to feel anything bad towards me

Glovinskaja takes a similar approach and defines apologies as follows (1993: 210, translation mine):

(1) X sdelal P, plochoe dlja Y-a;
(2) X sožaleet o P;
(3) X chočet, čtoby Y prostil ego;
(4) X govorit slovesnuju formulu, prinjatuju dlja ėtogo;
(5) X govorit ėto, potomu čto chočet, čtoby Y znal, čto X sožaleet o P i poėtomu prostil ego

(1) X did P, bad for Y;
(2) X regrets P;
(3) X wants Y to forgive him;
(4) X says a verbal formula suitable for it;
(5) X says it because he wants Y to know that X regrets P and to forgive him

3.2 Defining apologies

An important contribution to the understanding of the social functions of apologies has been made by Goffman (1971). In his work on remedial interchanges, apart from accounts and apologies, he also discusses requests asking “license of a potentially offended person to engage in what could be considered a violation of his rights” (1971: 114). Such disarming apologies seem to be what Brown and Levinson had in mind when classifying apologies as negative politeness strategies (1987: 131).

Cross-cultural research, however, focuses on remedial apologies, which are reactions to offences, such as violation of social norms or failure to fulfil personal expectations (Fraser 1981: 259). Apologies have been defined as transactions involving “a bid to change the balance-sheet of the relation between s and h” (Leech 1983: 125). The imbalance in the relationship between S and H is created by S committing an offence harming H, and S’s apology constitutes an attempt at restoring the balance. Accordingly, remedial apologies can be defined as compensatory actions used to restore and maintain social harmony. They allow “the participants to go on their way, if not with satisfaction that matters are closed, then at least with the right to act as if they feel that matters are closed and that ritual equilibrium has been restored” (Goffman 1971: 140).

Another important distinction in Goffman’s definition of apologies is that between substantial and ritual apologies. While the motivation for the former
is genuine regret for the committed offence, the latter aims at fulfilling social expectations. The social function of apologies is emphasised by Norrick, according to whom they are performed in order “to evince good manners, to assuage the addressee’s wrath, or simply to get off the hook and be on one’s way” (1978: 280). On a similar note, Zimin argues that by apologising we are “doing what is socially acceptable and expected” (1981: 41), while Tarasenko suggests that apologies are used “to present oneself as an educated member of a society” (“pokazat’ sebj vospitannym členom obščestva”) (1999: 97).

It is mainly this function of apologies that Coulmas refers to as “highly recurrent and routinised” (1981: 69). He defines ritual apologies in terms of conversational routines, which he views as conventional implicatures in Grice’s sense (1981: 7). The distinction between genuine and ritual apologies is, of course, fuzzy as they can be “motivated from both perspectives” (Fraser 1981: 266). It seems, therefore, that apologies combine normative and strategic elements of politeness: Uttering the appropriate routine formula under the circumstances requiring it can be viewed as an aspect of normative politeness, but engaging in considerations regarding the future relationship with the offended party or one’s reputation and weighing them up against the humiliation involved in admitting responsibility for the offence is clearly strategic.

This strategic side of apologies brings S’s as well as H’s face into play and seems to justify Brown and Levinson’s concept of face as ‘wants’ (see Chapter 1.3). In order to restore H’s face damaged by the offence, S performs a speech act which is costly to his or her own face, which makes apologies “face-saving for the H and face-threatening for the S” (Olshtain 1989: 156). Edmondson defines apologies as “an instance of socially-sanctioned H-supportive behavior” (1981a: 280) and Holmes maintains that apologies are “addressed to B’s face needs and intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility” (1995: 155).

While the definitions provided in cross-cultural research focus on the hearer’s face and its restoration, research dealing with apologies as a means of image restoration conducted in the fields of sociology and social psychology is mainly concerned with the speaker’s face needs (see Benoit 1995: 9–61 for an overview). The view of apologies as strategies benefiting the speaker also features in some definitions provided in linguistic studies. Edmondson and House, for instance, point out that the purpose of an apology is not only to placate the hearer, but also to restore one’s own social status (1981: 153). Fraser seems to share their view when arguing that apologies relieve the offender of some moral responsibility (1981: 259), and Meier refers to research conducted in the field of psychology when arguing: “Contrary to Brown and Levinson, I posit remedial work as a face-saving device as regards S (not H). Concern for H’s face is only a by-product of the attempt to serve the intent of saving S’s face” (1992b: 31).
Chapter 3. The speech act of apologising

3.3 Applying Brown and Levinson’s theory to apologies

Apology studies conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics focus on remedial apologies and, following Leech, define them as beneficial to the hearer and inherently polite. This definition is generally adopted along with Brown and Levinson’s classification of apologies as negative politeness strategies, i.e. strategies oriented towards the hearer’s right to non-distraction. Combining these two definitions suggests that a speech act which benefits the hearer and restores social harmony is based on an avoidance-based type of politeness. Since Brown and Levinson’s classification is strongly influenced by their viewing apologies in their anticipatory disarming function, this chapter’s objective is to examine whether and how their framework can be applied to remedial apologies.

Holmes’ defines remedial apologies as negative politeness strategies on the grounds that their “primary purpose is redressive action” (1995: 155), thus focusing on the damage caused by the offence necessitating the apology rather than that occurring to S’s face when performing the apology. Holmes does take into account S’s face, however, when she notes that apologies including an explanation redress the “loss of positive face incurred by the speaker” (1990: 162). According to Deutschmann, a great part of remedial apologies in his corpus involves positive politeness. He argues that “this important function of apologising has been entirely overlooked by B&L and many other scholars, who have primarily classed apologising as an example of negative politeness” (2003: 71). Larina suggests that apologies should be viewed as positive politeness strategies while describing their function as: “to assure the addressee that he is being noticed, respected, and that the maintenance of a conflict-free relationship is desired” (“zaverit’ adresata v tom, čto ego zametili, ego uvažajut i chotjat podderživat’ s nim beskonfliktnye otnošenija”) (2003: 212).

As I have already mentioned, there is not only a lack of consensus as to the type of politeness apologies involve, but also as to whether it is the speaker’s or the hearer’s face that they redress. Whereas linguists tend to see them as oriented towards the hearer’s face needs, or even as face-supportive acts (Holmes 1989, 1995), sociologists discuss apologies as devices used for image restoration, benefiting the speaker.

Considering all the contradictions found across and even within apology definitions offered in previous research, the most promising approach to determining whose face and which face is affected in what way by the apology is to consider all the possibilities. Deutschmann suggests that when analysing apologies “both negative and positive face needs should be to be [sic] taken into account” and “these should be viewed from both hearer and speaker perspectives” (2003: 39). Additionally, I deem it necessary to analyse all the elements of a remedial interchange
and the potential damage and restoration of both interlocutors’ face involved in each of them. Since ritual apologies are not particularly face-threatening, the following discussion applies primarily to substantial, strategic apologies offered for offences causing damage to H’s face and S’s reputation.

What makes it problematic to apply Brown and Levinson’s framework to apologies is that, although it is meant to be applicable to all kinds of FTAs alike, the majority of their examples and many of the substrategies presented in their charts apply exclusively to requests (see e.g. “Give H option not to do act”, 1987: 131). The association of politeness with avoiding imposition and the focus on speech acts threatening H’s negative face lead to the association of indirectness with politeness.

The fact that this does not apply to apologies, whose polite realisations adhere to rather than flout the CP, has been noticed by Edmondson, who points out that with regard to apologies “gushing is socially acceptable” (1981a: 279). Meier asks herself the question: “And, what do we do if we maintain that indirectness implicates politeness in the case of I apologise, which, containing a performative verb, is unambiguous, therefore direct and must be dubbed non-polite(?), impolite(?), informal(?). All of these are intuitively untenable” (1992b: 25).

Speech acts that are beneficial to the hearer generally do not constitute an imposition on the beneficiary’s face. This is why direct offers, such as: “Have a chocolate” are fully acceptable and this is why polite apologies take the form of bare performatives, such as ‘I apologise’ or even bald on record requests such as ‘forgive me’. They are not only beneficial to the hearer, but since they are preceded by an offence, their performance is expected. The hearer’s face has already been damaged by the offence and the function of the apology is to restore it, so that failure to fulfil this expectation is likely to be interpreted as another offence (see Thomas 1995: 175). One could, of course, argue that certain apologies may also threaten H’s face, for instance, when the offence was so grave that the victim does not want to be reminded of it even in the form of an apology or when the very sight of the offender makes them sick. In such cases, an apology would do more harm than good – but they can be safely dismissed as marginal.

On the whole then, it can be concluded that when performing a speech act which is beneficial to the hearer and expected by him or her, no redress of their negative face is necessary, and hedges on the illocutionary force will not make it more polite. I disagree, however, with Edmondson who claims that in the case of apologies “there is no cause for not being explicit” (1981a: 280), for this would mean that apologies are always performed in their most direct form, which is clearly not the case. The reason for indirectness in apologising has been provided by Brown and Levinson, who explain:
Given the following set of strategies, the more an act threatens S's or H's face, the more S will want to choose a higher-numbered strategy; this by virtue of the fact that these strategies afford payoffs of increasingly minimized risk.

(1987: 60 – emphasis added)

In their subsequent argumentation, the focus is almost exclusively on the hearer’s face. Apologies are, however “essentially threats to S’s face” (1987: 76), and it is the damage to the speaker’s face that can be minimised: In the case of apologies, the use of a higher-numbered strategy results in redress of S’s and not H’s face. Basically, by choosing a higher-numbered strategy, we are being more polite to ourselves, or rather more protective towards our own face. Applying Brown and Levinson’s chart to a speech act threatening the speaker’s face clearly shows that face-work rather than politeness lies at the heart of their theory.

Since most cross-cultural apology studies focus on politeness phenomena, they do not discuss the speaker’s face needs and the function of indirectness in apologising. At the same time, several researchers point out the increasing popularity of public apologies (Abadi 1990, Cunningham 1999, Lazare 2004, Harris, Grainger & Mullany 2006). Some discuss their effectiveness in image restoration (e.g. Benoit 1995, Govier & Verwoerd 2002, Liebersohn, Neuman & Bekerman 2004), thus shifting the focus to the apologiser’s positive face needs. Studies analysing the role of apologies in restorative and criminal justice have, on the one hand, demonstrated that apologies serve as a means of empowering the victims and may even lead to reduced recidivism (see Bavelas 2001, Petrucci 2002, McNamara & Dhami 2003). On the other, they have been shown to play a crucial role in settlement negotiation as well as in sentencing and parole hearings (e.g. Gill 2000, Robbenholt 2006), where the acceptance of responsibility and show of remorse can reduce the sentence or even make the offended party drop the charges.

However, the apologiser’s positive face needs are central to all apologies, for if we did not care about what others think of us, we would see no reason for putting things right and humiliating ourselves by doing so. Brown and Levinson only briefly mention remedial apologies, and they categorise them as FTAs that damage S’s positive face, which is explained as follows:

S indicates that he regrets doing a prior FTA, thereby damaging his own face to some degree – especially if the apology is at the same time a confession with H learning about the transgression through it, and the FTA thus conveys bad news.

(1987: 68)

This definition depicts a very specific type of apology, namely one including a confession. A confession, however, is a separate speech act within a remedial interchange, which may or may not accompany an apology. Indeed, most offences
happen with both parties present, while situations in which H has to be told that he or she has been offended are the exception rather than the rule.

While I agree that apologies affect S’s positive face, the apology is not the part of the remedial interchange that damages it, but the one used to restore it (see Holmes 1995: 155). It is the offence that damages S’s positive face because, obviously, we do not approve of people who offend us. Consequently, S’s positive face – the desire to be liked by and share wants with others – is not damaged by the apology but the factor motivating it.

The damage to S’s positive face caused by the offence is sometimes delayed by the necessity to verbalise it. There seem to be two cases in which one of the parties involved needs to be made aware of the offence: either S’s confession informs H that he or she has been harmed, or H’s complaint tells S that his or her behaviour has been interpreted as offensive.

Having defined apologies as speech acts restoring the speaker’s positive face, I would like to turn to the speaker’s negative face needs, specifically the want “that his actions be unimpeded by others” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 62 – my emphasis). What is problematic about this definition is that it applies to speech acts which are performed by one person and threaten the face of another. When apologising, however, the speaker is the one who performs the speech act and simultaneously the one whose face is threatened.

Apologies have been described as humiliating (Olshtain 1989: 156) and as a “painful experience” (Norrick 1978: 284), and some even regard the suffering of the offender as an important contribution to the healing process (Lazare 2004: 19), which shows why we are reluctant to apologise. The only way of explaining this reluctance in terms of Brown and Levinson’s conceptualisation of face seems to be that by performing an act which is humiliating and unpleasant to them, apologisers restrict their own freedom of action, i.e. threaten their negative face. Unless other human needs, not included in Brown and Levinson’s model, are used to explain why people are reluctant to apologise, one could argue that since they are certainly not worried that the apology will make them less likeable, which is what threat to positive face would imply, the threat involved in apologising must concern their negative face. Damage to positive face has already been caused by the offence and will be even greater if no apology takes place. We do not risk our positive face when apologising but attempt to restore it, which is why apologies are oriented towards satisfying S’s positive face needs, at the expense of S’s negative face.

Although most researchers agree that apologies are meant to restore H’s damaged face, usually no distinction is made between positive and negative face needs. The last question to be addressed is, therefore, whether it is H’s positive or negative face which the apology aims at restoring. Which face needs to be restored is
largely determined by the type of offence necessitating the apology: While offences that damage the hearer’s positive face require apologies which are directed to this face type, damage to negative face is most effectively remedied by addressing the hearer’s negative face needs. Hence, the type of offence determines whether positive or negative politeness strategies are more likely to placate the hearer.

Damage to H’s positive face is likely to occur when S’s behaviour indicates that he or she “does not care about the addressee’s feelings, wants, etc.” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 66). Examples of such offences include disappointing H by not keeping a promise or forgetting an appointment. Since positive face needs tend to be reciprocal – for we generally like people by whom we want to be liked – they mainly matter in relationships based on low social distance. In the case of offences taking place between strangers, in contrast, negative face is more likely to be at stake. A typical offence restricting H’s basic claim to territories is a space offence. While such offences also occur between friends, the low social distance characterising friendships makes them less offensive.

Ultimately, some offences cause damage to both face types, and with the speaker and the hearer both having a positive and a negative face, a remedial interchange can affect up to four faces. Although Brown and Levinson recognise that the threat underlying the performance of an FTA may involve H’s and S’s and even both interlocutors’ face, and that damage can occur to both positive and negative face, their chart of strategies available for performing an FTA (1987: 69) does not account for all these possibilities: The calculation of the necessary amount of face-redress is determined by risk to face (singular). Typically, the focus is on the negative face of the hearer, which is threatened by a speech act invading his or her private territory, such as a request. Through the use of higher-numbered strategies, the threat is minimised, the speech act becomes less direct and more polite.

Whereas it would be exceedingly difficult to develop a chart that is applicable to all speech acts alike and takes into account S’s and H’s face as well as the tension between their positive and negative face needs, Figure 2 represents an attempt at capturing all the face considerations involved in the performance of an apology.

The offence, sometimes followed by a complaint or a confession, damages both H’s and S’s face. In the case of H, it may be either positive or negative face that is harmed, depending on the offence. In S’s case, it is positive face that is damaged, for committing an offence makes S’s wants less desirable. Positive face is especially important in relationships characterised by low social distance; with both parties willing to maintain social harmony and continue the relationship, S’s and H’s positive face wants can be regarded as mutual. H’s negative face is more central in offences between strangers, though brief encounters involving space offences generally require ritual rather than substantial apologies.
The apology restores H's negative and / or positive face as well as S's positive face, but some damage to S's negative face is unavoidable. The apologiser not only has "two points of view – a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the other's face" (Goffman 1955 [1972: 325]), but is also caught in a conflict between his or her positive and negative face needs.

Lazare makes yet another distinction when explaining an offender's reasons for apologising, namely that between psychological concepts, such as empathy, guilt and shame and external circumstances, such as avoidance of abandonment, damage to reputation and retaliation (2004: 134–158). His approach shows that in many cases it will not be possible to tell apart all the factors motivating an apology and that there is more at stake than Brown and Levinson's negative and positive face.

**Figure 2.** Face considerations involved in remedial interchanges

The apology restores H's negative and / or positive face as well as S's positive face, but some damage to S's negative face is unavoidable. The apologiser not only has "two points of view – a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the other's face" (Goffman 1955 [1972: 325]), but is also caught in a conflict between his or her positive and negative face needs.

Lazare makes yet another distinction when explaining an offender's reasons for apologising, namely that between psychological concepts, such as empathy, guilt and shame and external circumstances, such as avoidance of abandonment, damage to reputation and retaliation (2004: 134–158). His approach shows that in many cases it will not be possible to tell apart all the factors motivating an apology and that there is more at stake than Brown and Levinson's negative and positive face.
The restoration of both interlocutors’ face and their reconciliation are completed with the apology reaching its perlocution, i.e. with H forgiving S or at least expressing apology acceptance. Strategy choice oriented more towards S’s than H’s face needs, in contrast, can lead to a rejection of the apology.

As is evident from the above argumentation, both parties’ positive face needs are crucial in performing an apology. While damage to the hearer’s positive as well as negative face can necessitate it, without the speaker’s positive face needs, there might be no apology, which is uttered despite threat to negative face. Hence, whenever an apology takes place, positive face needs can be said to supersede negative face needs. Considering that remedial apologies are not likely to be successful when verbalised reluctantly, and that there is virtually no need to redress H’s negative face when performing an act from which H benefits and which he or she expects, it seems that the function of apologies as negative politeness devices is largely restricted to disarming apologies.

As I have argued in Chapter 2.4, members of negative politeness cultures are particularly sensitive to negative face while members of positive politeness cultures are more attentive towards positive face needs. One of the objectives of this study is to find out how the preference for negative politeness in British culture, and that for positive politeness in Polish and Russian cultures influences apology behaviour. On the basis of the above discussion, one could hypothesise that Poles and Russians focus on both parties’ positive face when apologising: S will want to signal H that H’s wants are still desirable to S and to ensure that, despite the offence, also S’s wants remain desirable to H. In doing so, Polish and Russian speakers are more likely to disregard their negative face needs than members of a negative politeness culture.

People with an Anglo-Saxon cultural background, on the other hand, might be more reluctant to allow threat to their negative face, more likely to apologise indirectly or avoid the confrontation than members of positive politeness cultures. At the same time, they might apologise more readily in situations involving damage to H’s negative face; situations which may not require an apology in positive politeness cultures.

One might also hypothesise that the function of apologies is culture-specific and that the general agreement on viewing apologies as negative politeness strategies is related to the fact that most apology studies have been conducted by researchers with a Western cultural background. While members of individualist cultures seem to view apologies as a post factum acknowledgement of the hearer’s right to non-distraction, thus focusing on the past, in collectivist cultures, the future relationship seems to be central, a precondition of which is that S’s wants are still desirable to H. Furthermore, while both Polish and Russian cultures have been classified as positive politeness cultures, the stronger individualist tendency
characterising Polish culture could lead to differences in the conceptualisation and realisation of apologies in these two Slavic cultures.

Ultimately, by focusing on face as a factor determining apology behaviour and by taking into account both parties’ positive and negative face needs, the following analysis can be expected to contribute to the description of the manifold functions of apologies and culture-specific ways of dealing with offensive situations.

3.4 Analysing apologies

The contrastive method of cross-cultural pragmatics requires a framework allowing for categorising speech act strategies and comparing them across languages. The taxonomies suggested by Austin and Searle, however, are of limited value when it comes to empirical investigation of conversational behaviour since they are based on introspection, which confines the analysis to the most prototypical realisations of the speech acts. Searle feels at liberty to exclude certain forms of language use from his taxonomy, on the grounds that they are not “essential to linguistic communication” (1969: 20), but an empirical linguist has to take into account all the data. Although the “illocutionary force indicating device” (ibid: 54) is a central element of the speech act of apologising, empirical research has revealed a wide range of its indirect representations, not to mention its non-verbal realisations.

Having recognized the impracticability of creating a taxonomy defining all language uses in terms of rules, researchers investigating cross-cultural differences in speech act realizations derive the taxonomies for their analyses from large quantities of empirical data. For the study of apologies, the classificatory scheme developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981 & 1983) has proved most productive. Olshtain and Cohen suggest a “slight expansion of the notion ‘speech act’ so as to clarify the relation between a discourse situation and the specific utterances that can qualify for certain speech functions” (1983: 20). In order to capture the range of possible apology realisations, they analysed empirical data from different languages, consisting of oral and written reactions to hypothetical offensive situations. In this way, they manage to move away from the idealised notion of the ‘speech act of apologising’ towards a choice of apology strategies. Building on the apology strategies distinguished by Fraser (1981) and Searle’s notion of indirect speech acts (1975), they propose a ‘speech act set of apologising’ comprising five strategies:
Chapter 3. The speech act of apologising

An Expression of an Apology: I’m sorry, forgive me, etc.
An Acknowledgement of Responsibility: It’s my fault.
An Explanation: The bus was late.
An Offer of Repair: Let me fix it up for you.
A Promise of Forbearance: It won’t happen again.

(1983: 22, examples mine)

According to Olshtain and Cohen, any of these strategies or a combination of several can fulfil the function of an apology. Whereas Expressions of Apology and Acknowledgements of Responsibility can be used in virtually any apology situation, the strategies Explanation, Offer of Repair and Promise of Forbearance are situation-specific (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989).

The fact that the last three strategies are indirect realisations of the speech act of apologising can be illustrated by assigning them to the speech act categories established by Searle. While Expressions of Apology and Acknowledgements of Responsibility belong to the category of ‘expressives’, Explanations are clearly ‘representatives’ whereas Offers of Repair and Promises of Forbearance fall into the category of ‘commissives’. Hence, apologies can be realised not only by performing a different speech act (Searle 1975), but even by resorting to a different category, which illustrates the limited perspective of classical speech act theory. The impracticability of establishing speech act categories based on a consistent set of criteria and embracing all their realisations becomes even clearer if one considers that there also are inconsistencies among direct apology strategies, the expression ‘forgive me’, for instance, being a request and belonging to the category of ‘directives’.

What further restricts the applicability of Searle’s taxonomy to cross-cultural research is that it is based solely on the English language. Olshtain and Cohen’s speech act set, in contrast, has been successfully applied to a large number of languages, not only justifying the classification of the five strategies as apology strategies, but also suggesting that their speech act set of apologising may be universal.

Categories emerging from recurring patterns in the respondents’ utterances, however, face the researcher with a problem opposed to that inherent in Searle’s approach: Whereas his taxonomy cannot be applied to all verbal communication, empirically elicited data are difficult to fit into clear-cut categories. Considering that the assignment of utterances to speech act categories is a highly complex task, the problems related to it have received surprisingly little attention in previous research. Most cross-cultural apology studies rely on Olshtain and Cohen’s speech act set in categorising the data, some of them suggesting minor modifications at the level of substrategies (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Holmes 1990, Trosborg 1995).
The modifications suggested in the present study are more substantial. They are based on the theoretical reflections presented in the preceding chapters and they aim to provide a better insight into the impact of the speaker’s face needs on apologising as well as into the differences in apology behaviour brought about by placing stronger emphasis on either positive or negative face in the examined cultures.

The main modification consists in replacing the two strategies Explanation and Acknowledgement of Responsibility by a category of Accounts, which has been inspired by research carried out in the field of sociology. Much of the work on accounts relies on Austin’s distinction between excuses and justifications (1961), taken up by Scott and Lyman (1968). Following Austin, they view excuses as accounts in which the speaker admits that the act was wrong, but does not accept full responsibility. Justifications, in contrast, involve accepting responsibility for the act, but deny that it was wrongful. Schlenker (1980) distinguishes three account types: defences of innocence, excuses and justifications. Benoit proposes five main strategies of image restoration: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness of event, corrective action and mortification (1995: 95). As the term ‘image restoration’ already suggests, the focus of much work in sociology and social psychology is on verbal self-defence, within which apologies are regarded as strategies used to restore the offender’s reputation.

Although most cross-cultural apology studies acknowledge that the speaker’s face plays a central role in the performance of an apology, the role of self-defence in dealing with offences has been largely neglected in previous research conducted in this field. In the present study, the scope of the analysed strategies has been extended to account not only for strategies intended to restore H’s face but also for those aimed at reducing or avoiding damage to S’s face, i.e. the face threatened by the apology.

The impact of an emphasis on positive vs. negative face is another central aspect of the present analysis. While most cross-cultural apology research has confirmed the universal character of the speech act set proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and shown considerable parallels across cultures in realising apologies, García (1989) categorises her data according to the type of politeness used and reveals substantial discrepancies in strategy choice. Her results clearly show that the use of positive politeness in apologies to addressees who expect negative politeness can be ineffective and even sound rude. Employing negative politeness where positive politeness is expected can, of course, be equally unproductive.

The classification employed in the present study consists of three main strategies:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IFIDs (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Politeness Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of Forbearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Hearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading (accepting responsibility, face-threatening to S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downgrading (denying responsibility, face-saving to S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category of IFIDs comprises all formulaic expressions commonly associated with apologies in each of the examined languages. Since IFIDs are highly routinised, they have been classified as negative politeness strategies (Deutschmann 2003). The strategies subsumed under the category of positive politeness strategies, on the other hand, are all oriented towards positive face (Brown & Levinson 1987: 102).

Accounts form the largest category in the data, comprising ten account types that can be placed on a continuum from denial of responsibility and low face-threat to S to responsibility acceptance and high face-threat to S. At the same time, they can be subdivided into upgrading and downgrading accounts, with the latter not classifying as apology strategies. A closer look at the individual formulations of accounts also reveals preferences for positive vs. negative politeness.
CHAPTER 4

Literature review

4.1 Cross-cultural research on English apologies

In the past 30 years, ample research has been devoted to the description of various speech acts and their comparison across languages, and apologies are, after requests, the second most-studied speech act in cross-cultural pragmatics. Coulmas’ article on thanks and apologies (1981) was among the first ones to take a contrastive approach, while the research carried out by Cohen, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka, covering a range of native and learner languages (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain 1981, Olshtain 1983, Olshtain & Blum-Kulka 1985), helped to establish the speech act set of apologising (Olshtain & Cohen 1983) taken up in most subsequent research on apologies.

The largest speech act study has so far been the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP), conducted by an international team of linguists (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper et al. 1989). They examined realisations of requests and apologies in five languages (Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and English) – the last one represented by three varieties (Australian, American, and British) – and several interlanguages. The framework developed in the CCSARP was replicated in later speech act studies, resulting in a large body of comparable data from many more languages, providing new evidence for the continuing debate between universality and culture-specificity in speech act realisation.

Among the languages studied, English has received most attention, including British, American, Australian and New Zealand English – one of the reasons being that nearly all cross-cultural studies contrast the language(s) under investigation with English. There are contrastive analyses of English and German apologies (e.g. Olshtain 1989, Vollmer & Olshtain 1989, House 1989), including Austrian German (Meier 1992a, 1996). Apology studies have compared English with different varieties of Spanish (García 1989, Cordella 1990, Mir 1992, Márquez Reiter 2000, Palma Fahey 2005), Italian (Lipson 1994, Sbisà 1999), Hebrew (Cohen & Olshtain 1981, Olshtain 1989), Hungarian (Suszczyńska 1994) and Danish (Trosborg 1987, 1995). Turkish has been compared with English (Hatipoğlu 2002) as well as German (Eğit 1998).
English apologies have been contrasted with those produced in various Asian languages, including Japanese (Miyake 1994, Sugimoto 1997, Okumura & Wei 2000, Takaku et al. 2001), Thai (Bergman & Kasper 1993), Chinese (Xiang 2006), Hindu (Bharuthram 2003) and Indonesian (Wouk 2006). There are also studies comparing English with different varieties of Arabic (Hussein & Hammouri 1998, Al-Zumor 2003, Bataineh & Bataineh 2006), and with African languages, such as Akan (Obeng 1999) and Setswana (Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu 2007).

Since all these studies compare two or more languages, most of them have adopted the framework developed in the CCSARP and used an experimental data collection method. Apology studies that do not take a cross-cultural perspective will be discussed in Chapter 5.2 along with the various data collection methods that have been used to study apologies.

4.2 Research on Polish and Russian apologies

4.2.1 Speech act studies in Poland and Russia

Whereas English apology realisations have received considerable attention, there is hardly any literature available on the speech act of apologising in Polish and Russian. The focus on English in speech act research is partly related to the Anglo-Saxon theoretical background of cross-cultural pragmatics. Although the scope of research in this field has been rapidly extended by numerous contributions on various European and Asian languages, studies analysing Polish and Russian remain scarce.

There are several reasons why this field of research is practically non-existent in Poland and Russia. First of all, the years of political and ideological isolation of these countries caused by the Cold War hindered the exchange of linguistic and scientific ideas. In Soviet Russia, in particular, the imposed view of the supremacy of linguistics coined by Marxist philosophy and the disapproval of all Western thought made it exceedingly difficult for Soviet linguists to refer to Anglo-American theories in their writings (see Prucha 1983). Even the basic ideas underlying pragmatics, such as the interpretation of meaning according to the speakers’ previous experiences and common background knowledge are incompatible with Marxist sociology, which regards class and the economic organisation of society as factors shaping social relations (Harlig 1995b: 34–35).

Secondly, due to the Iron Curtain and very limited possibilities of travel there was no practical need for cross-cultural studies. The low level of foreign language teaching was another obstacle in accessing the ideas of Western philosophy and linguistics. This was especially the case in Poland where Russian was artificially
accredited the status of a lingua franca. Translations of the major works in pragmatics did not appear until the 1980s, the first Polish version of Austin’s “How to do Things with Words” was published only in 1993. First introductions to pragmatics in Polish were offered by Awdiejew (1987) and Kalisz (1993).

Polish and Russian speech acts have been mainly described in etiquette books, which emphasise their social functions and tend to have a prescriptive character (e.g. Formanovskaja 1989, Zgółkowie 1992, Marcjanik 1993, Voronkova 1996). Russian etiquette books have also been adapted to address the needs of foreign language learners (e.g. Formanovskaja 1987, Akišina & Formanovskaja 1988).

Since the late 1980s, there has been a growing interest in the writings of the literary theorist Bachtin, particularly in his “The Problem of Speech Genres” (“Problema Rečevych Žanrov”). The manuscript dates back to the early 50s, but a (complete) published version did not appear until 1979, and his theory of speech genres seems to have gained in popularity only after speech act theory had reached both Poland and Russia. Russian linguists link Bachtin’s theory of speech genres with Austinian speech act theory (e.g. Zemskaja 1988, Šmeleva 1990, Dement’ev 1997, Fedosjuk 1997, Kitajgorodskaja & Rozanova 1999) and Wierzbicka (1983) has combined insights from these two theories in proposing her culture-independent metalanguage.

Both theories regard the utterance (vyskazyvanie) as the relevant unit of analysis, but while in speech act theory, there has been no systematic attempt at defining what constitutes a speech act (Wierzbicka 1983), Bachtin’s definition is so broad that it allows for anything from a one-word utterance to an entire novel to be classified as a speech genre. Hence, Bachtin’s category covers speech acts such as requests and apologies, but also speech events (see Hymes 1962), such as ‘family dinner conversations’, and literary genres – the concept Bachtin begins with and extends to include spoken language. An important feature of speech genres, as opposed to speech acts, is that they can contain several illocutionary forces, which is reflected in the distinction between primary (pervičnye) and secondary (vtoričnye) speech genres. While the latter are composed of a number of primary speech genres and often take the written form (Bachtin [1979] 1996: 161), the former refer mainly to spoken language and encompass speech acts as well as speech events. The overlap between Austin’s speech acts and Bachtin’s speech genres has led to confusion among Russian linguists, with some equating speech genres with speech acts and some regarding them as a sequence of speech acts (see Fedosjuk 1997).

Bachtin’s argumentation is based on the dialogic structure of language, which helps him to determine the boarders between speech genres, one of the criteria being that they are bounded by a change of speakers. This approach assigns the
hearer a more central role than does speech act theory. Bachtin argues that the very existence of speech genres depends on them being directed to an addressee, who has a great influence on their linguistic realisation. His argument that the addressee’s role consists in the recognition of the speaker’s intention necessary for an appropriate reaction ([1979] 1996: 169) exhibits a clear parallel to Grice’s notion of non-natural meaning.

Bachtin devotes much of his discussion to the role individual ‘style’ plays in the composition of an utterance. He argues that some, in particular primary, speech genres allow for less variation than others, thus recognising their routinised nature. Furthermore, when discussing primary speech genres, Bachtin names several factors determining the speaker’s ‘style’, such as the social position of the addressee (including his rank and age) as well as the position of the speaker in relation to the addressee. He also points out the specificity of speech genres addressed to people familiar with one another and intimates ([1979] 1996: 201–202). These observations foreshadow the variables P and D and their influence on speech act realisation, as introduced by Brown and Levinson in 1978. Finally, Bachtin clearly separates sentences from utterances, while opposing them as a unit of language and a unit of communication. A sentence is defined as a purely grammatical unit which “has no direct contact with reality” (“ne imeet neposredstvennogo kontakta s dejstvitel’nost’ju”) (ibid: 176), whereas an utterance’s meaning depends on situational context (ibid: 186).

Due to the broadness of Bachtin’s concept of speech genres, many discussions in Russian linguistics continuing his work focus on the search for the basic unit of speech (see Dement’ev 1997). Particularly influential for the analysis of speech genres has been the framework proposed by Šmeleva (1990) who suggests a taxonomy consisting of four types of speech genres, established according to their communicative intent: informative (informativnye), assessing (ocenočnye), imperative (imperativnye) and ritual (ritual’nye) (1990: 25). Her framework places speech genres in a broad communicative context, since it envisages an analysis of the concept of both speaker and hearer (obraz avtora, obraz adresata), the circumstances leading up to the speech genre (faktor prošlogo), as well as its perlocution (faktor buduščega).

Despite the increasing interest in speech acts and speech genres since the 1990s, Polish and Russian linguists still favour prescriptive over descriptive methods, placing a heavy emphasis on formal approaches to the analysis of language, whereas little attention is devoted to examining spoken language (see Harlig 1995a, Duszak 1997, Zajceva 1998). Apart from a few notable exceptions, such as the field research conducted by the Russian linguists Zemskaja, Rozanova and Kitajgorodskaja or the Polish linguist Ożóg, empirical studies remain scarce.
4.2.2 Polish and Russian apology studies

While Russian speech act research has been shaped by Bachtin’s theory, most Polish studies continue the English speech act theoretical tradition, and nearly all of the few contrastive studies have been undertaken by Polish researchers specialising in English linguistics.

Analyses of the speech act of apologising in Polish include those offered by Pisarek (1995) and Marcjanik (1995, 1997). Both authors limit their discussions to the description of the most prototypical apology realisations and largely rely on introspection as well as quotations from novels and journals. Whereas Marcjanik describes a selection of Polish speech acts, while devoting some pages to apology strategies, Pisarek contrasts a few Polish and Russian speech acts, including apologies. Ożóg’s brief analysis of formulaic apologies (1985 & 1990), in contrast, is based on empirical data, as is Jaworski’s article on negotiation in apologising (1994).

There are a few empirical studies contrasting English and Polish apologies which have adopted the framework developed in the CCSARP. Jakubowska (1999) contrasts a variety of politeness formulae in Polish and English and devotes a few pages to apologies, whereas Suszczyńska’s article (1999) offers a cross-cultural perspective on apology realisations in American English, Polish and Hungarian. The probably most detailed discussion of Polish apology strategies can be found in Lubecka’s (2000) book on requests, invitations, apologies and compliments in American English and Polish, while Bielski (1992) offers an analysis of apologies produced by Polish students of English.

Apparently, Russian was originally intended to be among the languages examined in the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984: 197), but in the end it was not included in the project. Russian apologies are discussed in the above-mentioned contrastive analysis by Pisarek (1995), and in Tarasenko’s unpublished thesis (1999). Tarasenko analyses several “etiquette speech genres” (“ètiketnye rečevye žanry”), one of them being the speech act of apologising. She mainly derives her data from literary sources and largely adheres to Šmeleva’s framework (1990), which means that she discusses many aspects of apologies while devoting only limited attention to their linguistic realisations.

The discussion of remedial interchanges by Vereščagin and Kostomarov (1999) has a slightly different character, for it moves away from formulaic apologies and provides an exhaustive taxonomy of strategies used to accept and deny responsibility. Their data have been derived “from daily life” (“iz povšednevnogo byta”) (1999: 22) and two novels dealing with offences and repair work: Dostoevskij’s “Prestuplenie i Nakazanie” and Tolstoj’s “Voskresenie”. 
The most detailed analysis of Russian apologies has been conducted by Rathmayr (1996, 1998), who draws on a variety of data collection methods and provides a multi-faceted analysis of Russian apologies. Larina (2003) offers a contrastive analysis of various speech acts in English and Russian, but since she focuses on differences in the level of directness, apologies receive relatively little attention and their discussion is based solely on the author’s observations and intuitions (personal communication, March 2006). The most recent contribution on Russian apologies seems to be Shardakova’s study (2005) examining the pragmatic competence of American learners of Russian.
CHAPTER 5

Methodological considerations

Studies conducted in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics have applied a variety of data collection methods. According to Turnbull, the best pragmatic elicitation technique is one that generates data “in situations in which researchers can manipulate variables in the testing of hypotheses and speakers can talk freely and spontaneously without awareness that their talk is the object of study” (2001: 31). Unfortunately, none of the data collection methods available for the cross-cultural study of speech acts fulfils all these requirements. Data are either collected ethnographically or elicited experimentally, and whereas the first method provides natural data that are difficult to control and compare, the second method yields sufficient quantities of comparable data that do not necessarily reflect natural speech.

Hence, the selection of a data collection instrument involves weighing up the potential strengths and weaknesses of the available methods and deciding which of them best meets the requirements of the envisaged study: “The questions that we want to ask must ultimately determine method” (Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 237).

The main objective of research conducted in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics is the comparison of speech act realization in different languages, including the analysis of the strategies used to perform a particular speech act (pragmalinguistics) and the impact of social factors on the choice of these strategies (sociopragmatics). In order to be able to establish universal patterns in speech act realization and interpret the differences in terms of underlying cultural values, large quantities of comparable data are needed.

5.1 DCTs vs. naturally occurring speech

The only data collection instrument that provides sufficiently large samples of comparable, systematically varied data is the discourse completion task (DCT), also referred to as ‘production questionnaire’. This experimental data collection instrument can be used to elicit speech acts in a variety of situations, thus covering a wide range of semantic formulae by which a given speech act can be implemented (Beebe & Cummings 1996: 80, Johnston et al. 1998: 158, Kasper 2000: 325, Barron 2003: 84). The identification of strategies available for the performance of
a particular speech act is “particularly important when investigating languages which have not yet been described pragmatically and for speech acts which have not been described in languages which are better documented” (Bardovi-Harlig 1999:239, see also Yuan 2001:289).

While natural talk always includes elements unknown to the observer, the scenarios making up the DCT can be designed to include all pertinent contextual factors relevant to the envisaged study. The values of social variables, such as social distance and power, can be systematically varied and then correlated with preferences for particular strategies, allowing the investigation of the impact of social variables on strategy choice (Barron 2003:85, Schauer & Adolphs 2006:131). Since DCTs can be translated into any language, they are the ideal instrument for comparing speech acts produced in equivalent situations in different languages (Aston 1995:62, Barron 2003:85), providing data that is comparable across cultures as well as studies (Turnbull 2001:35).

Not surprisingly, the majority of cross-cultural studies are based on DCT data and researchers employing the DCT agree that its administrative advantages make it a valuable and effective data collection method (Johnston et al. 1998:157, Billmyer & Varghese 2000:521, Kasper 2000:325, Barron 2003:85), in particular for large-scale projects (Sasaki 1998:479). Questionnaires can be distributed to large groups of informants within a short period of time. In addition to comparable speech act data, they also provide demographic information on the respondents.

Hence, the advantages of the DCT have been best put to use in large projects, such as the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), “the most prominent and ambitious of the DCT studies” (Rose & Ono 1995:193). The data elicited in the CCSARP consisted of responses to 16 situations in seven languages and five interlanguages. With each of the groups encompassing roughly 200 participants, the corpus contained nearly 40,000 occurrences of apologies and requests. The framework developed in the CCSARP was then adopted in other studies in which the questionnaire was translated into other languages and administered to their speakers, generating vast amounts of comparable data.

5.1.1 Limitations of written data

Despite the numerous advantages production questionnaires offer for the cross-cultural study of speech acts, it should be borne in mind that they yield experimentally elicited, written data, which cannot be expected to precisely reflect natural speech. Although its written form makes the DCT quick and efficient, the question that inevitably arises when dealing with written data is whether they can be regarded as representative of naturally occurring talk.
A major limitation of written data is that they do not convey prosodic (e.g. pitch, intonation) nor kinesic features (e.g. gesture, facial expressions, posture), which can be crucial to the interpretation of the data (see Street 1990 for a detailed discussion of their functions). Only when working with video-recorded data “every element of the interaction (hesitation, laughter, silences, eye-contact, body-movements) may be incorporated in the analysis” (Golato 2003: 111, emphasis added) – though their transcription and interpretation are so time-consuming that they hardly ever are.

Some researchers maintain that DCTs elicit spoken language “indirectly through the written mode” (Sasaki 1998: 458) and that DCT data “accurately reflect the content expressed in natural speech” (Beebe & Cummings 1996: 75), despite the written form (Barron 2003: 85). Others point out that filling in a questionnaire may involve different cognitive processes than speaking (Cohen & Olshtain 1994: 148) and that it constitutes an offline task (Golato 2003: 110), since the informants are “prompted to recall pragmatic information from memory and report rather than use it” (Barron 2003: 85). The written mode provides more time not only to think about and plan the answers but even to change them after they have been written down.

Accordingly, responses to hypothetical situations do not necessarily reflect what the speakers would say if they found themselves in these situations, but rather what they think they would say (Aston 1995: 62). Clearly, it is unlikely that a speaker would react in exactly the same way every time he or she participates in a recurrent speech event, but the practice gained in these situations enables them to react in a socially and culturally appropriate manner (Barron 2003: 92). DCT data can, therefore, be regarded as indirectly representing “a participant’s accumulated experience within a given setting” (Golato 2003: 92).

Responses to written questionnaires have been shown to “reflect the values of the native culture” (Beebe & Cummings 1996: 75), and defined as metapragmatic on the grounds that they represent culture-specific beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behaviour (Golato 2003: 111). Hence, DCTs have proved useful in establishing what is perceived as socially appropriate in a given language (Barron 2003: 92); “what strategic and linguistic options are consonant with pragmatic norms and what contextual factors influence their choice” (Kasper 2000: 329–330).

Since DCTs provide production data that are regarded as metapragmatic, DCT responses can be viewed as contributing to the understandings of first-order politeness on the two different levels discussed by Eelen (2001). They illustrate “the way politeness manifests itself in communicative behaviour” and they provide an insight into “opinions about what politeness is all about”, i.e. “metapragmatic politeness1” (Eelen 2001: 32).
Studies comparing DCT responses with spoken data (e.g. Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1992, Eisenstein & Bodman 1993, Beebe & Cummings 1996, Turnbull 2001, Golato 2003) exhibit a high degree of agreement that “data elicited with DCTs are consistent with naturally occurring data, at least in the main patterns and formulas” (Billmyer & Varghese 2000: 518). Written DCT responses and natural speech have been shown to contain the same strategies and semantic formulae, though they tend to differ in length and complexity. According to Beebe and Cummings, “written role plays bias the response toward less negotiation, less hedging, less repetition, less elaboration, less variety and ultimately less talk (1996: 71). Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford’s (1993) comparison of recordings of advising sessions and DCT data on rejections showed that the former did not include strategies of postponement, requests for repetition, and requests for additional information. These strategies are not directly related to the speech act of refusing but rather strategies used to delay or avoid the performance of this speech act. The fact that they did not appear in DCT responses illustrates the most heavily criticized shortcoming of this data collection method, namely that DCTs do not “promote the turn-taking and negotiation strategies found in natural conversations” (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1992: 47).

5.1.2 On the sequential organization of speech acts

DCTs have been said to be inappropriate for studies of “interactional rules and patterns of actual language use” (Golato 2003: 110). They “necessarily obscure the sequential and co-constructed nature of talk” (Turnbull 2001: 35) since “conversational management, sequencing, collaborative activity, turn-taking, back-channeling – do not show up in one-turn responses” (Johnston et al. 1998: 158). On a similar note, Kasper enumerates several aspects related to the dynamics of conversation that do not occur in DCT data (2000: 325–326), while Bardovi-Harlig points out that “these are areas that the DCT was not designed to address” (1999: 238). One might add that these areas are not the focus of cross-cultural pragmatic research.

Aston’s explanation that “utterances are joint productions, of which the form, placement, and sequential implications are negotiated by participants” (1995: 63) is fully in accordance with the postmodern view on politeness. Admittedly, pragmatics is the study of language use and the best way of investigating how language is used seems to be by analysing naturally occurring conversations. However, pragmatics has been studied from various perspectives, and research questions central to discourse and conversation analysis are not necessarily relevant to speech act theoretical approaches.
Chapter 5. Methodological considerations

It has been pointed out that “many social acts are typically accomplished over a sequence of turns” (Turnbull 2001: 35, emphasis added), but speech acts differ in the extent to which they are likely to be performed over several conversational turns. Refusals, for instance, have been shown to consist of “multi-turn responses involving negotiation, hedging and even reversal” (Houck & Gass 1996: 47). Compliments, on the other hand, are “most frequently packaged as single-turn utterances with a simple, short, highly formulaic structure” (Kasper 2000: 319).

The sequential character of remedial interchanges has been pointed out by Coulmas who argues that apologies occupy “the second position in a three-place pattern” (1981: 71). On the one hand, they can be “conditionally relevant second parts of certain adjacency-pair-organized actions” (Robinson 2004: 300), such as complaints. On the other hand, remedial apologies constitute “first parts of adjacency-pair sequences of action” (ibid. 301) followed by a preferred or dispreferred response. Most remedial apologies, however, can be accomplished by one conversational turn uttered by the apologiser. They “constitute a complete segment of a speech event and do not necessarily require a response” (Coulmas 1981: 86, see also Goffman 1971: 151). Lakoff maintains that “unlike most speech acts it is the form of the apology that counts” (2001: 23), whereas Thomas argues that “the words only become an apology when H chooses to take them as such” (Thomas 1983: 101). However, if the hearer has no intention to accept an apology, no matter how sincere, elaborate and convincing it is, this does not mean that no apology has taken place (see Lakoff 2003: 208).

A remedial interchange is most likely to take several conversational turns when there is a discrepancy between the speaker’s willingness to risk losing face and the hearer’s expectations as to the amount of facework necessary to restore his or her face. Interchanges negotiating the need and form of the apology have been analysed by Jaworski (1994) who proposes “a dynamic view of interaction involving the negotiation of apology” (1994: 204). However, asserting that “apologies should be seen as complex negotiations between interactants over status and over who is seen to be ‘in the right’” (Mills 2003: 61) moves the focus away from the function apologies conventionally perform to the speakers’ exploitation of apology expressions or interchanges in which an apology is avoided rather than performed.

5.1.3 On collecting large quantities of data

There is no doubt that recordings of authentic conversations are indispensable when conducting a qualitative analysis of the sequential and co-constructed nature of politeness. Recording longer stretches of data in the hope that a particular speech act will materialise at some point, in contrast, may have the advantage of
providing a broader context, but at the same time will have the disadvantage of a rather low occurrence rate of the speech act under investigation. The main reason why observational data are rarely used in cross-cultural pragmatics lies in the sheer impracticability of assembling a representative corpus. Since natural speech is unpredictable, it cannot be replicated, and the contextual variables inherent in the observed speech acts are difficult to identify and control.

Again, the applicability of this data collection method to the study of speech acts depends on the speech act under investigation. Not only are some speech acts more interactive than others but they also vary in terms of their frequency and predictability of occurrence: “With exception of highly routinised and standardised speech events, sufficient instances of cross-linguistically and cross-culturally comparable data are difficult to collect through observation of authentic conversation” (Kasper & Dahl 1991: 245). Whereas some speech acts, such as greeting and parting formulae, occur regularly in certain situations, speech acts like apologies are much less predictable, since they are dependent on the occurrence of an unintentional offence. While DCTs can be designed to elicit any speech act in a variety of situations or, as Billmyer & Varghese put it, “a wide range of difficult-to-observe linguistic phenomena” (2000: 518), speech act studies based on recordings of authentic conversations tend to be restricted to a particular situation in which the speech act under investigation is likely to occur.

Aston’s study of thanking (1995), for instance, is based on data collected during service encounters. His insights into the speech act of thanking are thus restricted to this very specific situation. The relationship between the participants in this situation is generally characterised by high social distance and unequal social power. Studies of refusals are typically based on recorded telephone calls on behalf of an institution requesting participation, e.g. in conference organisation (Beebe & Cummings 1996) or an experiment (Turnbull 2001), again restricting the data to one situation characterised by high social distance. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) used recordings of advising sessions, which offer ample opportunity for collecting speech acts such as suggestions and rejections produced by interlocutors in an unequal power relationship. However, advising sessions not only “differ from everyday conversations in that theme and structure are highly focused” (Yuan 2001: 273), but they constitute a culture-specific and thus non-replicable speech event (Kasper & Dahl 1991: 231). They do not exist in countries where the students are free to choose their courses – nor in countries where they follow a fixed schedule. Not surprisingly, with the notable exception of Aston’s study (1995), speech act studies relying on recorded conversations tend to focus on one language and do not attempt cross-cultural comparison.

Most apology studies using recordings of natural conversations are not based on data specifically collected with the aim of analyzing the apologies contained
in them. Kampf and Blum-Kulka (2007), for instance, used recordings of peer interactions among Israeli preschool children, made for a longitudinal project “aimed at tracking the development of genres of extended discourse” (2007: 13). Fifty-seven apologies were identified in data collected over three years, which illustrates the low occurrence of this speech act in naturally occurring data. Meyerhoff’s (1999) study of a speech community of Vanuatu was based on a corpus of casual conversations containing 35 tokens of the word sore (‘sorry’). Bean and Johnstone’s (1994) corpus, on the other hand, contained 252 occurrences of I’m sorry, excuse me, and beg pardon derived from 62 telephone interviews conducted for a polling service. However, only 24 of the 207 apology forms uttered by interviewers were remedial, while the remaining ones served the function of discourse managing devices.

Generally, it seems that in speech act studies based on recorded conversations, the choice of the speech act is mainly determined by the availability of a situation in which it frequently occurs. However, data collected in one situation provide very limited insights into the realisations and functions of the examined speech act and its culture-specific properties. In addition to not being representative, the data do not offer the possibility of examining the impact of social or cultural factors on strategy choice. Because of “their lack of situational variation” recordings of natural conversations appear “excessively restricted and routine” (Aston 1995: 64) in comparison to experimentally elicited data.

Naturally occurring data focusing on a particular speech act are not only highly context-sensitive, but with the increasing awareness of ethical problems concerning the privacy of the recorded conversations, difficult to obtain. An early apology study conducted by Owen (1983) was based on data recorded with a portable tape recorder during transactions in shops and telephone conversations. Owen explains that “one or both participants were aware that a recording was being made” (1983: 5) and is merely concerned with proving that the fact that some of the speakers knew that they were being recorded did not invalidate her data. While some decades ago, it was considered legitimate to record people’s conversations without their knowledge, nowadays it is “imperative that anyone recording speech not only informs individuals that they are being recorded but obtains written permission from them” (Meyer 2002: 57).

The speakers’ awareness that they are being recorded and the presence of the recording equipment restricts the naturalness of the data and leads directly to the observer’s paradox, which is brought about by the researcher’s aim “to observe how people talk when they are not being observed” (Labov 1986: 30). Hence, the natural data one collects may easily cease being natural when the interlocutors know that they are being observed.6
Houck and Gass point out that “if one is truly to understand a given speech act, many occurrences are needed; this, of course, is difficult when one must rely on instances when a particular speech act is used by speakers who are unaware of being observed” (1996: 45). Taking all these problems together, it becomes obvious why data from natural conversations are underrepresented in cross-cultural pragmatics, namely: “the relationship between effort and outcome” make “this idealistic demand unrealistic” (House 2005: 19).

5.2 Alternative ways of collecting spoken data

Postmodern politeness theorists engage in detailed descriptions of the dynamic and negotiable nature of politeness in individual interactions, which makes recordings of naturally occurring conversations indispensable. Speech act studies, in contrast, even if they are based on interactional data, “isolate the focal speech act from its interactional environment, submit its linguistic design to scrutiny, and relate the identified meaning and form conventions to discourse-external context factors” (Kasper 2004: 125).

5.2.1 Field notes

Therefore, instead of quantifying qualitative data, many researchers assembling a corpus of observational speech act data do so by taking field notes, which constitute an efficient method providing data on the semantic properties of speech acts and the impact of contextual factors on their choice. Golato maintains that “the biggest advantage of this method is that it allows the investigator to collect a very large database from a wide range of speakers and across various settings” (2003: 95). Although field notes are more likely to provide the researcher with a representative speech act data base than recordings, in comparison to DCT data, they are unsystematic: It is exceedingly difficult to control the contextual variables inherent in the observed situations because each of them is unique.

Field notes have also been criticized for not being representative on the grounds that they are often limited to the researcher’s family, colleagues, and friends (Beebe & Takahashi 1989: 120, Beebe & Cummings 1996: 67) – as are recordings of conversational data (e.g. Watts 2003, Golato 2005). The inclusion of speech produced by speakers outside this group is problematic since it is often difficult to obtain systematic information on the identities of the interlocutors and their relationship, precluding the possibility of examining the impact of contextual variables on strategy choice. Another shortcoming of field notes consists
in the limitations on the researcher’s short term memory and motor skills, often resulting in accuracy problems (Kasper & Dahl 1991: 241), which is why field note data are more likely to include prototypical speech act variants than their less typical, indirect realisations (Beebe & Takahashi 1989: 120).

Since ethnographic data collection is an extremely laborious task, most researchers delegate the task to their students (e.g. Manes & Wolfson 1981, Herbert 1990, 1991). According to Deutschmann, “the reliance on such second-hand reporting of incidents is questionable” (2003: 16). Admittedly, assembling a corpus by combining notes taken by several helpers is likely to affect the reliability and homogeneity of the collected data.

Apology studies based on field notes include Holmes’ analysis of gender-based differences (1989), who managed to assemble a corpus of 183 apologies with the help of nine students. Jaworski (1994) analysed 84 apologies (and non-apologies) observed by eight students (personal communication).

### 5.2.2 Linguistic corpora

Problems related to collecting large quantities of spoken data, with the speakers’ permission and including information on contextual variables, can be partly solved by employing a linguistic corpus. There are at least two apology studies based on corpus data. Aijmer (1996) analysed 215 apology expressions derived from the London-Lund Corpus, which contains a variety of spoken material, including phone and face-to-face conversations. In a more recent study, Deutschmann (2003) searched the spoken part of the British National Corpus and assembled a data base composed of 3070 apologies produced by 1700 speakers. The BNC is the largest existing linguistic corpus and has a relatively well-developed section of demographically sampled speech. Its population is balanced by gender, age, social class and dialect, which allows the investigation of the impact of these variables on the choice of apology forms.

The way in which speech acts are retrieved from a corpus, however, leads to a focus on form rather than function. Deutschmann, for instance, searched the corpus for the forms: afraid, apologise, apology, excuse, forgive, pardon, regret, and sorry, thus omitting all indirect apologies and including instances of apology forms which were used for purposes other than apologising. Still, the identification of apologies is relatively easy in comparison to speech acts like complaints or compliments, only a small proportion of which can be located by searching for words typically used to perform them (see Ogiermann 2004).

Yet another major drawback pertaining to all observational data – whether recorded, written down or derived from a corpus – is “the absence of information
on when an apology could, or even should have occurred but did not” (Holmes 1995:157), which is indispensable when comparing apology behaviour and politeness norms across groups. Experimental data collection is the only method that enables the researcher to control the number of relevant situations, including those which have not elicited the speech act under investigation.

The problem of comparability becomes even more acute when it comes to comparing different languages, which is a central research objective of cross-cultural pragmatics. It is not without a reason that the vast majority of studies using naturally occurring data do not attempt cross-cultural comparison. Likewise, “authentic data may just not be a viable option when an essential component of the research goal is to compare the use of specific pragmatic features by different groups of speakers in a given context” (Kasper 2000: 320).

5.2.3 Role plays

Role plays can be described as a compromise between naturally occurring data and DCTs. Like DCTs, they are an experimental data elicitation technique, their main advantage over DCTs being that they elicit spoken language. In contrast to authentic discourse, however, they can be designed to elicit a particular speech act and they allow for controlling and manipulating contextual variables and replicating the data in different languages. There are two main types of role plays: closed and open role plays. The former strongly resemble DCTs in that they provide one-turn responses to described situations. Therefore, they are sometimes referred to as oral DCTs.

Since role plays need to be recorded and the data need to be transcribed, speech act studies based on this type of data tend to involve smaller data bases than those using DCTs. Role plays have been mainly employed in interlanguage pragmatics, and Cohen and Olshaitain’s apology study (1981) was among the first using this method. Their data consisted of eight oral responses elicited from twelve native speakers of Hebrew in their native language, 20 speakers of Hebrew responding in English and twelve native speakers of American English. Mir (1992) collected responses to eight apology situations from 29 native speakers of US English and 29 native Peninsular Spanish speakers learning English. Rintell and Mitchell’s study (1989) was conducted with the aim of comparing oral and written DCTs. The oral DCT was completed by 14 native speakers of English and 21 non-native speakers of English with different linguistic backgrounds. Rintell and Mitchell found strong similarities between the two modalities and they concluded that both instruments elicit spoken language (1989:270). The only notable difference between these two methods is that recorded role plays permit
the inclusion of prosodic features in the analysis. However, I am not aware of any role play studies that have taken advantage of this possibility.

In contrast to closed role plays, open role plays are interactive and can evolve over several conversational turns. They provide “jointly negotiated production of a discourse which is ongoing in real time” (Aston 1995:63). Since open role-plays constitute an online task, the elicited data resemble natural speech (Golato 2003:94), characterised by “full operation of the turn-taking mechanism, impromptu planning decisions contingent on interlocutor input, and hence negotiation of global and local goals” (Kasper & Dahl 1991:228).

Several apology studies have used open role plays, including that conducted by García (1989) who recorded ten native speakers of American English and ten Venezuelans living in the US acting out one apology situation. Likewise, Cordella’s study (1990) is based on data produced in one apology situation by 20 Australians and 22 Chileans living in Australia. Márquez Reiter (2000) worked with a considerably larger data base which consisted of twelve apology situations acted out by 61 native speakers of British English and 64 speakers of Uruguayan Spanish.

Although the interactive character of open role plays allows for studying speech acts in a broader discourse context than do closed role plays or written DCTs, researchers using this method rarely include features of conversational management in the analysis. They merely treat the oral data as an “authenticating feature” (Aston 1995:63) while focusing on providing total frequencies of strategies per role play (see e.g. Trosborg 1995, Márquez Reiter 2000).

The main advantage associated with open role plays is that they “make possible the close analysis of long interaction sequences of comparable data” (Houck & Gass 1996:47). However, unless the researcher takes over one of the parts in the role play and adheres to a pre-established pattern of responding (as in García 1989 or Xiang 2006), the comparability decreases with every new turn. Obviously, the longer the interaction, the less controllable the data become (Kasper & Dahl 1991:245).

The question inevitably arising at this point is to what extent role played conversations can be regarded as authentic. An argument put forward in favour of their authenticity is that the participants in a role play are focused on content rather than form (Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 35). Most researchers, however, point out that role plays are “motivated by the researchers’ goals rather than those of the interactants” (Kasper 2000: 318). One of the central research questions in cross-cultural pragmatics being the impact of social variables on strategy choice, role plays require the participants to take on the roles of various imaginary characters. When acting the role of a professor, police officer, waiter, and even characters of both sexes (see e.g. Rintell & Mitchell 1989:252), they are likely to resort to stereotypes of these roles. Ultimately, if social roles were
interchangeable and anybody could act like anybody else, there would be little need for sociolinguistic research.

Furthermore, the ability to take on roles is very individual, since “it requires a special knack for role playing and not all individuals feel at ease with this technique” (Bonikowska 1988: 170). On the one hand, participants in role plays may feel intimidated by the presence of other people or the recording device, on the other hand, their behaviour may reflect the fact that the conversation has no consequences for them (Golato 2003: 94). They may be putting on “a performance which is entertaining for actors and observers alike, giving rise to the overacting, laughter, and distancing from role which typify much role-played interaction” (Aston 1995: 64).

As I have argued above, the speech act under investigation – the circumstances in which it is likely to occur, its predictability and its potentially interactive character – should be taken into account when choosing a data collection method. Examining speech acts such as compliments or apologies, which are generally performed in one turn, by means of an experimental interactive data collection instrument is not only unnecessary but also brings with it the danger of the dialogue being artificially extended.

Turnbull maintains that the role play participants in his project “sought to extend the conversation with more requests for information and confirmations” and he describes role play data as “rambling, repetitive, and somewhat forced” (Turnbull 2001: 48). A possible reason why role play data tend to be long-winded is that the participants may unconsciously try to ‘make the most out of it’. A brief response may not seem satisfactory to a researcher who has decided to use an interactive data collection technique and invested considerable energy into finding subjects, inviting them individually and handling the recording equipment. If the conversation is between a participant and a researcher, the latter usually has a set of prepared responses to be used in the course of the role play. For instance, in Xiang’s study (2006) apologies that were readily offered by the participants right after the offence were met with a “but you should not have” and another “don’t let it happen again”, so that two more apologetic sequences could be elicited from the participant.

While open role plays have been found useful for the study of learners’ pragmatic competence, where they have additional advantages, such as the possibility of testing the learner’s ability to cope with negotiating situations with native speakers (see Ellis 1994: 163 and Cohen & Olshtain 1994: 148), they may not be the best technique for cross-cultural studies. Considering that role plays are “cumbersome to administer and time-consuming in both their administration and analysis” (Houck & Gass 1996: 48, see also Turnbull 2001: 48), DCTs appear to be the preferable data collection method when large quantities of comparable
data are needed to investigate the universality vs. culture-specificity of pragmatic phenomena.

The remaining methods used to collect speech act production data, such as interviews (e.g. Boxer 1996, Yuan 2001) and multiple choice questionnaires (e.g. Rose & Ono 1995, Hinkel 1997) are much less popular. Data collection methods designed to investigate pragmatic perception have been mainly used in interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Olshtain & Blum-Kulka 1985, Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998, Brown 2001 – see Kasper 1998 & 2000 for an overview of all methods employed).

Considering that “there are no foolproof procedures that do not affect the data” (Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 184), some researchers suggest “the use of multiple data collection procedures as a means to offset the instrument or observer bias that is necessarily involved in each technique” (Kasper 2000: 340). Others, however, warn against assuming that when employing several methods “the various results can be simply added together to get a total overview” (Barron 2003: 81).

In previous research, the tendency has been to either compare languages or to compare methods used to analyse speech act realisation in one language (Eisenstein & Bodman 1993, Yuan 2001, Turnbull 2001, Brehmer 2004), sometimes including learner data (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1992, Hinkel 1997, Sasaki 1998). Studies in interlanguage pragmatics tend to combine role plays with interviews or verbal reports (e.g. García 1989, Mir 1992, Cohen & Olshtain 1993) in order to find out more about the cognitive and psycholinguistic processes underlying the learner’s performance (Kormos 1998: 354).
A contrastive analysis of apologies in three languages, two of which have not received much attention in previous research, requires a corpus of comparable data sufficiently large to establish a classification of strategies in these languages. The DCT appears to be the only workable means of assembling a representative corpus of comparable data in several languages. The unpredictable nature of apologies is another reason why the collection of naturally occurring data in three countries does not seem a viable option. Considering that apologies tend to consist of one turn units, the possibility of investigating features of discourse management was not regarded as a decisive criterion in selecting the data collection method.

6.1 Designing the DCT

Since the Discourse Completion Test was developed (Levenston 1975, Levenston & Blum 1978) and adapted to investigate speech act realisation (Blum-Kulka 1982), it has undergone various modifications. Generally, a DCT consists of descriptions of situations to which the subjects are expected to react and thereby provide the desired speech act (open DCT). Sometimes the description is followed by an incomplete dialogue consisting of an initiating (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1993) or a closing line of dialogue (e.g. Rose 1992). DCTs with several turns requiring the respondents to provide two answers (Blum-Kulka 1982) or both interlocutors’ conversational turns (Barron 2003) have also been used to collect speech act data (see Kasper 2000 for an overview of DCT types).

Since a remedial interchange generally consists of three elements (Coulmas 1981:71), a DCT designed to elicit apologies could theoretically contain both a conversational turn preceding the apology and one following it. A preceding turn would most likely have the form of a more or less direct complaint and would have the advantage of making explicit what kind of response is expected. However, a complaint becomes superfluous when both parties are present when the offence is committed and the offender recognises the need for an apology. More importantly, in many situations, a complaint would not only sound unnatural but even make the offender less inclined to apologise (see Owen 1983:51).
A conversational turn following the apology to be elicited would constrain the responses even more. A preferred second, taking the form of apology acceptance, precludes the possibility to opt out or produce a different speech act. When the apology has been accepted “it seems logical that the speaker has previously offered an apology and/ or assumed responsibility for the offense” (Rose 1992: 53).

Unless the DCT is explicitly designed to elicit responses avoiding apologies, the inclusion of a dispreferred second, which would have to constitute a refusal of the apology to be offered, seems counterproductive. Johnston et al. (1998) compared the realizations of complaints, requests and apologies in three different DCT formats: open-ended, including a preferred, and a dispreferred second. Not surprisingly, they found out that apologies “were most strongly affected by rejoinder type” (1998: 170), with a dispreferred uptake eliciting responses downgrading the offence.

Ultimately, DCT scenarios are meant to elicit spontaneous responses resembling real life situations, in which it would be rather unlikely to know the answers to something before it is said, which is why the DCT used in this study consists of open-ended scenarios. It requires the informants to react to these scenarios as they would, thus allowing them to retain their identities, which is likely to elicit more authentic responses reflecting their politeness norms than would a questionnaire requesting the subjects to take on a variety of roles.

The selection of scenarios for the DCT was guided by two main concerns: they had to include particular combinations of contextual variables and they had to be perceived as realistic in three different cultures. In order to be able to test the influence of social power and social distance on strategy choice, the DCT had to include scenarios based on equal and unequal power (−P & +P) combined with low and high social distance (−D & +D).

While −P denotes a relationship between status equals, the variable +P indicates that one of the interlocutors is socially superior to the other. In the present study, this variable is limited to the constellation in which the hearer takes on the more powerful role. The variable S>H was deliberately omitted as all informants were expected to be students, who do not often adopt socially dominant positions. It proved difficult to find realistic situations in which they would be clearly superior to somebody and which they could identify with. Among the few exceptions are contexts in which they adopt the role of a customer. Such contexts, however, have proved controversial in pragmatic research, service encounters having been classified as both equal and unequal role constellations (see Spencer-Oatey 2000: 32−33). In addition, in Poland and Russia, such relationships are still shaped by socialist structures where the customer used to be regarded as inferior (see Chapter 2.3.1). Consequently, my Polish and Russian informants might evaluate such relationships differently from the British ones.
The variable $-P$ was combined with both low and high social distance, depicting relationships between friends and strangers, respectively. The possibilities of combining $+P$ with social distance, in contrast, are more restricted, which is why in addition to low and high social distance, the variable medium $D$ was introduced. The reason why combining $+P$ with low $D$ is problematic is that these two variables tend to be mutually exclusive, and even if a relationship includes both variables, they cannot operate at the same time (see Trosborg 1995: 148). Which of them is dominant in a particular situation is often determined by the formality of the context (e.g. private vs. professional). Moreover, social variables not only tend to exclude one another, but also to interact, and the variable $+P$ usually increases the social distance between the interlocutors (see Holmes 1995: 18 and Thomas 1995: 129). One of the few cases where $+P$ and low $D$ operate simultaneously and independently, is in a parent-child relationship. However, the power variable in this type of relationship has a strong component of responsibility and may interact differently with both familiarity and affect depending on the cultural background of the family.

Therefore, the variable $+P$ was combined with high and medium social distance. Although this means that the scenarios based on $-P$ combine it with high and low $D$ and those based on $+P$ with high and medium $D$, this does not necessarily interfere with the research design since a crucial element shared by apologies produced by friends and acquaintances is that they must take into consideration a relationship that needs to be maintained.

While in socially unequal relationships between acquaintances, the socially inferior party is dependent on the more powerful one, in encounters between strangers, no past obligations or future plans need to be taken into account. Even more importantly, since the interlocutors are not aware of their potentially unequal status, it is not relevant to the perception of the offence, nor can it have an impact on strategy choice. Although there have been attempts in previous research at combining the variables $+D$ and $+P$ by describing the addressee as “a man wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase” (Rose 1994: 3), it is doubtful whether the respondents would view themselves as subordinate to the hearer based on such a description. In most European cultures, at least, it takes more than a suit and a briefcase to put somebody in a socially powerful position.

It seems that for complete strangers to take on a relationship based on $+P$ one of them needs to have some official function making this status difference explicit. The offence committed is then not directed at the hearer, but a transgression of a rule or law, with the hearer representing the law. Despite the fact that such offences do not necessarily depict typical apology situations, they have been included in this study, since due to Poland’s and Russia’s socialist past and the still existing ambivalent attitude towards authorities, interesting differences in strategy choice can be expected.
Scenarios describing legal offences that have previously been used to elicit data on apologies include car accidents (Cohen & Olshtain 1981, Mir 1992) and even smuggling goods (Bergman & Kasper 1993, Maeshiba et al. 1996). Considering, however, that legal offences require restitutive rather than ritualistic corrective behaviour (Goffman 1971) and that there are fixed ways of dealing with them, apologies adopt a different function when employed in such situations. By apologising, the offender attempts to placate the hearer in order to avoid legal penalty.

Having decided that the scenarios will have to accommodate three levels of social distance, resulting in encounters between friends (low D), acquaintances (medium D) and strangers (high D), which would be combined with equal as well as unequal social power, offensive situations matching these contextual constraints had to be found. These situations should be interpreted similarly and perceived as realistic by speakers of all three languages analyzed (Cohen 1996: 389).

Previous research has shown that situations regarded as offensive in one culture may not be perceived as such in another and will not elicit an apology in that speech community (Cohen & Olshtain 1994: 152). Taxonomies of offence types have been suggested on the basis of data on American apologies (Wolfson, Marmor & Jones 1989: 177–179), British Apologies (Aijmer 1996: 109, Deutschmann 2003: 64), and apologies collected in New Zealand (Holmes 1989: 201). However, although all these taxonomies comprise offensive situations identified in Anglo-Saxon cultures, there is little overlap in the suggested categories.

Another reason why these taxonomies could not be relied on when selecting the offensive situations for the present study is that they had to be suitable for the Polish and Russian as well as the English version of the questionnaire. Instead, a number of situations matching the contextual constraints were prepared and native speakers of all three languages were consulted. The probability for the scenarios to happen and their possible interpretations and reactions to them were discussed. In the end, I selected the following eight situations from academic and everyday life:

1. H had asked S to look after his fish and some of them have died.
2. H had asked S to return her video tapes and S forgot.
3. S mistakes H for his friend and hits him on the back.
4. S lets go a heavy door and it hits H.
5. S had borrowed H’s book and misplaced it.
6. S had a loud party and left a dirty staircase behind in H’s house.
7. S walks out of the shop with an unpaid CD and is stopped by H.
8. S goes by train without a ticket and is caught by H.
Chapter 6. Data collection

As Table 1 shows, these eight scenarios cover all the combinations of variables relevant to the subsequent analysis. A systematic distribution of social distance and power resulted in four categories, consisting of two scenarios each. Categories I and II combine −P with low and high social distance, respectively, thus describing offences committed against friends and strangers. Category III combines +P with medium social distance and category IV with high social distance, resulting in encounters with socially more powerful acquaintances and authority figures. Within the categories, there is a symmetrical gender distribution, so that each scenario featuring a male has its counterpart with a female apologisee.

**Table 1.** Contextual variables embedded in the 8 offensive situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Hearer’s face harmed</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Apologisee gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1. Dead Fish</td>
<td>Positive face</td>
<td>S=H</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Video Tapes</td>
<td>Positive face</td>
<td>S=H</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>3. Mistaking a Stranger</td>
<td>Negative face</td>
<td>S=H</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Heavy Door</td>
<td>Negative face</td>
<td>S=H</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>5. Professor’s Book</td>
<td>Positive face</td>
<td>S&lt;H</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Landlady</td>
<td>Negative face</td>
<td>S&lt;H</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>7. Security Guard</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>S&lt;H</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Ticket Inspector</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>S&lt;H</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The degree of imposition, which in the case of apologies has been equated with the severity of the offence apologised for, subsuming the offender’s obligation to apologise and the likelihood of apology acceptance (House 1989, Olshtain 1989), was kept constant. One should bear in mind, however, that the degree of imposition is problematic in that it depends on the assessments of social power and distance (see Chapter 2.3), and that diverging assessments of this variable, in particular across languages, may lead to differences in strategy selection.

The damage to the hearer’s face brought about by the offence may affect both face types, so that those listed in Table 1 are considered to be primarily, but not exclusively threatened. What distinguishes the two legal offences from the remaining ones is that they do not imply any direct threat to the hearer’s face.

A problematic aspect of DCTs used in cross-cultural pragmatics, including the one discussed here is that although experimental data collection methods allow for controlled variation of contextual factors, in the end, all the situations are different and include additional factors influencing strategy choice. Clearly, the most reliable way of determining the variable responsible for the use of particular strategies would be by using several versions of one scenario varied by one social factor only and distributing them over several versions of the DCT. What makes
such a design impracticable, though, is that the contextual conditions in which certain offensive situations are likely to occur are not interchangeable.

Offences committed in low D contexts are more likely to affect the hearer’s positive face whereas those happening in high D contexts are more likely to cause damage to negative face (see Chapter 3.3). Most offences taking place between strangers are space offences, whereas possession offences tend to occur in low D contexts. Social gaffes may not be perceived as offensive among friends, but are more likely to be interpreted as such with increasing social distance and formality of the context. Obviously, one would not ask a stranger to look after one’s fish or a ticket inspector to return one’s video tapes.

Accordingly, while observational data have the disadvantage of including unknown factors, the interpretation of DCT responses should not be restricted to correlating strategy choice with the social variables around which the DCT was constructed. In the present study, this problem was tackled by conducting interviews in which the informants were requested to compare pairs of scenarios that differed by one variable and to name potential reasons for differences in their responses (see below).

In addition to the six scenarios featuring personal offences and two describing legal offences the questionnaire contains two distractors: one of them describing a complaint situation and the other one aiming at a request. In this way, it was hoped, the responses would not become as mechanical as they easily could when reacting to eight personal offences in a row.

In a short introductory part, the informants were instructed to imagine themselves in the presented situations and respond to them in direct speech. They were not explicitly requested to apologise as the responses can be expected to be more authentic if the focus of the study is not clear to the subjects (see Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 36). An example of a completed scenario was provided in order to ensure the clarity of the instructions. The demographic information requested in the questionnaire covers the informant’s age, gender, native language and the subjects studied (see Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire).

### 6.2 Translating the DCT

The questionnaire was formulated in English and then translated into Polish and Russian, though the translation process was greatly facilitated by the fact that the scenarios had already been formulated while discussing them with native speakers in their languages. Cultural transposition was not considered necessary as neutral contexts were chosen. The authenticity of the scenarios was confirmed by
my informants, suggesting that everyday academic life is similar in Poland, Russia, and the UK.

Minor difficulties occurred with the translation of a few English words, for which there was no one-to-one equivalent available, with the Slavic languages offering several synonyms with different connotations. One such problem was the translation of the English word *friend*, which, according to most dictionaries, is equivalent to the Polish *przyjaciel* and the Russian *drug*. Wierzbicka points out that “the semantic area covered by the English term friend is divided in Polish into three different categories” (1997: 85), offering three different possibilities of translation, namely: *przyjaciel*, *kolega* and *znajomy*, none of which is fully equivalent to the English *friend*. The word *kolega* is used to refer to a school friend, work mate or anybody with similar past experiences. The word *znajomy* is derived from the verb *znac* [to know], but its connotations differ from those of the English *acquaintance*, for it is much more widely used and less formal.

Russian offers even more possibilities than Polish of translating the English word *friend*. The word *drug* is used to relate to close friends and is equivalent to the Polish *przyjaciel*. The other two words denoting friendship, namely *prijatel’* and *znakomyj* [znac = to know] are close synonyms, the former implying a slightly closer kind of relationship. Another translation possibility of the English *friend* would be *tovarišč*, which translates into Polish as *kolega*, whereas the Russian *kollega* is equivalent to the English colleague (see Wierzbicka 1997: 57ff).

The words *znajomy*, *znakomyj*, and *prijatel’* could be compared to that of *friend* in American English. It is this variant of English that Lubecka refers to while arguing that in English “literally anybody can be called a friend (cf. P ‘znajomy’), while in Polish intimacy is the necessary feature to call somebody ‘przyjaciel’” (2000: 47). Intimacy is also a criterion in Holmes’ classification (1989: 205), in which the English *friend* would fall into category F (friends or colleagues), whereas the Polish *przyjaciel* and Russian *drug* should rather be assigned to category I (very close friends and intimates).

In the present study, *friend* was nevertheless translated as *przyjaciel* in Polish and *drug* in Russian because the remaining possibilities: *znajomy*, *znakomyj* or *prijatel’* may imply medium social distance. Hence, although entrusting somebody with one’s belongings and house keys presupposes a fairly close relationship, the higher degree of intimacy conveyed by the words *przyjaciel* and *drug* than that between *friends* in English might influence the perception of the variable low D and, simultaneously, the strategy choice. Incidentally, the greater range of lexical items available for differentiating between types of friendship in Polish and Russian further confirms the hypothesis that the concept of social distance in the two Slavic cultures differs from the Anglo-Saxon one (see 2.3.2).
Another obligatory choice, which had to be made in the Polish and Russian versions, was the decision between using T- or V-forms to address the informants. The perceived formality of the Polish deferential address forms, which supersedes that of the equivalent V-forms in other languages, may be the reason why T-forms are becoming more acceptable in Poland and are increasingly used, especially among young people. In Russia, in contrast, there seems to be a tendency towards an increase in the use of reciprocal V-forms, while the one sided use of T-forms by older generations towards the younger ones is in decline. According to some of my informants, even among university students who do not know each other, V-forms are preferred. All these considerations, as well as the formal character of the Polish deferential forms, which was regarded as a constraint on the informality of the language to be elicited, led to the decision of using V-forms in the Russian and T-forms in the Polish version.

Furthermore, since gender is explicitly marked in Polish morphology, it was necessary to develop different versions of the questionnaire for male and female informants. In Russian, this problem could be avoided by using the V-form, which is a plural form and does not distinguish between genders.

6.3 Testing and refining the DCT

Before collecting data from larger numbers of informants, the DCT was tested on ten English, ten Polish, and 15 Russian native speakers. Pilot testing can help to avoid “the loss of valuable, potentially useful, and often irreplaceable data” (Gass & Mackey 2000: 57), and in the present study it was carried out to ensure the clarity of the instructions, identification with the scenarios, and transparency of the incorporated variables.

The Polish and Russian versions were distributed in the Slavic Department at the University of Münster, where most students were native speakers of these languages. The English version was administered to British informants at the Hendrefoolean student village in Swansea. In addition to responding to the scenarios, the informants were asked to evaluate on a three-point scale the relationship between speaker and hearer in terms of social distance (low, medium or high) and power (S>H, S=H, S<H), as well as the severity of the offence (low, medium or high).

The intended values of the incorporated variables were largely confirmed by speakers of all languages so that a similar assessment could be expected from the remaining subjects. Slight discrepancies appeared in the assessment of the degree of imposition in category IV, featuring legal offences. The severity of the offence described in scenario 8, in particular, which was inspired by situations observed in Russia, was also rated lower by Russians than by speakers of the other two languages.
In addition to the written responses, ten informants in each language responded orally to the scenarios and were interviewed afterwards. Although a few leading questions were prepared for the interviews, the most valuable information was obtained in informal conversations into which they usually turned (see Boxer 1996: 221−222). The oral responses to the scenarios contained the same range and similar frequencies of strategies as did the written responses.

Valuable information was obtained by discussing the subjects’ perception of the scenarios and difficulties they experienced in responding to the DCT. The main purpose of the interviews was, however, to gain an insight into the subjects’ motivation for selecting the strategies that they used in response to the scenarios. They helped to establish to what extent the incorporated variables were noticed by the subjects and were decisive in their strategy choice. Discussions comparing responses to two scenarios differing by one variable allowed me to trace the influence of this variable on the response and to uncover other factors responsible for differences in strategy choice. This procedure differed from the \textit{a priori} assessment of the incorporated variables in that the respondents’ answers were the starting point. The interviews thus supplied valuable information that could not be accessed through elicitation of speech acts alone and that facilitated the interpretation of the responses.

Determining the factors involved in strategy choice helped avoid internal invalidity, brought about by focusing on the variables under investigation and disregarding other factors affecting the results, as well as external invalidity, which would preclude the possibility of generalising the findings to other contexts based on the same variables (see Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 95).

While the discussions with native speakers were meant to ensure that the contextual factors would be interpreted as intended, the pilot study confirmed that the scenarios were clearly formulated and that the variables were recognised when reading the scenarios without explicitly reflecting upon them. Minor adjustments in the formulations were made according to the responses and comments received. After translating, testing and refining the DCT, the scenarios were randomised and two different versions of each questionnaire were prepared. To eliminate fatigue effects, in the second version, the order was altered by placing the first five scenarios at the end.

6.4 The subjects and the data

Since gathering truly representative data is virtually impossible, most studies conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics rely on samples of a sub-population; most commonly students. Students are not only easily accessible and tend to be
cooperative, but they share various practices and represent a group, or a community of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), that is homogenous in terms of education, social class and age. Since this description applies to British, Polish and Russian students alike, the present study can be said to compare similar communities of practice in different cultures.

The Polish version of the questionnaire was distributed in the department of Polish Philology at the University of Wroclaw and the department of English at the Marie-Curie Sklodowska University in Lublin. All native speakers of Polish participating in the project were thus students of Polish and English philology, and they were aged from 19 to 31. The Russian version was administered to history students at the Moscow State Regional University and to students of Philology in the department of Germanic languages at the Moscow State University and at the Moscow State Regional University. Since in Russia children usually start school at the age of six and can enter university after completing 10 grades, the youngest among my Russian subjects were 16 and the oldest 25. In the UK, the questionnaires were distributed at three different universities: the School of Arts at the Middlesex University in London, the Centre for Language and Communication at Cardiff University, and in the Hendrefoleian Student Village at the University of Wales in Swansea. The British students were aged between 18 and 31.

Although over 500 participants were engaged in the project, only 300 DCTs were selected for analysis. The first factor that reduced the size of the corpus was the return rate, which did not equal the number of distributed copies. DCTs filled in by students with a native language other than those analyzed, on the other hand, could not be included in the corpus. Incomplete questionnaires also had to be excluded from analysis as there was no way of finding out whether the scenarios to which no response was given were omitted because the informants wished to opt out, could not identify with the scenario, or simply ran out of time. It further turned out problematic to match the numbers of male and female students. Since over 70% of the participants were women, for the results to be representative and comparable, the number of females had to be reduced to match the males.

In this way, 100 questionnaires with equal distribution between genders (50/50) in each of the languages were selected for analysis, so that the corpus consists of 300 questionnaires including a total of 2400 responses. The responses were typed up and coded according to the strategies they contain, e.g.:

I'm sorry I don't have parties often. It won't be so loud again and I'll clean up the staircase. [Em-6/39]

IFID, minimise, forbearance, direct repair

Unlike the majority of speech acts, which are not associated with any particular key words facilitating their identification, apology strategies can be categorised
according to their form and their function. Whereas direct apologies take the form of easily identifiable routine formulae, indirect apology strategies have to be classified according to their function. The classification of the data takes both linguistic and situational contexts into account, which allows for assigning expressions which could be placed into two or more categories to the contextually most plausible one. To facilitate statistical testing, the coded data were entered into SPSS.

The responses were assigned identification numbers specifying the informant’s native language and gender. The letters E, P and R stand for the respondent’s native language, and the gender of the informant appears as f or m. These letters are followed by the number of scenario and questionnaire, for example: [Ef-3/16] = [English, female, Scenario 3, questionnaire 16]. Due to space limitations, Russian examples will be quoted in transliterated form only, and instead of providing idiomatic translations and word for word glosses, the translations will be kept as close to the original as possible. Literal equivalents of particular words and grammatical information encoded in the morphological endings of the two Slavic languages will be provided whenever they are regarded as relevant to the full understanding of the response.
CHAPTER 7

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices: IFIDs

7.1 Definition

This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the most conventionalised apology strategy: the IFID. The expression “Illocutionary Force Indicating Device” was coined by Searle (1969) and introduced as a technical term in the CCSARP to refer to the category labelled ‘An Expression of Apology’ in Olshtain and Cohen’s speech act set (1983:22).

While the speech act theoretical approach largely restricts the class of IFIDs to the performative ‘I apologise’, empirical speech act research has extended this category to include a broader range of formulae. However, this extended concept of the category of IFIDs encompasses semantic formulae which appear in responses to offensive situations but do not necessarily serve the function of an explicit apology. This is especially problematic in cross-cultural studies, where an apologetic function may be assigned to an expression in one language because it serves as an apology in another.

I derive the semantic formulae making up the category of IFIDs from the collected data. All three sets of data were searched for the full range of formulae discussed in earlier apology research, including all IFID realisations distinguished in the CCSARP, as well as apology forms used in the two Slavic languages and previously discussed by Polish and Russian linguists. Not all of them, however, are expected to serve the function of explicit apologies in all three languages. In fact, one of the main objectives of this chapter is to establish whether, and to what extent, the formulae result in an apology in each of them.

7.2 Distribution across languages

IFIDs appear in responses to all scenarios and are – not entirely unexpectedly – the most frequent apology strategy in the corpus. The English data exhibit the highest frequency of IFIDs, where they amount to 645 tokens. The Polish responses contain a total of 607 IFIDs, while the Russian subjects used them 586 times.
In addition to the total numbers of tokens, previous apology studies tend to provide percentages of the potential total, which are calculated on the basis of the number of responses (see Vollmer & Olshtain 1989: 202). Since my data comprise 800 responses in each of the languages, the 645 IFIDs encountered in the English data correspond to 80% of the potential total. Accordingly, the Polish respondents used IFIDs in 76%, and the Russian respondents in 73% of all possible cases.

Such a calculation, however, overlooks the fact that not all responses include an IFID, while some may contain several. A classification of the responses according to whether they contain an IFID or not has shown that among the English responses, 588 (74%) include an IFID. In the Polish data, the total number of responses containing an IFID amounts to 561 and in Russian to 562, which corresponds to roughly 70% in both languages. The total numbers of IFIDs point to slightly greater discrepancies across languages than the proportions of responses containing an IFID, suggesting that the tendency to combine several IFIDs in one response is greatest in the English and slightest in the Russian data.

Cross-linguistic differences appear not only in connection with the number of combined IFIDs, but also with the positions they occupy within the responses. While most responses begin with an IFID, sometimes preceded by exclamations or forms of address, the data also contain utterances in which the IFID follows other apology strategies. Accordingly, the IFID may occur at the end of the apology or occupy a middle position, with one or more strategies preceding and following it.

As Table 2 illustrates, speakers of all three languages agree in favouring front positions. In English they make up 81% of all the responses including an IFID, in Polish 85% and in Russian 91%. The distribution of IFIDs in the English data is most varied, with the British participants opting for the final and middle positions more often than speakers of the two Slavic languages.

Table 2. IFID repetition and positioning across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>front</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>1468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>end</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front + end</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front + middle</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle + end</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front + middle + end</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front + front + middle + middle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responses with IFIDs</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>1711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFIDs total</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices: IFIDs

95

Considering that the English data contain the highest number of IFIDs, one could feel tempted to conclude that British people are generally more apologetic and more concerned about maintaining social harmony than are Poles and Russians. Before reaching any such conclusions, however, one should take into account that the category of IFIDs encompasses different semantic formulae which vary in their illocutionary force and the degree to which they are recognised and accepted to serve as an apology. Further insights into the apology behaviour of English, Polish and Russian speakers can, therefore, be gained by differentiating between the semantic formulae making up the category of IFIDs.

7.3 IFID realisations across languages

In the following three sections I will discuss the formulae assigned to the category of IFIDs in each of the languages, while referring to interpretations and definitions suggested in previous research conducted on English, Polish and Russian apologies.

7.3.1 English IFIDs

The most explicit English IFID realisation, which meets the felicity conditions necessary for the successful performance of an apology suggested in classical speech act theory, is the performative I apologise. Expressions including the infinitive to apologise as well as the noun apology are also regarded as explicit apology strategies. Fraser, for instance, distinguishes the following categories (1981: 263):

- Stating one’s obligation to apologize: I must apologize for…
- Offering to apologize: I (hereby) offer my apology for… I would like to offer my apology…
- Requesting the hearer accept [sic] an apology: Please accept my apology for… Let me apologize for…

The occurrence of the performative and semantic formulae derived from it is largely limited to formal contexts, involving official apologies uttered in public or offered in writing (Trosborg 1995, Aijmer 1996). They may also be given preference in situations in which “absolute unambiguity is required” (Owen 1983: 63, following Austin 1962). Despite the abundance of possibilities of embedding the verb to apologise or the related noun into apologetic formulae, they are used very rarely in spoken English. There is only one expression including the noun apology in my data, and its elliptic character makes it sound rather informal:
(1) Apologies, but it was a special, one-off occasion. [Em-6/47]

The possibility of performing the speech act of apologising by expressing regret was already acknowledged by Austin, who regarded the formula *I'm sorry* as a primary performative (1962 [1975: 66]). The expression of regret is clearly the most frequent English apology realisation, and my data display an extraordinarily strong preference for this strategy. *I'm sorry* and its short variant *sorry* were used 635 times, which is equal to 98% of all the IFIDs used by the English subjects. The full form *I'm sorry* was slightly more frequent, amounting to 336 instances, whereas the short form *sorry* was employed 299 times. The short form is generally associated with trivial offences that do not cause any great damage or disturbance, such as “momentary slips of physical control” or “slips of the tongue” (Owen 1983: 67).

Due to the nearly exclusive focus on the expression of regret, the remaining IFID realisations are very marginal in the English data. There are only two instances of the formula *excuse me*, which is regarded as more formal than the expression of regret and associated with contexts involving higher social distance, where it is used to apologise for minor offences (Fraser 1981: 267). Borkin and Reinhart, in their discussion contrasting the expressions *I'm sorry* and *excuse me*, define the latter as “a formula to remedy a past or immediately forthcoming breach of etiquette or other light infraction of a social rule” (1978: 61).

Edmondson maintains that *excuse me* is seldom used reactively, its main function being that of a “pre-posed disarming apology” (1981a: 282). It can also be used as a “polite way to inform our partner of our intentions” (Coulmas 1981: 78) or as a request for repetition (Aijmer 1996: 121). Fraser categorises *excuse me* as well as *forgive me* as requests for forgiveness (1981: 263), the latter occurring only once in my data.

Another expression that was found in the data and can function as an apology, though it has not been placed among English IFIDs in previous research, is the expression *hope you're not angry* [Ef-2/16]. By uttering these words, the speaker implicitly admits having done something the hearer may be angry about, thus referring to the offence without, however, explicitly assuming responsibility for it. Only one English respondent used this expression, but similar formulae were identified in the Polish and Russian data and assigned the function of explicit apology strategies in previous research, thus justifying their inclusion in the group of IFIDs.

Finally, the expression *I'm afraid* appears four times in the data. This formula especially takes on an apologetic function when combined with a confession, and some earlier apology studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Deutschmann 2003) regard it as an explicit apology strategy. Aijmer maintains that *I'm afraid* “has the
function to apologize just as much as *I'm sorry*” (1996:84) but, at the same time, she compares its function to that of the adverbs *regrettably* and *unfortunately* (1996:85), the latter appearing only once in my data. Although these two adverbs are usually not discussed in apology studies, Vollmer and Olshtain include their German equivalents *bedauerlicherweise* and *dummerweise* in their list of explicit apology expressions (1989:210). Edmondson and House describe the expression *I'm afraid* as “a softener with a disarming function” (1981:156); a term I would like to adopt to refer to an IFID category comprising the expressions *I'm afraid, unfortunately*, and their equivalents in the two Slavic languages.

7.3.2 Polish IFIDs

The most widely used Polish IFID realisation is the performative *przepraszam* [*I apologise*] in its imperfective form. Polish linguists emphasise the ritual character and broad applicability of this apology formula (e.g. Marcjanik 1997). According to Ożóg, it is often heard in public places, i.e. in situations marked by high social distance, while in relationships characterised by low social distance, its use is restricted to minor offences (1990:48). In the present data, *przepraszam* was used 495 times, thus constituting 82% of all Polish IFIDs.

Since in Polish there is no equivalent to the English *excuse me*, *przepraszam* fulfils some of its functions; for instance, to apologise for smaller offences, such as “breach of etiquette or other light infraction of social rules” (Lubecka 2000:150). Although it can also precede requests for repetition or serve as an attention getter, the expressions *proszę* [*I beg*] and *proszę Pana / Pani, [I beg you Sir / Madam*] respectively are more common (Pisarek 1995:88).

Apart from this highly routinised apology formula, Polish offers a broad repertoire of apology expressions including the infinitive *przepraszać* [*to apologise*], mostly in its perfective form *przeprosić*, or – less frequently – the noun *przeprosiny* (Pisarek 1995:83). Lubecka discusses three types of such expressions (2000:152–153), resulting in categories similar to those suggested by Fraser (1981):

- **Statement of the obligation to apologise**
  - Muszę Cię przeprosić
    - ‘I must apologise to you’
  - Chciałbym Cię przeprosić
    - ‘I’d like to apologise to you’

- **Statement of the willingness to apologise**
  - Pozwól, że cię przeproszę
    - ‘Allow me to apologise to you’
  - Przyjmij moje przeprosiny
    - ‘Accept my apologies’

- **Request for an acceptance of the apology**
In my data, there is only one construction including the perfective form of the infinitive *przepraszac*, and it is untypical in that *przeprosić* implies material compensation:

(2) Ale powiedz ile one kosztują, albo jak inaczej mogę Cię za przeprosić.

‘But tell me how much they cost or how else I can apologise to you for it.’

Although there are numerous possibilities of performing an apology in Polish, as in the English data, the strong focus on one apology form automatically leads to a much lower frequency of alternative IFID realisations. Among the remaining Polish IFIDs, there are 32 instances of the expression of regret *przykro mi*, which is equal to 5% of all Polish IFIDs. There is a disagreement among Polish linguists as to the exact function of this expression: Marcjanik (1995) and Lubecka (2000) define it as an explicit apology strategy, whereas for Ożóg (1985 & 1990) it constitutes merely an indirect apology realisation. The explicit expression of regret *żałuję* [I regret], in contrast, is generally recognised to serve as an apology (Ożóg 1990, Zgółkowie 1992, Pisarek 1995) and occurs only once in the present data.

An IFID that was used nearly as frequently as *przykro mi* by the Polish respondents happens to be the English word *sorry*. It amounts to 30 instances in the data and has been, in various ways, adapted to the rules of the Polish language. Four respondents spelled *sorry* with one ‘r’ – a tendency which was even greater in an earlier study (Ogiemmann 2001). The omission of one ‘r’ is an adjustment to Polish orthography and, simultaneously, likely to affect the pronunciation of the word, for it can be expected that respondents writing *sory* will pronounce it like a Polish word. Incidentally, Marcjanik (1997) consistently uses the ‘Polonised’ orthography when quoting examples of this apology realisation in her analysis.

A more recent phenomenon is not only an orthographic but also a morphological adaptation of *sorry*. Since Polish words ending in ‘y’ are usually plural forms, this has led to the formation of a diminutive plural form which, according to the rules of Polish morphology, has resulted in the form *sorki* (see Piotrowski 2003 for other morphological adaptations), and which occurs six times in the data.

The relatively strong preference for an English word can be attributed to the young age of the participants, while the older generations are more likely to use the French word *pardon*. According to Zgółka and Zgółka, *sorry* and *pardon* are employed in a similar way in Polish, namely for small offences only (Zgółkowie 1992: 96). The perceived informality of *sorry* in Polish is well illustrated by the following response to a situation featuring a professor, taken from an earlier study (Ogiemmann 2001: 20):
Sorry, to znaczy, przepraszam.
‘Sorry, I mean, I apologise.’

Requests for forgiveness amount to 14 instances in the Polish data. Imperatives are most common, and have been used nearly exclusively in my data, though Ożóg (1990) and Pisarek (1995) also suggest some more complex constructions including the infinitive *wybaczyć* [to forgive] or the noun *wybaczenie* [forgiveness]. The imperative form *wybacz* represents the T-form, whereas its deferential counterpart is more complex and allows for more variation. The V-form can be introduced by the particle *niech* [let], which is occasionally left out, in which case it can also function as an anticipatory, disarming apology.

(3) Niech mi pani wybaczy. [Pf-4/33]
(4)  … pan wybaczy. [Pf-7/4]

An alternative construction combines the perfective infinitive *wybaczyć* with the performative verb form *proszę* [please, lit. I beg]. *Proszę* serves as an intensifying device when combined with T-forms and the deferential request for forgiveness introduced by *niech*, but it constitutes an obligatory element of infinitival constructions, within which it has no modifying function. As example 5 illustrates, this request type contains no reference to the hearer, which makes it not only less personal but also more formal than the deferential requests in (3) and (6).

(5) Proszę mi wybaczyć. [Pm-4/50]

The Polish data also include one indirect realisation of the request for forgiveness, namely an expression of hope to be forgiven:

(6) Mam nadzieję, że mi pan wybaczy. [Pf-3/35]
‘I hope that you (V-form) will forgive me.’

While only one English respondent expressed hope that the addressee was not angry, in the Polish data, similar expressions were more frequent, and they assume the function of an explicit apology strategy in this language. Ożóg (1990) suggests that the formula *nie gniewaj się* [don’t be angry] and its deferential variant *proszę się nie gniewać*, as well as the expression *nie miej mi za złe* [don’t take it bad] constitute direct apologies in Polish. He refers to them as “conciliatory expressions” (“wypowiedzi pojednawcze”) (1990:52); a term that I will adopt in this study. The classification of conciliatory expressions as Polish apology strategies has also been suggested by Zgółka and Zgółka, who argue that they can substitute the performative (1992:92).

Eight of nine conciliatory expressions in the Polish data take the form of a direct request, thus exhibiting a formal parallel to *wybacz* [forgive]. The remaining realisation, in contrast, is embedded in an expression of hope, mirroring that
found in the English data. Apart from the formulae listed by Ożóg, the present data include the deferential request form *niech się pani nie gniewa* [Pf-6/29] and the phrase *nie bądź zła* [Pm-2/9], which is synonymous with *nie gniewaj się*. The expression *niech się pani nie złości* [Pf-6/32], in which the adjective *zły* is replaced by the verb *złościć*, was also included in this IFID group – though with some reservations as the use of the verb may be interpreted as implying that the addressee’s reaction is exaggerated. Ultimately, what all the formulae classified as conciliatory expressions have in common is that they refer to the hearer’s emotional state and to the offence by implying that there is something to be angry about.

The category of disarming softeners has not been previously mentioned in discussions of Polish apologies. However, my data contain literal equivalents of the English IFIDs *I’m afraid* and *unfortunately*. Although their apologetic function is controversial in English and has not been dealt with by Polish linguists, they serve a similar function in both languages, justifying their inclusion in the present discussion. *Niestety [unfortunately]* and *obawiam się [I’m afraid]* were mainly used in situations necessitating a confession. The former is, with 22 tokens, the preferred expression, whereas the latter occurs only three times in the data.

7.3.3 Russian IFIDs

In contrast to the English and Polish respondents, the Russian respondents did not focus on one apology form. The main reason for the more varied distribution of IFIDs in the Russian data is that Russian has two highly conventionalised apology realisations, namely the imperatives of the perfective forms of the verbs *izvinit’* and *prostit’* [to forgive]. Therefore, the most common Russian apologies are requests for forgiveness, though *izvini* (T-form) or *izvinite* (V-form) and *prostite* are not fully synonymous and thus not always interchangeable. It is generally agreed that while *izvini-te* is mainly used to apologise for light offences, *prostite* can be used for light as well as more serious offences (see e.g. Pisarek 1995, Rathmayr 1996, Tarasenko 1999, Formanovskaja 2002). In my data, the apology form *izvini-te* is more frequent than *prostite*. While the former was used 404 times, thus making up 69% of all Russian IFIDs, there are only 125 occurrences of *prostite*, which is equal to 21%.

The Russian language also allows for constructions including the infinitive form of these two verbs and nouns derived from them. Being derived from a verb used to request forgiveness, the literal meaning of the two nouns is *forgiveness*. However, my data suggest that whereas the use of the noun *prościenie* is limited to this literal meaning, the English equivalent of *izvinenie* seems to be *apology*. Accordingly, expressions including the former retain their function as requests
for forgiveness, whereas those containing the latter exhibit a parallel to apology expressions derived from the performative in English and Polish.

Compound apology expressions were used 27 times by the Russian subjects, that is much more frequently than by the English and Polish subjects. The most frequent among them, amounting to 13 instances, is the expression prošu proščenija [I beg forgiveness], which Larina associates with the linguistic repertoire of older generations (2003:216). The data further include three instances of prošu menja prostit’ and three of prošu menja izvinit’, both translating as I beg to be forgiven.

Among the remaining constructions, five include the plural form of the noun izvinenie. There are two formulae requesting H to accept S’s apologies: Primate moi izvinenija, and one formula merely offering (lit. bringing) them: Prinošu svoi izvinenija. Whereas these apology expressions sound rather formal – partly due to the use of a performative – the elliptic form of the formula tysjača izvinenij [thousand apologies], makes it sound impersonal and, at the same time, informal. Examples (7) and (8), in contrast, are stylistically marked in that they emphasise low social distance between the interlocutors.

(7) Nadejus’, ty menja prostiš’. [Rf-1/19]
   ‘I hope that you will forgive me.’
(8) … ty prostiš’? [Rm-1/7]
   ‘… you will forgive?’

The personal character shared by these two constructions is related to the use of the second person singular pronoun ty, directly addressing the hearer. What clearly distinguishes them, though, is the implied expectation to be forgiven.

Finally, the Russian data include formal and informal apology expressions based on the reflexive form of the verb izvinit’:

(9) Ja choču pered vami izvinit’sja. [Rm-8/45]
   ‘I want to apologise before you.’

Whereas in example (9), the reflexive form of the perfective infinitive izvinit’ is embedded in a formula expressing the wish to apologise, the imperfective reflexive form of the verb izvinit’ in the first person singular takes on the performative function (Rathmayr 1996, Dymarskij 2000). Considering that the form izvinjajus’ is classified as colloquial in Russian dictionaries (e.g. Ožegov’s “Slovar’ Russkogo Jazyka”) and, thus, associated with spoken, informal language (Gasparov 1993), which is what this study aims to investigate, it was employed rather infrequently by my Russian subjects, for it occurs only eight times in the data.
The Russian expression of regret *mne (očen’) žal’* [I am (very) sorry] appears only four times in my data. Whereas Russian linguists do not discuss this formula in the context of apologies, Rathmayr explains that it does not constitute an apology in Russian (1996: 80). She argues that expressing regret does not imply accepting responsibility, which is an indispensable element of the Russian concept of apologising. She does, however, provide examples of expressions of regret for offences caused by the speaker and argues that such examples are English calques (ibid.).

The expression *k sožaleniju*, which occurs ten times in the data, has not been previously discussed by Russian linguists either. Semantically, this formula also expresses regret, for it contains the word *žal’*, whereas functionally, it is equivalent to the Polish *niestety* and the English *unfortunately*.

Five Russian respondents used conciliatory expressions, and one of the formulae, namely *ne serdis’* [don’t be angry], has been previously classified as an apology strategy (Formanovskaja 2002). Whereas *ne serdis’* aims at placating the hearer, the other variant found in the data, *ne obižajsja* [don’t take offence], additionally expresses the wish to avoid negative consequences for the relationship between S and H. As in the English and Polish data, the illocutionary force of one realisation was modified by embedding it into an expression of hope:

(10) Nadejus’, ty na menja ne sil’no obidelas’. [Rf-2/19]  
‘I hope you’re not angry (lit. offended) with me much.’

This sentence can be regarded as reflecting particular concern for maintaining the relationship, for it emphasises the speaker’s awareness of the consequences of her offensive behaviour. Not only does the addition of *na menja* [at me] link her with the offence, but the adverb *sil’no* [strongly] implies that the addressee has the full right to take offence, merely leaving open to what extent.

Finally, there are three instances of foreign words serving the function of an apology in the Russian data, with the English *sori* appearing twice, and the French *pardon* once.

### 7.4 IFID realisations contrasted

Having discussed the IFID realisations used in each of the languages separately, I will now systematise the findings and examine cross-linguistic differences in the distribution of the identified formulae and in the extent to which they are recognised to serve as an apology.
7.4.1 Classificatory problems

Placing the formulae discussed above into semantically equivalent categories and contrasting them across languages, as attempted in Table 3, suggests close similarities in the linguistic repertoire each of the languages offers to deal with offensive situations.

Table 3. IFID categories and their realisations across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERFORMATIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I apologise</td>
<td>Przepraszam</td>
<td>Izvinjajuš'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OFFER OF APOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>(Accept my)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apologies</td>
<td>Chciałbym cię</td>
<td>Prinošu svoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>przeprosić</td>
<td>izvinenija</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>REQUEST FOR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORGIVENESS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgive me</td>
<td>Wybacz mi /</td>
<td>Izvini-te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proszę mi wybaczyć</td>
<td>Prosti-te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPRESSION OF REGRET</strong></td>
<td>I am sorry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Przykro mi</td>
<td>Mne žal'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONCILIATORY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPRESSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope you are not</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
<td>Nie gniewaj się</td>
<td>Ne obižajsja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nie bądź zły</td>
<td>Ne serdis’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISARMING SOFTENER</strong></td>
<td>I’m afraid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obawiam się</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niestety</td>
<td>K sožaljeniju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOREIGN WORD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>Sori</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorki</td>
<td>Pardon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although each of the IFID categories listed in Table 3 has been mentioned in previous studies (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen 1983, Ożóg 1990, Aijmer 1996, Marcjanik 1996, Suszczyńska 1999), I am not aware of any systematic attempt to categorise IFID formulae in a cross-linguistic context. The most systematic categorisation of apology formulae seems to be that offered by Suszczyńska (2005), who rejects the possibility of fitting her Hungarian data into the three categories – expression of regret, offer of apology and request for forgiveness – suggested by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). She solves the problem by resorting to Owen’s (1983) ‘key word’ approach, which, however, is of limited use when it comes to comparing IFIDs across languages.

The categories suggested in Table 3 illustrate not only considerable parallels across languages, but also the heterogeneity of criteria underlying pragmatic categories. Whereas all IFID categories can be classified according to stylistic criteria resulting in different degrees of formality, there are a number of features typical of only one or two categories. The main criterion distinguishing offers of apology seems to be their synthetic form, while disarming softeners differ from the remaining IFIDs in that they serve as formulae introducing an account. A formal criterion characteristic of requests for forgiveness and conciliatory expressions is
On Apologising

their imperative form, unless their illocutionary force is weakened by embedding them in an expression of hope. Foreign words, in contrast, constitute a separate category on the grounds that they have been borrowed from another language.

These problems clearly illustrate the discrepancy between purely taxonomic approaches and the classification of categories emerging from empirical data, the latter largely precluding the possibility of arriving at a classificatory scheme based on consistent formal criteria. What all the expressions listed above can be safely claimed to have in common is that they were employed by native speakers of three different languages under identical contextual conditions, and that they potentially serve the function of an apology in each of them. The above discussion has, further, shown that even though all three sets of data include nearly the same range of IFID formulae, often even constituting literal equivalents across languages, their potential to serve as an apology is language-specific.

An analysis into an IFID’s potential to serve as an apology presupposes, therefore, a distinction between its semantic and pragmatic properties. For this purpose, I will view IFID realisations according to their primary illocutionary forces (Searle 1975), with only some of them adopting the secondary illocutionary force of an apology in a given language. Such an approach narrows down the applicability of the term IFID to refer to the expressions’ primary illocutionary force. However, this more restricted concept of IFIDs is not only closer to Searle’s original definition (1969), but also allows for a systematic classification of the suggested IFID categories.

Viewing requests for forgiveness, expressions of regret, conciliatory expressions and disarming softeners according to their primary illocutionary forces, potentially serving the function of an apology, appears fully unproblematic. Performatives, defined as the least ambiguous linguistic means of performing an action, can be classified as coinciding in their primary and secondary illocutionary forces – though the Russian performative proves problematic in this respect (see 7.5.2). Foreign words, in contrast, can be defined as lacking a primary illocutionary force, having been adopted from another language in their apologetic function.

Offers of apology are certainly the most miscellaneous IFID category, showing a functional overlap with the performative in English and Polish, and with the request for forgiveness in Russian. However, there is a clear parallel between the concepts of asking for forgiveness and offering an apology. Incidentally, the formulae encountered in the Russian data including the noun *izvinenie* are literal equivalents of some of the apology expressions suggested by Fraser (1981: 261).

The main argument against regarding offers of apology as sub-cases of the categories they have been derived from is that, in particular in Polish and Russian, these categories constitute the most conventionalised apology strategy. In
contrast to *przepraszam* and *izvini-te*, which are highly routinised, the use of the formulae subsumed under offer of apology presupposes a conscious choice on the part of the speaker. What further distinguishes offers of apology from the categories they have been derived from is their stylistic markedness, which also affects their illocutionary force.

To sum up, the suggested taxonomy of IFID formulae is based on categories emerging from the analysis of empirical data. These categories, all of which are sporadically referred to in previous apology studies, have been systematised on the basis of data collected in three different languages, resulting in a classification of the formulae according to their primary illocutionary forces – or their absence in the case of foreign words.

### 7.4.2 Culture-specific preferences

Cross-linguistic differences in the perception of IFID realisations, especially in the extent to which they are seen as serving as an apology, lead to diverging preferences for these formulae across languages. The frequencies with which they are used to deal with offensive situations can be interpreted as indicative of their acceptance as an apology strategy in a given language.

Table 4. Frequencies of IFID realisations across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Illocutionary Force</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apology (performative)</strong></td>
<td>495</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>503</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offer of apology</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Request for forgiveness</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>529*</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression of regret</strong></td>
<td>635</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conciliatory expression</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disarming softener</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>None (foreign word)</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>645</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simpson’s Diversity Index

* This number comprises 404 instances of the imperative *izvini-te* and 125 occurrences of *prosti-te*.

The figures in Table 4 illustrate that each of the languages exhibits a strong focus on one IFID category, which can be interpreted as confirming the classification of the most frequent form as an explicit apology strategy. While the English subjects employed almost exclusively expressions of regret, the Polish responses include a high number of performatives, and in the Russian data, the request for forgiveness is the preferred strategy.
The Simpson's Diversity Index shows that the low degree of heterogeneity is most striking in the English data, where the D value of 0.0384 is close to zero, which indicates a much stronger focus on one form than in the Polish data, where D equals 0.3815. Since the calculation of the Diversity Index for the distribution of IFIDs in the Russian data takes into account the two different realisations of the request for forgiveness, the D value is even higher here, amounting to 0.545 (see Müller-Benedict 2006: 113–115).

Although previous apology studies confirm the high frequency of the expression of regret in English, the almost exclusive use of this formula, making up 98% of all IFIDs in my data, is exceptional. A study conducted by House (1989) suggests that 80% of all apology realisations in British English are represented by (I'm) sorry, whereas Aijmer’s results (1996) exhibit a frequency of 83.7%. In my previous study (2001), the expression of regret was more frequent, making up 92% of all IFIDs. In Deutschmann’s analysis of apology forms found in the spoken part of the BNC (2003), in contrast, it appears with a frequency of only 59.2%. However, this relatively low percentage can be attributed to the high number of disarming apologies included in Deutschmann’s data, which usually do not take the form of the expression of regret.

The Polish data exhibit a slightly more varied distribution of IFID realisations, with the performative constituting 82% of all IFIDs. The frequency of the form przepraszam in my data confirms the results obtained by Suszczyńska (1999), whose data exhibit a frequency of 85%. In Lubecka’s study, przepraszam corresponds to 52.7% of the apology strategies in her corpus (2000: 155). However, although she supplies this figure when discussing explicit apology strategies, it is not clear whether this relatively low percentage refers to the total of IFIDs or the total of apology strategies in her data. Another point of reference is my earlier study (2001), in which przepraszam constitutes 80% of all Polish IFIDs.

Russian shows a strong preference for requests for forgiveness, which amount to 90% of all IFIDs in the Russian data. It should be borne in mind, however, that this IFID can be realised by means of two different verbs, carrying different implications. Although Rathmayr argues that there is no great difference between the frequencies with which these two verbs are used, while referring to dictionaries which assign them to the same frequency class (1996: 68–69), in my data, the form izvini-te (404 tokens) by far outnumbers prosti-te (125 tokens). This discrepancy may be either due to the type of offences chosen for the present study or the young age of the participants – provided that there is a preference for the form prosti-te among the older generations, as claimed by Rathmayr (1996: 70).

On the basis of the frequencies with which the expression of regret is used in English, the performative in Polish, and the request for forgiveness in Russian, it can be concluded that they serve the function of an apology in the respective
languages. What the quantitative differences do not explain, however, is why a particular formula constituting the most conventionalised apology form in one language does not necessarily serve this function in the other two. In the following sections I will attempt to answer this question by sketching the culture-specific concepts of apologising in the three languages.

7.5 Apologies across cultures

The main objective of this chapter is to highlight the different connotations the three most conventionalised formulaic apology expressions carry across languages. For this purpose, I will discuss interpretations offered by English, Polish and Russian linguists – in particular the arguments brought forward against the apologetic function of the IFIDs favoured in the other two languages. By examining why the applicability of an IFID form is restricted or even rejected in a particular language, I hope to arrive at this language’s culture-specific concept of apologising with which the less accepted IFIDs are incompatible.

7.5.1 The expression of regret

The extent to which expressions of regret are recognised to serve the function of an apology varies greatly across the three languages. The central role it plays in the English concept of apologising is reflected in Searle’s definition of the apology as: “A person who apologises for doing A expresses regret at having done A” (1979: 4). However, although I’m sorry is the standard apology realisation in English, and the frequency with which it is used confirms that it is generally accepted to serve as an apology, it can be used as a mere expression of sympathy (Coulmas 1981: 76). Lazare not only points out that I am sorry can be interpreted as either apologetic or compassionate, but also that it is sometimes used in the compassionate sense with the hope that it will be perceived as an apology (2004: 25).

The expression of regret does not entail responsibility acceptance as it does not link the object of regret with the speaker, which can be illustrated by Borkin and Reinhart’s definition of I’m sorry as an “expression of dismay or regret about a state of affairs viewed or portrayed by the speaker as unfortunate” (1978: 60). It has been even argued that expressing regret is “consistent with steadfast refusal to apologise” (Davis 2002: 169); the expression sorry about that, in particular, implying denial of responsibility (Aijmer 1996: 92) and often sounding arrogant or rude (Cohen 1996: 383).
In Polish, the expression of regret is not only much less frequent, but it is also regarded as an indirect apology form by some linguists (e.g. Ożóg 1990). The Russian equivalent of the expression of regret, on the other hand, is not even discussed by Russian linguists studying apologies. Admittedly, the Russian word žal’ or žalko can be translated as pity, in which case it does not presuppose any connection between the object of regret and the speaker, nor even the existence of an offence, as in the example:

(11) Žal’, čto Vas včera ne bylo s nami. [Rf-6/20]
    ‘It’s a pity you weren’t with us last night.’

Rathmayr (1996) explains that the remedial function of the expressions of regret she has observed in Russian has been borrowed from English. Considering the rapid changes the Russian language has been undergoing under the influence of English in the past years, expressions of regret are likely to be increasingly used as conventionalised indirect apologies.

Generally, it can be said that although the expression of regret does not entail the acceptance of responsibility on the part of the speaker in any of the three languages, in English it is accepted to serve as an apology, in Russian it is not, and Polish linguists disagree as to its apologetic function. An additional factor distinguishing the expression of regret in the two Slavic languages from the English one, which may contribute to this divergent perception, is that in Polish and Russian it is formulated by means of an impersonal dative construction, whose literal translation is ‘it is sorry to me.’ This passive way of expressing regret, in which the speaker has the thematic role of an experiencer, affects the illocutionary force of the formula by distancing the speaker even more from the offence.

7.5.2 The performative

Since the performative przepraszam is the most frequent apology strategy in Polish, its apologetic function cannot be questioned, though Polish linguists point out its highly routinised character. In English, the performative is considered to be the most explicit and least ambiguous apology strategy. At the same time the etymology of the word apology links it with self-defence rather than the acknowledgement of guilt, which is why the words I apologize used on their own are seldom effective (Lazare 2004: 31, see Owen 1983: 109–113 for a semantic history of this term).

Once the words I apologise have been uttered, there is no doubt that an apology has taken place, but it need not be sincere (Fraser 1981: 261). Thomas quotes the following statement to show that the performative has a weaker illocutionary
force than the expression of regret: “I said I apologize, I didn’t say I was sorry” (1995:35). In this example, the formality of the English performative seems to convey insincerity.

In contrast to the English and the Polish performative, the Russian izvinjajus’, which has adopted a performative function, is far from being unambiguous, which is why it deserves some more attention. The main problem connected with the form izvinjajus’ seems to be that it is a loan translation, introduced into the Russian language by foreign tradesmen (Kolesov 1988:232); perhaps going back to the German ich entschuldige mich. In contrast to foreign words serving the function of an apology, such as sorry, the semantic meaning of a loan translation remains transparent to language users, which is why the Russian izvinjajus’ is, up to the present day, regarded as inappropriate (Comrie, Stone & Polinsky 1996:280).

The implication underlying the reflexive form of a verb used to request forgiveness, namely that the speaker is forgiving him- or herself, while all they are entitled to is seeking forgiveness from the offended party, is reflected in the following quotation from an etiquette book: “the person incurring the damage will not feel relieved or pleased when you forgive yourself” (“postradavšemu ne bude léže ili prijatnee, čto vy sami sebya izvinjaete”) (Kuprin 1965:89, quoted in Dymarskij 2000:26). While older dictionaries tend to classify izvinjajus’ as belonging to prostoreče [colloquial] – the first dictionary including this word dating back to 1935 (Rathmayr 1996:63) – more recent dictionaries accompany it with the less critical remark: razgovoryj jazyk [spoken language].

Dymarskij (2000) offers a grammatically oriented analysis of izvinjajus’, in which he points out a number of formal problems, such as the secondary character of the imperfective verb izvinjat’ and its reflexive form izvinjat’sja, both incompatible with the verb’s original meaning. Although Dymarskij’s approach is grammatical, and his objective to show that the word izvinjajus’ belongs to prostoreče, his discussion also illustrates the impracticability of conveying the Russian concept of apologising by means of a performative. A recurring phrase underlying his argumentation is “apologies heard and accepted” (“izvinenija uslyšany i prinjaty”) (2000:26, 28) which he derives from the semantic properties of the verb izvinit’ [to forgive], implying not only the hearer’s active role in the process of apologising, but also its completion (personal communication, February 2006).

Dymarskij’s decisive argument is, therefore, semantic, and it is on semantic grounds that many native speakers of Russian, who are fully unaware of the formal inconsistencies underlying the performative izvinjajus’, recognise its incompatibility with the Russian concept of apologising. Speakers employing the performative may still meet with the reaction “It’s not izvinjajus’, it’s izvinite” (“Ne izvinjajus’, a izvinite!”) (Rathmayr 1996:64), and although one could argue that
this critical attitude is stylistically motivated, an equally plausible reason is the transparency of the formula’s literal meaning.

The main difference between the Polish *przepraszam* and the English *I apologise*, on the one hand, and the Russian *izvinjaju’s*, on the other, is that they are derived from different verbs. Correspondingly, while the Polish and English performatives do not go beyond the speaker performing the act of apologising, i.e. the illocutionary act, the Russian performative entails the perlocution as well. In addition, the reflexive form of *izvinjaju’s* equates the grammatical object with the subject or – on a functional level – the person to be forgiven with the person forgiving.

7.5.3 The request for forgiveness

Russian displays the strongest focus on the request for forgiveness, which can be performed by means of two different verbs in this language. *Izvinite* contains the word *vina* [guilt], so that by using the imperative *izvini-te*, the speaker literally asks to be freed from guilt. The IFID *prosti-te*, in contrast, is often associated with religious contexts and forgiving sins, which might be the reason why it is used for more serious, even unpardonable offences (Rathmayr 1996: 66).9

The concept of apologising in Russian is based on the speaker admitting to be guilty and the hearer freeing him or her from this guilt (Tarasenko 1999: 98), which explains the preference for the request for forgiveness in the Russian data, as well as the negative attitude towards the expression *izvinjaju’s*. The significance of the concept of guilt in Russian apologies is not only reflected in the focus on the request for forgiveness, but also evidenced by the use of the word *vinovat* [guilty], which has been defined as a direct apology strategy (e.g. by Rathmayr 1996 and Formanovskaja 2002).

Due to the manifold possibilities of embedding the word *vinovat* into apologetic expressions identified in the data, with some of them resulting in offers of repair and others overlapping with the category ‘explicit admission of guilt’ distinguished in previous studies, these expressions were not assigned to the category of IFIDs (see 10.1.1).

Whereas Polish linguists generally agree that the request for forgiveness constitutes a direct and effective apology, in English this does not seem to be that obvious. Owen (1983), for instance, does not mention this IFID realisation in her analysis. Although this is mainly due to the fact that it does not occur in her corpus, in a concluding chapter she introduces the formula *forgive me*, while arguing that one cannot equate it with apologies “as semantically synonymous, though there is some functional overlap” (Owen 1983: 182). According to Fraser,
the expression *forgive me* entails the acceptance of responsibility, but not necessarily regret (1981: 264).

The classification of requests for forgiveness as English apology strategies can be justified by their fulfilling the function of apologies, i.e. restoring social balance. The pronoun ‘me’ appearing in the English request for forgiveness clearly identifies the speaker as the person to be forgiven and thus responsible for the offence. The formula further acknowledges the existence of an incident which needs to be forgiven and of an imbalance in the relationship between S and H, the restoration of which is achieved by S requesting forgiveness and H granting it.

### 7.5.4 The remaining IFID categories

Since the expressions labelled ‘offer of apology’ are related to the performatif in English and Polish, and the request for forgiveness in Russian, it is not surprising that they are accepted to serve as an apology in all three languages alike.

In Russian and in Polish, offers of apology tend to be much more formal than the apology formulae from which these expressions are derived. In English, the high degree of formality inherent in the performatif seems to be comparable to that underlying offers of apology, which is perhaps why they have been placed in the same IFID category by Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 22). Furthermore, although most realisations of offers of apology have a formal character, they are not as routinised as the conventionalised apology forms they are derived from. The exact formulation is left to the speaker who may want the apology to sound personal rather than formal. Ultimately, some of the formulae listed by Fraser (1981) illustrate that offers of apology may include additional implications, restricting their applicability to situations in which the addressee needs to be informed about the offence or where there is disagreement as to the need for an apology.

The remaining IFID categories distinguished in the present analysis are not only less frequent, but have also received relatively little attention in previous research. The main function of conciliatory expressions, such as: *nie gniewaj się* or *ne serdis’* [don’t be angry] is to show concern for the hearer’s feelings negatively affected by the offence. Although conciliatory expressions usually take the form of negated imperatives, in each of the languages, the respondents also opted for a less direct realisation of this strategy by merely expressing hope that the addressee was not angry rather than requesting them not to be.

Ożóg (1990) and Zgółkowie (1992) consider conciliatory expressions to be direct apology strategies in Polish, and Formanovskaja (2002: 127) mentions *ne serdites*’ in her discussion of Russian apology formulae. What certainly speaks in favour of regarding conciliatory expressions as explicit apology strategies is that
their primary illocutionary force matches the social function of apologies, namely the restoration of social equilibrium. Ultimately, their various linguistic realisations refer to both the offence and the speaker as the one responsible for it more explicitly than does the expression of regret.

Suszczyńska’s research (1999, 2005) shows that conciliatory expressions, referred to as formulae “pleading to withhold anger” (1999: 1058), are the most frequent Hungarian apology strategy. According to my data, Suszczyńska’s category can be expanded to include expressions aiming at ascertaining that the hearer’s hurt feelings will not have negative consequences for the relationship between S and H, such as ne obižajsja [don’t get offended].

The classification of formulae constituting the category of disarming softeners, such as unfortunately and I’m afraid, as apology strategies is controversial in the literature on English apologies, whereas Polish and Russian linguists do not even mention their equivalents in their discussions. Edmondson and House regard I’m afraid as a softener used to introduce disagreement or criticism (1981: 156), and Owen argues that it is used “to preface dispreferred activities” (1983: 90). It seems that disarming softeners can introduce apologies but are none themselves. They are used to prepare the speaker for an account relating some bad news for which the speaker may or may not be responsible.

The IFID category encompassing foreign words is ambivalent because the speakers using them cannot be expected to be aware of their original illocutionary force. However, their importance should not be underestimated, especially considering that the English word sorry is increasingly used instead of the most conventionalised IFID in many languages.

Ultimately, whether a particular IFID results in an apology depends not only on its potential to fulfil the social function of this speech act, which is assessed differently across cultures, but also on the linguistic and situational contexts in which it is employed. A better insight into the functions of – particularly the less frequent – IFID realisations can, therefore, be provided by taking into account the contextual conditions under which they are given preference over the most conventionalised ones and by analysing the strategies with which IFIDs are combined.

Whereas this type of analysis can only be conducted after examining the remaining strategies used in the data, the following chapters discuss a number of linguistic devices modifying the illocutionary force of IFIDs.
7.6 Syntactic frames

This chapter is concerned with the syntactic context in which IFID formulae occur. Specifically, I will look at the conjunctions and prepositions following IFIDs and the influence they exert on the syntactic constituents they introduce and on the illocutionary force of the entire apology.

Among the responses collected for the present study, 1711 of 2400 (71%) include an IFID (see Table 2), marking them as an apology, but only 73 of these responses (3%) consist of an IFID only. This means that 1638 responses combine one or more IFIDs with other strategies. In most responses, the strategies accompanying the IFID take the form of an independent sentence or a coordinate clause separated from it by a comma. Whereas asyndetic coordination does not provide any information on the impact of the added strategies on the illocutionary force of the apology, a total of 326 IFIDs were followed by prepositions and conjunctions indicative of the ensuing strategy’s potentially upgrading or downgrading character.

The following discussion takes into account prepositional and sentential complements as well as adjunct clauses. Due to the low frequency of several IFID realisations and the syntactic restrictions on the use of some of them, I will focus on the most conventionalised IFID category in each of the languages.

7.6.1 The English expression of regret

In the English data, a total of 91 IFIDs (14%) were followed by a preposition or conjunction introducing an additional strategy. Due to the nearly exclusive focus on the expression of regret, all but one were combined with this IFID realisation. The conjunction but, which introduces a new strategy in the form of a subordinate clause, co-occurs 52 times with (I’m) sorry. Since the word but triggers a conventional implicature signalling “that what follows will run counter to expectations” (Thomas 1995:57), the clause it introduces can be expected to provide information intended to make the speaker’s behaviour appear less offensive.

According to Owen, the short variant sorry is generally used without “verbal reference (…) to the offence” (1983:67). In my data, both short and long forms were accompanied by strategies addressing the circumstances of the offence, but most clauses introduced by but co-occurred with the full form. Whereas the full form was followed 45 times by but, only seven short forms were combined with this conjunction, rendering some support to Owen’s suggestion that the elliptic form sorry usually occurs on its own.
In contrast to the conjunction *but*, the preposition *about*, accompanying 37 English expressions of regret, selects a complement which refers to the offence without providing new information. In my data, *about* introduces two different types of noun phrases, with 16 instances of the set expression *sorry about that* and 21 of *(I’m)* *sorry about* followed by a noun phrase briefly naming the offence apologised for. Whereas the latter was combined with both long and short forms, the use of the prepositional phrase *about that* was restricted to the short form. It has been argued that the deictic *that* serves as a distancing device (Owen 1983: 86), which may be the reason why this formula is often perceived as unapologetic.

Finally, the English data contain one instance of a conditional clause introduced by *if*, which briefly takes up the offence while indirectly questioning its existence. In sum, the English data include the following possibilities of combining the expression of regret with a sentence or a complement:

```
(I’m) sorry            but + S          but it was my birthday [Ef-6/35]
                        if + S          if we kept you awake [Em-6/48]
                        about + NP   about the noise last night [Ef-6/12]
                                        about that [Em-1/49]
```

These different types of syntactic constituents can be further divided into those with a potentially upgrading and those with a downgrading function. While the noun phrase following *about* is likely to add to the illocutionary force of the IFID, the deictic *that* in *sorry about that* and the adjunct clauses introduced by *but* and *if* can be expected to have a downgrading character. Therefore, among the syntactic frames in which the English expression of regret occurs, 21 are likely to have an upgrading and 69 a downgrading function.

Incidentally, according to Searle, expressives “characteristically require a gerundive transformation of the verb” because they lack a direction of fit (1979: 23). Apart from the gerundive, as in “I apologise for stepping on your toe”, Searle also mentions constructions in which *for* selects a noun phrase, such as “I apologise for my bad behaviour”. However, although the preposition *for* can also be combined with the expression of regret, it does not appear a single time in my English data.

### 7.6.2 The Polish performative

The Polish data exhibit the strongest preference for combining IFIDs with ‘functionally marked’ syntactic constituents. They accompany 174 of 607 Polish IFIDs (29%), and a total of 146 co-occur with the IFID realisation prevailing in the Polish data, i.e. the performative *przepraszam*. The conjunction *ale* was used much
more frequently than the corresponding *but* in English, for it accompanies 122 instances of the Polish performative.

The most frequent preposition following *przepraszam* is *za* [*for*], which introduces a noun phrase naming the offence, and which was used 19 times. Another device introducing a complement referring to the offence for which the apology is offered is the conjunction *że* [*that*], which accompanies four Polish performatives. Although *za* largely restricts the reference to a short noun phrase and *że* introduces a whole sentence describing the offence, neither of them is used to provide new information. Since the contents of the offence are in both cases mutually known to S and H, taking them up and, in particular, portraying them critically clearly has an upgrading character.

Finally, as in the English data, there is one instance of a conditional clause introduced by *jeżeli* [*if*] questioning the offence to some degree, without introducing new information. On the whole, the syntactic constituents accompanying the Polish performative were introduced by means of three different conjunctions and one preposition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Complement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>ale</em></td>
<td><em>S</em></td>
<td><em>ale miałem dużo spraw</em> [<em>but I had many things (to do)</em>] [Pm-1/14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>jeżeli</em></td>
<td><em>S</em></td>
<td><em>jeżeli było zbyt głośno</em> [<em>if it was too loud</em>] [Pm-6/27]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>że</em></td>
<td><em>S</em></td>
<td><em>że zawiodłam</em> [<em>that I disappointed (you)</em>] [Pf-2/4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>za</em></td>
<td><em>NP</em></td>
<td><em>za kłopot [for the trouble]</em> [Pf-6/14]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The syntactic frames in which *przepraszam* occurs illustrate the impact of prepositions and conjunctions on the illocutionary force of the Polish performative. While *że* and *za* are likely to be accompanied by strategies acknowledging the offence, *ale* usually introduces an element standing in opposition to the apologetic character of an IFID and *jeżeli* questions the offence. The high frequency of the conjunction *ale*, in particular, shows that the use of an apology formula which is regarded as fully unambiguous by classical speech act theory does not guarantee an apologetic attitude on the part of the speaker.

In sum, the Polish data contain 123 instances of *przepraszam* selecting conjunctions which are likely to reduce the illocutionary force of the apology and only 23 complements with a potentially upgrading function.

### 7.6.3 The Russian request for forgiveness

In the Russian data, 61 IFIDs co-occur with conjunctions and prepositions introducing additional strategies. This corresponds to 10% of all Russian IFIDs, a slightly smaller proportion than that established for the English data (14%) and considerably smaller than the proportion in the Polish data (29%).
On Apologising

The most conventionalised Russian IFID, the request for forgiveness, was followed 57 times by prepositions and conjunctions introducing a strategy taking up the contents of the offence. The conjunction no [but] occurs 35 times, and since it assumes the same function as do its English and Polish equivalents, the Russian respondents seem to provide mitigating circumstances in their apologies less often than the British and, especially, the Polish respondents in theirs.

While izvini-te was combined 24 times with no, there are only 11 instances of prosti-te followed by this conjunction. However, this distribution parallels that of the total frequencies of these two verbs in my data, so that no tendency as to one of the forms being more likely to introduce downgrading strategies than the other can be established.

The Russian data further include 13 instances of requests for forgiveness accompanied by the conjunction čto [that]. Sentential complements thus introduced usually briefly hint at the offence, their function being similar to those introduced by the Polish że [that]. However, eight of the 13 complements introduced by čto contain a very vague reference to the offence, such as:

(12) Izvini, čto tak vyšlo. [Rm-2/47]
(13) Prosti, čto tak polučilos’. [Rf-2/9]
‘Forgive that it turned out like this.’

This type of reference can be employed by the speaker to distance him- or herself from the offence, and it resembles the English construction about that used with expressions of regret. Although similar expressions are also possible in Polish, they do not occur in my data, which, however, may be due to the low frequency of sentential complements introduced by že.

The preposition za [for] was used seven times to introduce a brief reference to the offence with an upgrading function, while conditional clauses introduced by esli [if], which co-occur twice with izvinite, tend to have a distancing character.

Izvini-te no + S no vy že tože byli molody [but you were also young] [Rm-6/7] esli + S esli my vam pomešali [if we disturbed you] [Rf-6/26] Prosti-te čto + S čto ja ne otdala ich [that I didn’t return them] [Rf-2/30] za + NP za bespokojstvo [(for) the disturbance] [Rf-6/35]

Similarly to the function they assume in Polish and English, the conjunctions no and esli are likely to reduce the illocutionary force of the preceding IFID. The former can be used to provide mitigating circumstances and the latter to signal either that the speaker is not aware of the offence or that he or she does not perceive it as offensive. The remaining two constructions are more likely to have an upgrading function, the preposition za introducing a noun phrase naming the
offence and the conjunction čto a subordinate clause containing a description of the circumstances leading up to it. Despite the relatively low frequency of the conjunction no, the distribution of upgrading and downgrading syntactic frames in the Russian data is comparable to that in the other two languages. Due to the vague, distancing character of most sentential complements, only 12 of the above discussed syntactic constituents can be regarded as upgrading, while the remaining 45 are likely to have a downgrading function.

7.6.4 Syntactic vs. pragmatic considerations

Syntactically, all the constructions discussed above can be classified as either complements or sentential adjuncts. The former can be further subdivided into prepositional and sentential and the latter into coordinate and subordinate. From a functional point of view, however, all these syntactic constituents are subordinate to the IFID. This applies to adjunct clauses introduced by a coordinator as much as to asyndetic coordination.

The syntactic frames identified in the data can be further subdivided into those merely taking up the contents of the offence and those supplying new information. The conjunction but is the only element that introduces additional information concerning the offence, though the same applies to clauses introduced by a comma and separate sentences. Hence, although these clauses are subordinate to the IFID, their syntactically coordinate function is paralleled by their ability to introduce new information, as opposed to syntactically subordinate constructions which merely take up known facts.

Finally, and most importantly, the analysed syntactic constituents can be classified according to their potentially upgrading or downgrading impact on the illocutionary force of the IFID. Such a distinction further suggests an interesting parallel between syntactic structures and politeness, with complements generally adopting an upgrading, and sentential adjuncts a downgrading function; though the Russian data show that a complement with a vague reference to the offence can also serve as a distancing device.

A similar analysis has been previously attempted by Lubecka (2000) who briefly mentions that 32.7% of the Polish apologies in her corpus and only 17.6% of those formulated in American English were accompanied by an ‘object’ taking up the contents of the offence. She argues that “the presence of a grammatical object which completes the IFID verb is a culture-motivated, differentiating property of American vs. Polish apologies” (2000: 158).
Unfortunately, she does not define what constitutes “grammatical objects” in her analysis, nor does she discuss whether these objects are related to the use of any particular prepositions or conjunctions. Her English examples do, however, include the preposition for, and the Polish examples the conjunction że, suggesting that her category of grammatical objects may cover both prepositional and sentential complements. The figures Lubecka arrives at are surprisingly high in comparison to those emerging from my data, in which the proportions of complements do not exceed 5% per language.

Since Lubecka considers apologies including a complement to express a particular interest in the restoration of good relations (ibid.), her results portray the Polish respondents as more apologetic. However, as my analysis has shown, an extension of the analysis of syntactic constituents to include adjunct clauses, in particular those introduced by the conjunction but, sheds completely new light on the use of IFIDs in the Polish data.

The most significant finding emerging from the analysis of syntactic frames is that conventionalised apology strategies, which are clearly accepted to serve as explicit apologies, can be combined with strategies through which speakers distance themselves from the offence. In all three languages, syntactic constituents with a potentially downgrading character were introduced by the conjunctions but and if, though the latter was very rare in my data. However, the few instances of if / jeżeli / esli show that they are employed to question the offensiveness of the event or the speaker’s knowledge of it.

The much more frequent conjunction but / ale / no, on the other hand, “indicates that the speaker recognises some degree of incompatibility between apologies and accounts” (Owen 1983: 96). Its general function is to introduce information contrary to what precedes it, and in the case of an apology, it could be described as a way of unifying the speaker’s (not necessarily genuine) apologetic attitude expressed by an IFID with a reluctance to risk losing face in performing the apology, simultaneously affecting the illocutionary force of the entire utterance.

Table 5 lists all the IFID realisations combined with the conjunction but in my data. It provides the frequencies of IFIDs co-occurring with this conjunction and the corresponding percentages related to the total number of IFIDs in each of the languages. Broadening the scope of the analysis by including the remaining IFID categories illustrates the high frequency of the conjunction ale in the Polish data, suggesting a generally strong preference for combining IFIDs with strategies downgrading their illocutionary force in this language.

As already mentioned, not all IFID realisations can be combined with conjunctions or prepositions. Conciliatory expressions, for instance, tend to be used on their own. Disarming softeners differ from the remaining IFID realisations in that they always introduce new information, and the conjunctions following
some of them are not indicative of the ensuing strategy’s upgrading or downgrading function. While unfortunately, k sożaleniju and niestety do not need to be followed by a conjunction, obawiam się is always followed by że [that], and in the case of I’m afraid the conjunction that is optional. Whether it is employed or not does not seem to affect the utterance’s illocutionary force. Hence, the upgrading or downgrading character of the reference to the offence introduced by disarming softeners depends entirely on its propositional content.

Since the Polish responses exhibit a marked preference for combining IFIDs with conjunctions and prepositions, it may be worth mentioning that this also applies to 20 of the 33 instances of the Polish expression of regret przykro mi. Apart from 13 instances of the conjunction ale [but], there are two complements introduced by the preposition że [that], one of them accompanying the only explicit expression of regret żaluje in the data. Finally, the Polish respondents made use of three less common constructions referring to the source of the speaker’s regret introduced by za to [for it], z tego powodu [for this reason] and bo [because].

Interestingly, the English sorry, which is occasionally modified according to the rules of Polish orthography, phonology and morphology (see Section 7.3.2), also tends to be integrated into Polish syntax. Among the 30 instances of sorry in the Polish data, four were followed by ale, introducing a sentence with a potentially downgrading function, and two by że, resulting in a sentential complement with an upgrading function.

The high frequency of but-sentences in the Polish data may be related to the explicit character of the performative, making it necessary to mark the transition from this IFID to a strategy with a downgrading character. The fact that also the

| Table 5. Frequencies of the conjunction but co-occurring with IFIDs across languages |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| English                                      | I’m sorry, BUT 45 → 53 (= 8%) |    |
|                                              | Sorry, BUT 7                  |    |
|                                              | Apologies, BUT 1              |    |
| Polish                                       | Przypraszam, ALE 122 → 143 (= 24%) |
|                                              | Przykro mi,                  |    |
|                                              | Wybacz,                      |    |
|                                              | Sorry,                       |    |
|                                              | Niestety,                    |    |
| Russian                                      | Izvini-te, NO 24 → 40 (= 7%)  |
|                                              | Prosti-te,                   |    |
|                                              | Izvinjajuš                   |    |
|                                              | Prošu prošćenija             |    |
|                                              | Prinošu izvinenija            |    |
|                                              | Mne žal’                     |    |

Since the Polish responses exhibit a marked preference for combining IFIDs with conjunctions and prepositions, it may be worth mentioning that this also applies to 20 of the 33 instances of the Polish expression of regret przykro mi. Apart from 13 instances of the conjunction ale [but], there are two complements introduced by the preposition że [that], one of them accompanying the only explicit expression of regret żaluje in the data. Finally, the Polish respondents made use of three less common constructions referring to the source of the speaker’s regret introduced by za to [for it], z tego powodu [for this reason] and bo [because].

Interestingly, the English sorry, which is occasionally modified according to the rules of Polish orthography, phonology and morphology (see Section 7.3.2), also tends to be integrated into Polish syntax. Among the 30 instances of sorry in the Polish data, four were followed by ale, introducing a sentence with a potentially downgrading function, and two by że, resulting in a sentential complement with an upgrading function.

The high frequency of but-sentences in the Polish data may be related to the explicit character of the performative, making it necessary to mark the transition from this IFID to a strategy with a downgrading character. The fact that also the
Polish expressions of regret were often combined with *ale* could, on the other hand, be interpreted as a result of generalisation, confirming the routinised use of IFIDs. What further speaks in favour of an explanation in terms of generalisation is the syntactic integration of the English *sorry*.

From a semantic point of view, there are no objections to performing the act of apologising and simultaneously providing reasons despite which the apology takes place. Expressing regret and naming circumstances due to which this regret should not be felt, or begging forgiveness while supplying reasons that are likely to make the hearer less inclined to forgive, in contrast, are semantically odd combinations. In any case, the present analysis shows that the Russian request for forgiveness and the English expression of regret are followed less often by the conjunction *but* than the Polish performative, suggesting that they may be combined less often with downgrading strategies than the performative in Polish.

However, the above analysis has to be interpreted as revealing tendencies only. First, it should be borne in mind that downgrading strategies can also be added to an IFID by means of asyndetic constructions. Second, since pragmatic meaning is context-dependent, not only can linguistic and situational contexts change the illocutionary force of apology formulae and even rid them of their apologetic function, but also the discussed conjunctions and prepositions as well as the adjuncts and complements they introduce may serve various functions. As some of the complements found in the English and Russian data illustrate, a potentially upgrading reference to the offence can be so vague that it results in a strategy distancing the speaker from the offence. Similarly, the exact influence the conjunction *but* exerts on the IFID cannot be examined out of context. For instance, the data include responses in which *but* separates an IFID from an offer of repair, in which case this conjunction seems to emphasise the contrast between the existence of an offence and its envisaged removal:

(14) **Bardzo przepraszam, ale ja to zaraz wszystko uprzątnę!** [Pf-6/19]
    ‘I apologise very much, but I’ll clean everything in a moment!’

While an initial interpretation of the much stronger preference for the conjunction *ale* in the Polish data suggests a higher frequency of mitigating strategies than in the other two languages, in order to provide a more complete picture, a systematic analysis of the strategies used to describe the circumstances of the offence and the degree of responsibility acceptance inherent in them is necessary. Before analysing these strategies, I would like to complete the discussion of IFIDs by examining a range of intensifying devices employed to upgrade their illocutionary force.
7.7 Intensifiers

7.7.1 Definition and distribution

Apologies have been defined as “highly recurrent and routinised speech acts” (Coulmas 1981: 69). IFIDs, in particular, exhibit a high degree of routinisation, and it is often difficult to differentiate between a genuine and a ritual apology and to determine whether the apologiser feels truly sorry for the offence committed or simply fulfils social norms. Consequently, if a speaker feels that a routinised apology formula might be perceived as insufficient – in the light of the offence committed and the status of the person offended – he or she may choose to upgrade the apology in order to make it sound more sincere.

According to Blum-Kulka et al., “intensification usually takes one or more of the following: (a) an intensifying expression within the IFID, (b) expressing explicit concern for the hearer – external to the IFID or the other strategies used, and (c) the use of multiple strategies” (1989: 21). Having discussed the potentially upgrading function of complements co-occurring with IFIDs, I will now turn to the use of adverbial intensifiers, the politeness marker please, exclamations and to the role direct objects play in intensifying Polish and Russian apology formulae.

The frequencies of English and Polish internal intensifiers are comparable, amounting to 273 in the English and to 248 in the Polish data. In relation to the number of IFIDs, this means that the English respondents added an intensifier to 42% of all the IFIDs and the Polish subjects to 41%. The frequency of intensifying devices in the Russian data is considerably lower, for they amount to only 136 instances, thus accompanying 23% of Russian IFIDs (see Table 6). When comparing these figures, however, one should bear in mind that each of the languages shows a strong preference for a particular IFID type, and that not all of them are compatible with all forms of intensification. The focus on the expression of regret in English and on the performative in Polish leads to a high frequency of adverbial intensifiers in these two languages. However, adverbial intensifiers cannot be combined with requests for forgiveness, so that Russian relies on a different type of intensification, namely the politeness marker please.

7.7.2 Adverbial intensifiers and please

Due to the almost exclusive use of the expression of regret in the English data, nearly all intensifiers were combined with this IFID realisation. Although the potential range of adverbial intensifiers in English is very wide, only six realisations appear in the data. The most popular intensifier among the English respondents
On Apologising

was the adverb really, which was used 155 times, followed by the adverbs: so (75), very (22), terribly (10), three instances of ever so and one of truly. Although the semantic properties of the expression of regret suggest that feeling sorry is not something that can be done or offered repeatedly, the intensifier (once) again, signalling repetition, co-occurs six times with this IFID.

The short form of the expression of regret is generally not subject to intensification, though it does occur in informal speech, and also in the present data, 23 of 273 adverbial intensifiers accompany the elliptic sorry. Since requests for forgiveness were hardly used, the intensifier please appears only once in the English data, accompanying the expression forgive me.

The Polish respondents used adverbial intensifiers with przepraszam and with przykro mi. The most frequent intensifier in the Polish data is the adverb bardzo [very (much)], which occurs 187 times. This high frequency seems to confirm the claim put forward by several Polish linguists (e.g. Ożóg 1990, Marcjanik 1997) that bardzo is added so automatically that it has lost its intensifying effect. Whereas bardzo was used to intensify the performative as well as the expression of regret, the superlative najmocniej [most strongly], which is the second most frequent intensifying adverbial in the Polish data, was combined 27 times with przepraszam. There are also eight instances of the adverb strasznie [terribly] employed with the expression of regret as well as the performative, though in the latter case, the combination has to be described as semantically awkward.

Similarly, from a semantic point of view, the applicability of the Polish equivalent of the most common English intensifier really: naprawdę is restricted to the expression of regret, where it is employed to convey sincerity of the expressed regret. Combined with the Polish przepraszam, however, it literally seeks to convince the offended party of the fact that one really apologises. Nevertheless, seven of the nine instances of naprawdę accompany the performative, one the expression of regret, and one even the English word sorry. The fact that some speakers treat IFIDs and intensifiers as freely combinable elements, without reflection upon their meaning, confirms the routinised character of formulaic apologies.

The Polish data further include 14 instances of jeszcze raz [once again], all but one accompanying the performative, while one informant combined it with sorry. The remaining Polish intensifiers found in the data occur only sporadically. There is one instance of double intensification, with tak [so] preceding bardzo, one respondent used gorąco [hotly] to intensify przepraszam, and in one response, przykro mi was intensified by the addition of niezmiernie [immeasurably]. The word proszę [please, lit. I beg], in contrast, appears exclusively in deferential requests for forgiveness embedding proszę in an infinitival construction, in which
case it is an obligatory element of the formula and, therefore, does not have an intensifying function.

Due to the centrality of the request for forgiveness in the Russian data, the majority of the intensifying devices are represented by the word pożalujsta [please]. The use of adverbial intensifiers is, with one exception, limited to the few instances of the performative and the expression of regret in the data. There are five instances of očen’ [very] and two of diko(-diko) [wildly], the former co-occurring with the expression of regret and with the performative, and the latter only with izvinjajus’, leading the ‘self-forgiving’ strategy even more ad absurdum.

The request for forgiveness, in contrast, was mainly intensified by means of the word pożalujsta [please], which appears 117 times in the data, and occasionally with radi Boga [for God’s sake], which was used only seven times. Strictly speaking, the latter could be classified as an exclamation, but has been assigned to the group of Russian intensifiers in previous research (e.g. Rathmayr 1996, Larina 2003).

Although asking for forgiveness repetitively may be viewed as increasing the imposition on the hearer, there are four instances of ešče raz [once again] accompanying requests for forgiveness – another combination illustrating the conventionalised nature of apologies. While the higher degree of imposition inherent in requesting forgiveness repeatedly is likely to pass unnoticed, the Russian data also include one combination which appears to intend an increase of imposition on the hearer: One respondent used the adverb velikodušno [generously] to intensify the request for forgiveness. Contrary to expectations, it was not combined with the request prosti-te, which has been defined as implying generosity (Rathmayr 1996), but with izvinite.

As Table 6 demonstrates, the English repertoire of adverbial intensifiers exhibits a more balanced distribution across a wider range of realisations than that established for the other two languages.

**Table 6. Linguistic realisations of intensifiers across languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Really</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terribly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once again</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever so</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>273</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whereas the most frequent English intensifier *really* makes up 57% of all intensifiers, the Polish *bardzo* was given preference in 75% of all cases, and the Russian *pożalujsta* is even more dominant, for it makes up 86% of all Russian intensifiers. On Simpson’s Diversity Index, the D values are: 0.6776 for English, 0.4747 for Polish, and 0.3063 for Russian, which shows that, in contrast to the distribution of IFIDs, that of intensifiers is most heterogeneous in the English and least varied in the Russian data.

7.7.3 Other forms of intensification

The Polish performative *przepraszam* can also be intensified by adding an accusative object referring to the addressee, which requires the apologiser to select either the T-form *Cię* [to you] or the V-form *Pana* [Sir] or *Panią* [Madam]. These direct objects not only make the apology sound slightly more sincere, but also more personal in the former case, and more respectful in the latter. They were used 85 times, which corresponds to 17% of the total number of the IFID *przepraszam* in the data.

Whereas the English request for forgiveness normally includes the pronoun *me*, identifying the person to be forgiven, in Russian it is optional. According to Rathmayr “the added *menja* makes the expression sound more serious” (“das hinzugesetzte *menja* verleiht der Äußerung Ernst”) (1996: 72), while Formanovskaja argues that it “makes the formula more personal” (“delaet formulu (…) bolee ličnostnoj”) (2002: 125). In either case, it can be regarded as a form of intensification. In the present data, *menja* was used 38 times, that is with only 7% of all requests for forgiveness in the Russian data.

Finally, exclamations – usually preceding the IFID – also have an intensifying effect. It has even been argued that an exclamation, given the appropriate contextual conditions, can serve as an apology on its own (e.g. Fraser 1981, Holmes 1990). The main and most obvious function of exclamations, however, is to express surprise, which is why they were used frequently in scenarios with an unexpected outcome. This especially applies to category II, which includes 202 of the 358 (56%) exclamations found in the data. Obviously, exclamations are unlikely to be used in situations in which the apology is simultaneously a confession, as is the case in scenarios 1 and 5, or when it is preceded by a complaint, as in scenario 6. Hence, exclamations can be regarded as situation-specific devices emphasising non-intentionality rather than intensifiers co-occurring with formulaic apologies.

Exclamations were most frequent in the English data, where they appear 166 times and centre around expressions such as, *oh, oh no, oh shit, oh my God, ups,*
whoops, etc. The Russian subjects employed 112 exclamations, and most of them take the form of oj, occasionally ups – clearly an English influence – and gospodi [Lord]. The Polish data exhibit, with 80 instances, the lowest frequency, but also the greatest variety of exclamations, ranging from o, oj, ojej, ojeju, jejku, och, and the English ups, to diverse expressions with religious connotations, such as: o Boże [oh God], o matko (Boska) [oh (God’s) mother], Jezu [Jesus], rany boskie [God’s wounds], and o rany [oh wounds].

Incidentally, Wierzbicka argues that exclamations in English, as opposed to Polish, “are a conventional device aimed at ‘being nice’ to the addressee rather than any spontaneous and unrestrained outburst of the heart” (1985b: 163). Provided that exclamations have situation- and culture-specific functions, the above figures are not really comparable and, hence, not necessarily indicative of differences in the use of intensifiers. Finally, it should be borne in mind that the present data have been elicited by means of a written questionnaire, which is not a reliable instrument for examining linguistic devices expressing spontaneity and emotionality.

### 7.8 Evaluation

In this chapter I have discussed a number of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties of IFIDs and revealed some culture-specific aspects of the speech act of apologising. Although the full range of IFID categories appears in all three languages, major quantitative and qualitative differences have been identified. In each of the languages, there is a strong focus on one, most conventionalised apology form. The frequency with which this form is used confirms its acceptance to serve as an explicit apology strategy in a given language.

The effectiveness and applicability of the remaining categories vary across languages. Whereas requests for forgiveness and offers of apology are generally recognised to serve the function of an apology in all three languages, there are marked differences in the perception of the performative. Being the most common Polish IFID, przepraszam is less formal than its English equivalent. The reflexive form of a verb used to request forgiveness in Russian, in contrast, makes it sound inappropriate.

Although the expression of regret is the most frequent English IFID, it does not presuppose any responsibility on the part of the speaker and can serve as a mere expression of sympathy in all three languages. Whereas in English it functions as a highly conventionalised apology expression, it does not constitute an apology in Russian (Rathmayr 1996) and is regarded as an indirect apology strategy in Polish (Ożóg 1990).
Since the primary illocutionary force of conciliatory expressions depicts them as strategies aimed at preserving harmony, they clearly fulfil the social function of apologies. However, their personal and emotional character not only restricts their applicability to low D contexts, but also emphasises their orientation towards positive face needs, which is perhaps why they are seldom used in English and, hence, have not found their way into discussions of English apologies so far.

Disarming softeners have not been discussed in previous research on Polish and Russian apologies and their status as explicit apology strategies in English is controversial. They are mainly employed to make an account sound apologetic, suggesting that they cannot serve as an apology on their own in any of the examined languages. As far as foreign words are concerned, all that can be said is that they – in particular the English word *sorry* – are increasingly used as a substitute for the most conventionalised apology strategy in Polish and, to a lesser degree, in Russian. Ultimately, judgements concerning the exact function of the less conventionalised IFID realisations can be best made in relation to the linguistic and situational contexts within which they occur.

The centrality of one main IFID category in each of the examined languages, in contrast, gives a valuable insight into their concepts of apologising. Apologies consisting of the performative are most explicit, requests for forgiveness are characterised by involving the hearer in the process of apologising, while expressions of regret make the most indirect apologies. Considering that each of the languages exhibits a strong preference for one of these realisations, one feels tempted to draw conclusions concerning the culture-specificity of the concept of apologising in these languages.

In doing so, I would like to refer to Brown and Levinson's framework or, more specifically, to take into account the threat to both S's and H's face involved in each of these IFID categories. The request for forgiveness and the expression of regret, in particular, vary greatly in the degree to which they threaten face. By requesting forgiveness, offenders not only place themselves at the hearer's mercy, but also threaten H's negative face by assigning him or her an active role in the process of forgiving. The expression of regret, on the other hand, implies a much lower degree of imposition for both parties involved. Suszczyńska sees the preference for the expression of regret in English as being “in accordance with the general assumption that contemporary English displays features of avoidance-based negative politeness” (1999: 1059).

Whereas the English and the Polish speech acts of apologising belong to the category of expressives (Searle 1976, 1979), it has been suggested that Russian apologies should be assigned to the group of directives (Rathmayr 1996). The Russian request for forgiveness also differs from apologies characterising the other two languages in that its performance involves the perlocution, i.e. the offended
party granting forgiveness, to a greater extent than does the expression of regret and the performative, which do not go beyond the illocutionary act performed by the apologiser.

What characterises the performative is that it relies exclusively on the apologiser performing the act. The most conventionalised Polish apology appears, therefore, to be more face-threatening to S than it is to H. An alternative interpretation, however, can be suggested on the basis of the strong preference for the conjunction *but* co-occurring with the Polish performative. The mere performance of an apology does not exclude the possibility of providing information reducing one’s responsibility for the offence, which is also reflected in the perceived insincerity of the English performative (Fraser 1981, Thomas 1995). From a semantic point of view, the most conventionalised Polish apology formula presupposes neither a feeling of regret, as does the expression of regret, nor guilt, as does the request for forgiveness.

It has been argued that "IFID formulae function as conventional linguistic means to embody culture-specific attitudes" (Suszczyńska 1999: 1059, following Wierzbicka 1985a: 500). What is problematic about such an interpretation is that it is difficult to say to what extent the speakers themselves are aware of the semantic implications of the apologetic formulae they use. Even though the preference for a particular IFID may reflect the cultural values motivating its use, its conventionalised character suggests that it functions as a routine formula employed without reflection upon its semantic properties.

The present data provide contradictory evidence on the impact of semantic meaning on pragmatic choice. On the one hand, the negative attitude towards the performative *izvinjajuš* seems to indicate that native speakers of Russian are aware of the specificity of their concept of apologising. On the other, several of my respondents made an orthographic mistake and wrote *izvenite*, clearly showing that they do not recognise that the word *vina* [guilt] lies at the core of this apology form. Furthermore, although *prostite* is less frequent than *izvini-te* in my Russian data, they were used interchangeably, contradicting previous claims of the former constituting an apology for unpardonable offences, with the speaker depending on the hearer’s generosity to be forgiven (e.g. Rathmayr 1996: 71).

The fact that a conventional implicature signalling disagreement was combined most often with the performative seems to confirm the greater compatibility of its semantic properties with an unapologetic attitude. However, although the conjunction *but* was considerably less frequent in the English and Russian data, its co-occurrence with the expression of regret and the request for forgiveness, regardless of semantic restrictions, again suggests a greater awareness of pragmatic function rather than semantic meaning.
The best example for a functionally oriented use of IFIDs is certainly the English word sorry in the Polish data. Although the Polish expression of regret is not fully accepted to serve as an explicit apology strategy, this foreign word – and even its Polish diminutive plural form – was used as a substitute for przepraszam. It was not only integrated syntactically, but also intensified by means of Polish adverbs.

The semantically awkward combinations of IFIDs and intensifiers found in the data further show that they are occasionally treated as interchangeable tokens. Generally, however, the distribution of intensifying devices suggests a correlation between IFID type and frequency of intensification. Speakers of English seem to be aware that the expression of regret can also be used as a mere expression of sympathy and occasionally “with little pretense at sincerity and even to express annoyance” (Borkin & Reinhart 1978:65). Since the expression of regret is “relatively ‘weak’ in its apologetic force” (Suszczyńska 1999:1060), it requires more intensification than other IFIDs, which explains why English shows a strong preference for intensifiers. Similarly, the high frequency of the adjective bardzo in the Polish data seems to suggest that the highly routinised formula przepraszam is often regarded as insufficient to convey a truly apologetic intention. The much lower degree of intensification and IFID repetition in Russian, in contrast, may be related to the relatively high degree of imposition on the hearer inherent in the request for forgiveness, a repetition or intensification of the request increasing the threat to the hearer’s face even more.

Although speakers do not seem to reflect upon the exact meaning and illocutionary force of the apologetic routine formulae they use, the addition of intensification can be interpreted as a conscious attempt to emphasise one’s apologetic attitude. Furthermore, variation in the selection of a particular IFID realisation as the most appropriate one in a given situation shows that speakers must – to some extent – be aware of the different implications underlying the apology formulae available in their language. Considering the conventionalised nature of the main IFID categories, one could argue that it is the less frequently used forms that reflect more than automatic behaviour and result in particularly effective apologies. According to such an interpretation, the almost exclusive focus on the expression of regret portrays British apology behaviour as highly routinised – though the fact that adverbial intensifiers were most varied and exclamations most frequent in the English data contradicts such an interpretation.

Since the function of the expression of regret as an apology strategy is context-dependent, strictly speaking, it can be classified neither as a direct apology strategy, nor as an on record strategy. Therefore, linguistic and situational contexts are crucial in determining whether an expression of regret is likely to be interpreted as an apology.
The diversity of functions performed by formulae classified as IFIDs is well illustrated by Deutschmann’s analysis (2003) of apology forms derived from the BNC. He distinguishes several categories, in which IFIDs serve an unapologetic function, such as “requests for attention” and “face attack apologies” (2003: 59). Obviously, no IFID will result in a convincing apology when accompanied by downgrading strategies.

All in all, the present chapter has provided an insight into cultural differences in apologising, while offering some explanations of why not all IFID types are equally effective across languages, and why each language displays a strong focus on a particular IFID. However, although the examined languages seem to have culture-specific politeness norms, it should be borne in mind that, due to their ritual character, formulaic apologies are, to a great extent, used without reflection upon their meaning.

The following chapters analyse the remaining apology strategies comprising the speech act set proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1981 & 1983). Viewed in isolation, these strategies have to be regarded as off record in Brown and Levinson’s, or conversational implicatures in Grice’s terms, but they are more likely to reflect the speaker’s attitude than IFIDs. An analysis of the large group of strategies which have been subsumed under the term ‘accounts’, in particular, allows for a cross-cultural comparison of the speakers’ willingness to accept responsibility and risk losing face.
8.1 Apologies and the acceptance of responsibility

As the previous chapter has shown, the category of IFIDs covers a limited range of linguistic realisations, and each of the languages shows a strong focus on one IFID type. Although IFIDs mark an utterance as an apology, the use of routine formulae says little about the speaker’s attitude towards the hearer and the offence. The remaining elements contained in an apology may stand in opposition to the function of an IFID – as evidenced by the use of the conjunction but – and even reflect a highly unapologetic attitude. Even adverbial intensifiers, such as really in English or bardzo in Polish, tend to be added so automatically that for some speakers they have become part of the apology formula.

The speakers’ intention is more likely to be conveyed by strategies referring to the circumstances of the offence and their responsibility for its outcome. The acceptance of responsibility is generally regarded as an indispensable element of apologies, necessary for the restoration of social equilibrium (e.g. Norrick 1978, Bach & Harnish 1979, Holmes 1990, Lazare 2004). It has been argued that expressions acknowledging responsibility can fulfil the function of an apology in any context (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen 1983, House 1989, Vollmer & Olshtain 1989), which classifies them as direct apology strategies. Olshtain maintains that expressions of responsibility make particularly effective and sincere apologies (1989: 168) while Kasper and Bergman argue that acknowledgements of responsibility emphasize the “substantive nature” (1993: 96) of the offered apology.

Although apology studies conducted by Polish and Russian linguists are generally restricted to the languages’ repertoires of formulaic expressions, similar interpretations of strategies assuming responsibility have been offered by Ożóg (1985: 272) and Rathmayr (1996: 81). As the discussion of Russian IFIDs has already shown, the concept of guilt – which is closely linked with responsibility acceptance – is central to Russian apologies.

While an explicit acknowledgement of responsibility may result in a more convincing apology than would a routinised IFID formula, there are manifold possibilities of expressing one’s responsibility for an offence, and not all of them
are equally effective. In the attempt to capture the full range of realisations occurring in the data, many empirical studies suggest a broad category of strategies related to responsibility. Whereas some of these strategies can serve as direct apologies, others are employed to deny rather than accept responsibility.

8.1.1 Previous classificatory schemes

Early classificatory schemes of strategies related to the offender's willingness to accept responsibility have been developed in sociology. The framework underlying most research in this field is based on Austin's (1961) distinction between justifications and excuses, further subdivided into more specific categories by Scott and Lyman (1968). Excuses have been defined as accounts through which the offender admits that the committed act was wrong, but does not accept responsibility. Justifications, on the other hand, entail acceptance of responsibility for the act, but redefine it as non-offensive (Austin 1961: 176). Hence, responsibility serves as a key criterion in assigning utterances to these two categories.

In subsequent research, this distinction has been mainly applied to data collected in legal and political contexts, leading to very minute differentiation among strategies mitigating the offender's guilt (see Benoit 1995), while expressions acknowledging responsibility and explicit apologies have received less attention. Linguistic research focuses on formulaic apologies, but the strategies falling under excuse and justification in sociology constitute a great part of the data collected in apology studies carried out in cross-cultural pragmatics.

Edmondson and House (1981) are among the few linguists who discuss Austin's distinction between excuses and justifications. They conclude that in practice “it is impossible to always distinguish these two cases” and suggest that both belong to the same “category of illocution” (1981: 158). Owen also recognises that justifications and excuses can be easily confused, but she argues that the distinction should be kept because justifications “are not the type of account we are concerned with” (1983: 93). She points out that, unlike excuses, justifications cannot be combined with apologies for it would “require the speaker to hold contradictory beliefs about his action” (ibid.).

Meier's unpublished dissertation (1992a) is, to my knowledge, the only attempt at classifying cross-cultural apology data on the basis of sociological frameworks. She argues that while excuses place the speaker in a better light “via transforming the responsibility link”, justifications do so by “transforming the appearance of the act” (ibid: 60). Meier identifies co-occurrences of explicit apology formulae and justifications in her data (ibid: 80), thus providing counterevidence to Owen's (1983) claim that since justifications are not remedial acts, they cannot
be combined with explicit apologies. Unfortunately, Meier does not supply any examples to illustrate her categorisation criteria.

Most apology studies conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics distinguish between taking on responsibility and explanation, as suggested in the CCSARP framework, which builds on the speech act set developed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Interestingly, an earlier version of the speech act set (Cohen & Olshtain 1981: 119) does not include the strategy of explanation, which indicates either that it was initially not regarded as constituting an apology or that the strategy taking on responsibility subsumed realisations of explanation. In 1983, Olshtain and Cohen suggested a distinction between ‘an explanation or account of the situation’ and ‘an acknowledgement of responsibility’ (1983: 23), where the latter is further subdivided into four substrategies:

- accepting blame
- expressing self-deficiency
- recognizing the other person as deserving an apology
- expressing lack of intent

While in sociological research a clear distinction is kept between excuses and justifications, in cross-cultural pragmatics the criteria determining the categories of explanation and taking on responsibility have never been explicitly established. This lack of a clear definition has led to an overlap between these two categories and to an inconsistent assignment of strategies to them across studies.

The most obvious criterion underlying Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) strategy termed ‘acknowledgement of responsibility’ is that it presupposes some degree of responsibility acceptance. However, as has already been mentioned, the need to create a category embracing all related strategies found in the data has led to an extension of this strategy. In the CCSARP, for instance, taking on responsibility is defined as follows:

In the attempt to placate the hearer, the speaker often chooses to express responsibility for the offence which created the need to apologize (…) The subcategories for this strategy may be placed on a continuum from strong self-humbling on the speaker’s part to a complete and blunt denial of responsibility. (1989: 21)

Such a continuum for the supra-strategy taking on responsibility is suggested in the CCSARP coding manual (1989: 291–292):

- Explicit self-blame
- Lack of intent
- Justify hearer
- Expression of embarrassment
Admission of facts but not of responsibility
Refusal to acknowledge guilt: Denial of responsibility
Blame the hearer
Pretend to be offended

Since the function of the three strategies subsumed under the heading 'refusal to acknowledge guilt' is clearly to reject rather than accept responsibility, it can be expected that they are omitted in discussions of apology strategies. Most apology studies, however, provide frequencies for the entire category of taking on responsibility, without mentioning which of the substrategies it includes. Such broad approaches to the analysis of responsibility acceptance are unlikely to provide any significant information on the differences in apology behaviour in the examined cultures.

Inconsistencies in defining taking on responsibility and assigning expressions to this strategy can be found not only across but even within studies. Olshtain, for instance, claims on the one hand, that an expression of S's responsibility “could realize an apology in any situation” (1989: 157), on the other, she names “pleas for [sic] excusable lack of foresight, pleas for [sic] reduced competence and admissions of carelessness” (ibid.) as realisations of this strategy. They have been adopted from Owen (1983: 94), who quotes Goffman's account types (1971: 109–113), which would rather fit into Olshtain's category of explanation, defined as “situation-specific” and “semantically reflect[ing] the content of the situation” (1989: 157).

Explanations are indirect apology strategies, though most researchers agree that they can perform an apology on their own (e.g. Holmes 1995, Aijmer 1996). Wolfson et al. (1989) further suggest that the acceptability of an explanation as an apology may be culture-dependent. In the CCSARP, the strategy of explanation has been defined as a form of “self-justification by explaining the source of the offence as caused by external factors over which the speaker has no control” (1989: 21).

The restriction of explanation to external factors is perhaps the reason why the category taking on responsibility contains a strategy labelled ‘Admission of facts but not of responsibility’, which necessarily refers to the circumstances of the offence, therefore serving the function of explanation. Its assignment to taking on responsibility seems even less justified if one considers that the label given to this substrategy already implies that no responsibility is accepted. What makes this inconsistency particularly problematic is that this strategy is very frequent. It also seems to make up a great proportion of the data falling under taking on responsibility in the CCSARP. The frequency of explanations in the CCSARP apology studies is much lower than in other analyses, while those of taking on

The overlap between taking on responsibility and explanation is partly related to the fact that while the latter has been defined as semantically reflecting the offence, the former has not been defined as lacking this property. Hence, expressions of responsibility which refer to the circumstances of the offence simultaneously classify as explanations. The lack of a clear-cut distinction between these two strategies leads to inconsistencies in the assignment of subcategories to them.

The CCSARP manual names a criterion limiting the range of utterances classifying as explanation and, simultaneously, distinguishing it from taking on responsibility: “Whenever First Person is used (...), the expression should be coded as one of the substrategies of ‘taking on responsibility’” (1989: 293). Accordingly, the utterance ‘The bus was late’ provides external factors and classifies as an explanation whereas ‘I missed the bus’ would be assigned to taking on responsibility. What is problematic about this approach is that the main criterion for assigning strategies to taking on responsibility is the use of the first person singular, which means that grammatical criteria are used to create pragmatic categories.

In my data, there is no systematic relationship between the use of the first person and responsibility acceptance. While utterances such as ‘I killed your fish’ clearly depict the speaker as the person responsible for the offence, the first person can also be used in passive constructions, which are the most obvious example of the speaker’s lack or refusal of responsibility. Whereas passive constructions clearly delegate the responsibility for the offence to some other – often unspecified – party, expressions including modal verbs, such as ‘I had to’ or ‘I could not’ and other formulations in the active voice, such as ‘I was in a hurry’ or ‘I have been busy’, are used to hint at factors beyond the speaker’s control.

Although the categorisation criteria employed in the CCSARP have not been explicitly questioned in subsequent apology research, I am not aware of any other studies in which the first person is used as a criterion classifying strategies as taking on responsibility. Mir, for instance, quotes the phrase “I missed the bus” (1992: 6) as an example of explanation – and the frequency of explanations in her data is considerably higher than in the CCSARP.

Holmes’ (1989, 1990 & 1995) category acknowledgement of responsibility is comprised of the strategies: accept blame, self-deficiency, recognise H as entitled to apology, lack of intent, and offer of repair (1990: 167). Acknowledgements of responsibility make up 16.9 % of all the strategies in her data – 10.9% without offers of repair, which are viewed as a separate category in most apology studies. Explanations, which include justifications and excuses in Holmes’ taxonomy, account for 23.2% of the strategies in her corpus.
In conclusion, it can be said that two criteria, potentially distinguishing taking on responsibility from explanation, emerge from the way they have been defined and categorised in previous cross-cultural research on apologies. Firstly, it has been argued that the former is direct and general and the latter indirect and situation-specific. Secondly, explanation has been defined as semantically reflecting the offence, which could be interpreted as implying that taking on responsibility does not refer to the circumstances of the offence. Adhering to these criteria, however, would lead to a small category comprised of formulaic admissions of guilt and a very large one, encompassing all strategies referring to the circumstances of the offence – and thereby conveying the speaker’s willingness to admit responsibility for it.

As I have already mentioned, some researchers point out that the linguistic realisations of taking on responsibility reveal different degrees of responsibility acceptance, which can be placed on “a continuum stretching from a high level of responsibility to a very low level of responsibility” (Vollmer & Olshtain 1989: 198). Such a continuum also depicts gradual differences in the amount of threat to S’s face, with the substrategies ranging from self-demeaning to self-protective. Trosborg adopts a similar approach and additionally groups the substrategies into denying responsibility and acknowledgement of responsibility (1995: 378–379), thus clearly setting apart apologies from non-apologies. Similarly, Deutschmann broadly differentiates between taking on responsibility and minimising responsibility (2003: 84), with the latter including excuses and justifications.

Bergman and Kasper (1993) abandon the categories of explanation and taking on responsibility and differentiate between upgraders and downgraders. In their model, the category of upgraders includes not only strategies accepting responsibility but also adverbial intensifiers. Downgraders, in contrast, encompass strategies downgrading both responsibility and severity of offence (1993: 94). What distinguishes their model from most other classificatory schemes is not only that taking on responsibility is split according to its upgrading and downgrading tendencies and assigned to two larger categories, but it also seems to imply that this strategy cannot serve as an apology on its own (ibid: 96).

Excuses and justifications are assigned to the category of downgraders and the following examples are provided to illustrate the underlying categorisation criteria (ibid: 94):

Excuse: My watch has stopped
Justification: I was suddenly called to a meeting

As can be seen from these examples, these labels are used to refer to external mitigating circumstances rather than to the functions they serve in sociological
frameworks; though it is difficult to say what exactly distinguishes excuses from justifications.

8.1.2 Considerations underlying the present taxonomy

While a critical review of existing taxonomies is a necessary step in suggesting an alternative, the taxonomy designed for the present study was mainly guided by the theoretical considerations outlined in Chapter 3. It encompasses all the strategies related to responsibility, whether they constitute apology strategies or not, and it takes into account the degree of responsibility acceptance and the corresponding face-threat inherent in the strategies.

The extent to which S is willing to admit responsibility reflects his or her concern for S's vs. H's face wants. Weighing up between them, as well as between one's positive and negative face needs, is central to the formulation of an apology. A taxonomy based on face wants taking into account their culture-specificity can be expected to provide some evidence on the impact of cultural values on apologising and the underlying concepts of politeness.

An additional consideration shaping the present taxonomy is that responsibility can be accepted and rejected with or without reference to the offence, and that the strategy labelled explanation in previous apology studies also exhibits varying degrees of responsibility acceptance. As the following analysis will show, the main criterion for choosing either a formulaic expression of responsibility or a realisation referring to the contents of the offence appears to be whether they are known to the hearer or not. Hence, the strategies coded as explanation and taking on responsibility in previous research will be combined and placed on a scale denoting increasing face-threat and responsibility acceptance. Rather than distinguishing between realisations reflecting the circumstances of the offence and those focusing on the speaker's responsibility for it, I will differentiate between upgrading and downgrading account types. Accordingly, accounts are defined as expressions reflecting the speaker's willingness to admit responsibility for the offensive outcome of the situation, whether or not they include a reference to circumstances emphasising, mitigating or denying the speaker's involvement in the offence.

The subdivision of accounts into justifications and excuses suggested by Austin has proved impracticable for the purposes of this study. Justifications, defined by Scott and Lyman as “socially approved vocabularies that neutralize an act or its consequences” (1968: 51), were almost non-existent in the data. The reason why this strategy usually does not occur in cross-cultural apology studies is that they tend to rely on experimentally collected responses. The scenarios are explicitly
designed to elicit apologies, making it difficult to turn the described offence into something positive. In fact, most offences in daily life arise due to thoughtlessness or inattentiveness, whereas situations dealt with in sociological literature range from purposeful criminal conduct to justification of political decisions. In my study, the scenarios depict the speaker as responsible for the offence and generally preclude the possibility of claiming that the offence has not occurred or redefining it as non-offensive, though its offensiveness can be minimised.

Excuses, on the other hand, encompassing “socially approved vocabularies for mitigating or relieving responsibility” (Scott & Lyman 1968: 47), would constitute a very broad category, underplaying important cross-linguistic differences. Incidentally, in Meier’s study, excuses are nearly as frequent as IFIDs (1992a: 72).

I would nevertheless like to keep these two terms while retaining one of the criteria underlying Austin’s classification, namely that justifications involve acceptance and excuses rejection of responsibility (1961: 176). The Oxford Dictionary offers two definitions of the verb ‘to justify’, one of them being “demonstrate the correctness of”, which is the function it has been assigned by Austin, while the other, namely “adduce adequate grounds for”, is the definition used in the present taxonomy. Consequently, the term justification is used to refer to mitigating circumstances justifying – not so much the offence itself by redefining it as non-offensive as – the offender’s behaviour leading up to the offence. The term excuse, in contrast, refers to external mitigating circumstances, which are clearly beyond the speakers’ control and would have led to the offence without their contribution. Both strategies are in the centre of the ‘continuum’ denoting responsibility acceptance and threat to the speaker’s face, justifications being the least face-threatening among the strategies accepting responsibility and excuses involving the highest face-threat when rejecting responsibility.

Accordingly, not all strategies in the category of accounts can be described as apology strategies, but merely as strategies used to deal with offensive situations. The inclusion of downgrading strategies in the analysis, however, is indispensable for the overall assessment of the examined groups’ willingness to risk face when apologising. Only an analysis covering the full range of strategies found in the data provides a complete picture of apology behaviour and allows for comparison across cultures.

8.1.3 Classification of account types

0. **Opt out**
This category embraces all the instances of non-verbal reactions aiming at avoiding confrontation. Although, strictly speaking, such evasive reactions do not con-
stitute account strategies, they can be regarded as the most face-protective approach taken in offensive situations. By remaining silent or ignoring the offended party, the speaker refuses not only to accept responsibility but also to deal with the situation:

(15) Turn away. [Em-3/43]
(16) Ujdu v drugoj vagon. [Rm-8/16]
   ‘I’ll leave for another carriage.’

1. **Denial of responsibility**

This strategy includes all the utterances negating the speaker’s involvement in the offence and shifting the blame to other people or the hearer. The distinction between blaming others and blaming hearer, as suggested in the CCSARP Manual (1989) and by Trosborg (1995), is very significant with regard to the hearer’s face. However, since it is the speaker’s face which is central to the categorisation, and since both categories were very rare in the data, they were subsumed under denial of responsibility.

The formulation of denials of responsibility can be either general or situation-specific. In the following examples, responsibility is denied without reference to the circumstances of the offence:

(17) It wasn’t me. [Em-6/10]
(18) ... to nie ja. [Pm-6/35]
    ‘... it (is) not me.’
(19) Ja tut ni pri čem. [Rf-1/50]
    lit. ‘I (am) here not with anything.’

Whenever the offence occurs due to failure to do something, responsibility can be denied by claiming that the speaker has done what was expected of them, in which case the formulation is situation-specific:

(20) I did return them on time. [Ef-2/1]
(21) Robilem wszystko jak mi kazaleś. [Pm-1/30]
    ‘I did everything the way you told me.’

As has already been mentioned, responsibility can also be denied by blaming others,

(22) Obratites’ v sosednjuju dver. [Rm-6/50]
    ‘Turn to the neighbouring door.’

and by blaming the hearer:
(23) Look where you are going! [Em-4/26]
(24) Ty sam vinovat ... [Rf-1/24]
‘It’s your fault ...’

2. Acting innocently
The strategy acting innocently is a more indirect form of denying responsibility for the offence as it does not exclude the possibility of the speaker’s accidental involvement in it. An additional factor making it more face-threatening than explicit denials is that it is more likely to be followed by further accusations on the part of the victim.

Formulaic expressions identified in the data are largely restricted to the following phrases:

(25) I’ve no idea what happened. [Ef-1/1]
(26) ... nie mam pojęcia. [Pf-1/12]
‘... I’ve no idea.’
(27) Ponjatija ne imeju! [Rm-1/5]
‘I’ve no idea!’

Whereas the following realisations refer to the contents of the offence:

(28) ... they were fine the last time I saw them. [Ef-1/10]
(29) Coś im chyba zaszkodziło. [Pm-1/2]
‘Looks like something has harmed them.’
(30) Ne znaju kak ěto ko mne popalo. [Rm-7/3]
‘I don’t know how this got to me.’

3. Minimisation
Minimisation is not primarily related to the degree of responsibility but rather to that of imposition for it reduces the offensiveness of the situation and not necessarily the offender’s responsibility for it. However, the less offensive the act, the less face-loss it entails to admit responsibility, which classifies minimisation as a strategy reducing threat to the speaker’s face.

In my data, two sub-types of this strategy can be distinguished. The first one minimises the degree of imposition, e.g. by referring to the limited frequency of the potentially offensive event:

(31) It doesn’t happen that often. [Ef-6/24]
(32) W końcu nie zdarza mi się to często. [Pf-6/5]
‘After all, this doesn’t happen (to me) that often.’
(33) Raz v god – možno. [Rm-6/13]
‘Once a year – it’s allowed.’
The second, much less frequent type of minimisation indicates that the offence was unavoidable, thus considerably reducing both its offensiveness as well as the speaker's responsibility:

(34) Shit happens. [Em-1/45]
(35) Sud'ba. [Rm-1/49]
   ‘Fate.’

4. **Excuse**

When using excuses, offenders do not deny their involvement in the offence, but name external factors, without which the offence would not have taken place, and thereby almost completely free themselves from responsibility for the offensive outcome of the situation.

By selecting the passive voice, the speaker transfers the responsibility for the offence to another party, without having to name it:

(36) I was distracted. [Em-7/18]
(37) Właśnie mnie okradli. [Pm-8/36]
   ‘I just got robbed.’
(38) ... menja otvlekl. [Rf-7/5]
   ‘... I got distracted.’

Alternatively, the external factors responsible for the offence can be explicitly named:

(39) The ticket machine had broken in the station. [Em-8/9]
(40) Mama na pewno schowała ją do jakiś pudel. [Pf-5/28]
   ‘(My) mum has surely put it into some boxes.’
(41) Čto-to slučilos’ s zamkom. [Rm-1/50]
   ‘Something has happened to the lock.’

Although the Polish example involves another person in the circumstances leading up to the offence, she is not blamed for committing it, which would classify the utterance as an instance of denial of responsibility. She is, however, made responsible for something that inevitably led to the speaker committing the offensive act.

5. **Admission of facts**

This category encompasses all account strategies in which the offence is portrayed in a neutral way, i.e. not described as offensive and including no reference to the speaker's involvement. Consequently, admissions of facts occupy a middle position on the responsibility scale; they neither reduce nor accept it. By merely
stating facts, however, the speaker distances him- or herself from the offence in the attempt to save face – though it may be threatened anew if the offended person finds this strategy insufficient and demands more information. The face-threat involved in admitting facts depends to a great extent on the situation in which this account type is used and the strategies with which it is combined.

Admissions of facts are most likely to appear in scenarios requiring the speaker to inform the hearer about the offence:

(42) Your fish died. [Em-1/17]
(43) Zdechły. [Pm-1/40]
   ‘They died.’
(44) Tvoi rybki sdochli. [Rf-1/6]
   ‘Your fish died.’

6. Justification
When using a justification, the speaker admits that an offence has taken place and accepts some responsibility for it. At the same time he or she provides mitigating circumstances placing their offensive behaviour in a better light and making it more acceptable. Justifications are often introduced by the conjunction but, indicating that the speaker admits responsibility, but had a good reason for acting as he or she did. Accordingly, justifications can be classified as the least face-threatening account strategies involving responsibility acceptance.

Since the circumstances leading up to the offence are described in the DCT scenarios, the subjects are provided with arguments they are likely to take up when Justifying their offensive behaviour. Consequently, justifications are the most frequent strategy in the data, and several sub-categories can be distinguished.

In apologies for offences consisting in failing to do something, factors can be named preventing the offender from doing what was expected of him or her, e.g. when breaking a promise, the speaker may point to more urgent obligations:

(45) I was really busy ... [Ef-1/47]
(46) U menja del po gorlo ... [Rm-2/24]
   ‘I have things (to do) up to my throat ...’

The speaker’s own duties and obligations are often named as factors leading to the speaker forgetting the promise, which is the most frequent justification in the data. A similar way of justifying one’s behaviour is by claiming non-awareness (see Suszczyńska 1999: 1062):

(47) I didn’t realise how frail they were. [Em-1/42]
(48) Ja prosto vas ne zametila. [Rf-4/23]
   ‘I simply didn’t notice you.’
The offender’s limited competence has also been named as responsible for the offence:

(49) I’m not used to pets. [Ef-1/38]
(50) ... nie wiedziałam, ile mam wsypywać tego jedzenia. [Pf-1/42]
   ‘... I didn’t know how much food I have to pour.’
(51) Ja ne znalə, kak ich pravil’nə kormit’. [Rf-1/35]
   ‘I didn’t know how to feed them correctly.’

Occasionally, the informants even blamed the offence on a deficiency in their character (52) or claimed that their personal situation justifies their behaviour (53):

(52) ... to ta moja nierozgarniętość. [Pf-7/29]
   ‘... it’s my half-wittedness.’
(53) ... ja bednyj student. [Rm-8/28]
   ‘... I’m a poor student.’

Justifications expressing lack of control show a tendency to transfer responsibility to an unspecified source, which would also classify them as excuses, e.g.:

(54) It all got a bit out of control. [Ef-6/29]
(55) ... impreza wymknęła się spod kontroli. [Pf-6/21]
   ‘... the party escaped (my) control.’

The decisive argument for classifying these examples as justifications is that the speaker does not deny being the one responsible for controlling the situation and preventing it from becoming offensive.

7. **Lack of intent**

Whereas several realisations of the category justification implicitly entail lack of intent, the category I have termed lack of intent differs in that it does not attempt to reduce the speaker’s responsibility by transferring it somewhere else, thus resulting in greater responsibility acceptance and higher face-threat. Scott and Lyman (1968) categorise lack of intent as a substrategy of excuses, which they define as accounts denying responsibility. I would argue, however, that saying ‘I did not mean to do it’ automatically implies ‘I have done it’.

Expressions of lack of intent are generally associated with neutral formulations, such as ‘I did not mean to’, which can be followed by naming the offence, as in I didn’t mean to hit you [Ef-4/1]. Most of the utterances assigned to this category in the current study do not refer to the offence:

(56) It was a genuine mistake. [Ef-7/22]
On Apologising

(57) Naprawdę, to było niechcący. [Pm-4/1]
‘Really, this was unintentional.’
(58) Ėto vyšlo slučajno. [Rf-4/14]
‘This happened accidentally.’

Although there are also a few realisations hinting at what the offender is accused of:

(59) I had no intention of steeling it. [Em-7/4]
(60) Ja nie chciałem tego ukraść. [Pm-7/9]
‘I didn’t want to steal this.’
(61) Ja soveršenno ne chotela ničego brat’ otsjuda. [Rf-7/50]
‘I absolutely didn’t want to take anything from here.’

The involuntary character of the offence can also be emphasised by claiming lack of foresight:

(62) I wouldn’t have thought that would have hurt them. [Ef-1/32]
(63) Ja ne dumala, čto vse tak polučitsja. [Rf-1/22]
‘I didn’t think that all would turn out like this.’

Finally, in responses to offences consisting of a failure to fulfil an expectation, lack of intent can take the form of an expression of good will. Instead of claiming lack of intent, the speaker professes to have intended to do the right thing:

(64) ... we meant to warn you beforehand. [Em-6/34]

8. Expression of embarrassment

In the context of an offence, an expression of embarrassment can be interpreted as the offender’s admission to have committed an act offensive enough to be embarrassed about:

(65) This is really embarrassing. [Em-5/46]
(66) Strasznie głupio wyszło. [Pf-2/11]
  lit. ‘This has come out terribly stupidly.’
(67) Mne tak neudobno. [Rm-2/35]
  lit. ‘It’s so unpleasant to me.’

Expressions of embarrassment usually consist of formulaic phrases focusing on the discomfort the speakers experience due to their offensive behaviour. Thus, these accounts only implicitly accept responsibility. Although it is theoretically possible to include the object of embarrassment in the formula, the realisations found in my data do not refer to the offence.
9. **Acceptance of responsibility**
A speaker willing to accept responsibility for the offence can do so by pleading guilty by means of a formulaic expression. When the offended party is unaware of the offence or its exact circumstances, however, it is necessary to provide a confession, which usually takes the form of a self-critical account of one's behaviour.

Formulaic admissions of responsibility are generally regarded as direct apology strategies:

(68) That was totally my fault. [Ef-2/48]
(69) Całą winę biorę na siebie. [Pf-2/31]
   ‘I’m taking all the guilt on me.’
(70) Ja vinovata pered toboj. [Rf-2/26]
   ‘I’m guilty before you.’

In contrast to these formulaic realisations, individually phrased confessions vary in the extent to which they threaten face, depending on how explicitly they accept responsibility and on how critically they portray the offence:

(71) I don’t think I fed them enough. [Ef-1/23]
(72) ... nie wywiązałam się z zadania. [Pf-1/7]
   ‘... I haven’t accomplished the task.’
(73) ... ja plocho uchažival za rybkami. [Rm-1/2]
   ‘... I badly looked after the fish.’

10. **Self-criticism**
Although expressions of self-criticism do not explicitly acknowledge responsibility, they are considered to be highly face-threatening and humiliating. In my data, two slightly different ways of expressing self-criticism were identified, one of them taking the form of self-blame:

(74) I’m completely useless. [Ef-2/49]
(75) Ale ze mnie głupek ... [Pm-7/14]
   ‘What an idiot I am...’

Whereas in these examples, the respondents criticise their personal shortcomings, the following responses focus on criticising their actions:

(76) ... powinienem bardziej uważać. [Pm-4/29]
   ‘... I should pay more attention.’
(77) Ja byla očen’ neostorožna. [Rf-4/41]
   ‘I was very inattentive.’
The list of account strategies suggested here is by no means exhaustive, being limited to the strategies used by my subjects in their responses to a selection of offensive situations. The order in which they have been presented suggests a continuum of increasing responsibility acceptance and face-threat, resulting in ten different account types. However, this order remains open to rearrangement, allowing for a certain degree of mobility along the continuum; depending on the exact formulation, both linguistic and situational contexts, as well as the cultural background of the interlocutors.

The strategies occupying the middle of the scale, namely excuses, justifications and admissions of facts, necessarily refer to the offence and only indirectly reflect the speaker’s willingness to accept responsibility. The remaining seven account types, in contrast, could be further subdivided into formulaic realisations focusing on expressing responsibility and those revealing the contents of the offence. Moreover, as illustrated by the manifold possibilities of justifying one’s behaviour, finer distinctions can be made to specify the exact function of a strategy in a given context.

As Table 7 shows, speakers of all three languages made use of the entire range of account types. English is the language with the highest proportion of downgrading and lowest proportion of upgrading accounts. The Russian data include the highest percentage of upgrading and lowest of downgrading strategies, while the Polish figures lie between those established for English and Russian. At the same time, the total number of account strategies is highest in the Polish data, with a relatively strong preference for justifications and excuses. Although the strategy opt out is, strictly speaking, not an account strategy, it has been included in the table as the most face-saving option in Brown and Levinson’s chart of strategies used to perform an FTA and a non-verbal way of denying responsibility.

Table 7. Preferences for account types across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function:</th>
<th>Account type</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Downgrading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Opt out</em></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upgrading</strong></td>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-criticism</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>899</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td>789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Justifications are clearly the most frequent account type in the data, constituting more than half of the strategies classified as accounts. This is not surprising since the scenarios created for the present study encourage their use. They describe the circumstances leading up to the offence, and referring to them usually results in justifications. Whatever other labels had been given to this category in previous apology studies, strategies aimed at justifying one's offensive behaviour – i.e. making it more acceptable – are most likely to accompany IFIDs in responses to DCT scenarios designed to elicit apologies. In order to ascertain the subjects' cooperativeness and identification with the scenarios (and to avoid responses such as “I don't do such things”), the described offences are usually not purposeful, but occur due to the speaker's inattention or carelessness, as reflected by the substrategies of justification distinguished above.

Although justifications do not necessarily constitute apologies when used on their own, the data show that when combined with an IFID, they tend to upgrade its illocutionary force. It seems that justifications are characterised by an inconsistency in the criteria underlying the classification of account types, for they entail responsibility acceptance and, at the same time, are face-saving for H. An argument in favour of their upgrading function – apart from their accepting responsibility – is that they contribute towards the restoration of harmony by acknowledging H's right to know why the offence has taken place.

What Table 7 does not take into account is that the total numbers of strategies per language comprise different linguistic realisations used under different contextual conditions. Hence, it cannot be excluded that the realisations of a particular account type in one of the languages involve less face-threat or a lower degree of responsibility acceptance than those making up this account type in the other two.

8.1.4 Importance of context in classifying and interpreting accounts

The high frequency and great variety of accounts in the present data call for a more detailed discussion of this strategy. While formulaic realisations constitute a very small proportion of this category, most accounts are situation-specific and reflect the circumstances of the offence, which is why their analysis should take into account the situation in which they occur.

Previous research has acknowledged that the strategies promise of forbearance and offer of repair are context-dependent, being largely restricted to potentially re-current offences and offences for which material compensation can be offered, respectively. Accounts are more problematic since they can be used in virtually any context, but the same utterance may mean something quite different
when used in reply to a different offence. It seems that although context is a central issue in pragmatics, it has been neglected in cross-cultural pragmatics, as evidenced by categorisation criteria such as the equation of utterances in the 1st person with a particular strategy.

The illocutionary force of an account, the degree to which it threatens the speaker's face and its likeliness to remedy the damage caused by the offence all depend on its context and linguistic realisation. Hence, although the provision of total numbers of account types across languages is useful when portraying general tendencies, such as the varying preferences for down- and upgrading account types, they cannot be regarded as reliably rendering cross-linguistic differences in the offenders’ willingness to risk face in restoring social equilibrium.

While account types at the two ends of the continuum – in particular their formulaic realisations – are largely unambiguous, excuses, admissions of facts and justifications are most likely to carry different illocutionary forces across situations. This can be illustrated by taking a closer look at one of the most frequent forms of justification in the present data, namely the phrase ‘I forgot’. Forgetting is a good justification because it is ‘human’ and non-intentional.

There are particularly many occurrences of this account realisation in scenario 2 (Video tapes), which is not surprising since forgetfulness is the reason for the offence provided in the description of the situation. While forgetting to return somebody’s tapes may be an acceptable justification, forgetting to feed a friend’s fish during a longer period of time displays a much more careless attitude on the part of the offender. The varying efficiency and acceptability of this strategy in these two contexts explains why it appears 126 times among the responses to scenario 2, but only 24 times in scenario 1 (Dead fish).

Similarly, in scenario 7 (Security guard), where the offender’s major concern is to prove the accidental nature of the offence, several mitigating circumstances were named, forgetting being, with 124 instances, the most frequent one. Since “men ordinarily impute to one another some measure of foresight for their actions” (Scott & Lyman 1968: 48), it is sometimes necessary to provide additional arguments justifying forgetful behaviour, and in scenario 7, the speaker’s forgetfulness was often justified by involvement in another task, i.e. talking to a friend or day-dreaming.

Forgetting was further named 60 times as the reason justifying the speaker’s offensive behaviour in scenario 5 (Professor’s book), where it serves a different function, namely that of a face-saving strategy minimising the offence. In this scenario, the claim of having forgotten the book is a made-up explanation concealing the true reason for the absence of the book and contrary to the information supplied in the description of the situation.
To sum up, justifications referring to the speaker’s forgetfulness, which make up roughly one quarter of all justifications in my data, were employed with varying efficiency, acceptability, credibility and different degrees of face-threat across scenarios. Hence, making finer distinctions between the realisations of justifications occurring in the data would mean that the phrase ‘I forgot’ would have to be assigned to different subcategories, depending on their function in context.

The fact that the illocutionary force of an utterance differs across contexts illustrates not only the incompatibility of formal criteria with pragmatic categories, but also the danger of inconsistencies inherent in contrastive pragmatic analysis. Therefore, I will analyse accounts in relation to the offences for which they were offered. In this way, I hope to reveal more than numerical differences in the way British, Polish and Russian people use accounts, and to gain a better insight into their willingness to admit responsibility and risk losing face.

As the use of the phrase ‘I forgot’ in scenario 5 illustrates, using an experimental data collection method enables me to analyse yet another aspect of account strategies, namely whether the offender is willing to admit the truth. Since DCTs provide the respondents with contextual information establishing the circumstances of the offence, accounts deviating from that information can be identified and analysed in their function as face-protective strategies.

Although face-saving account strategies have been analysed in previous research, to the best of my knowledge, the rather obvious fact that they may be based on lies has not been explicitly addressed. While denials of responsibility for an offence committed by the speaker cannot correspond to the truth, excuses or justifications can refer to the circumstances established in the scenario as well as to invented information.

In addition to situational context, the classification and interpretation of account strategies should also take into account linguistic context. The account type which is most likely to carry divergent illocutionary forces when combined with other strategies is admission of facts, which has been defined as neutral in terms of responsibility acceptance. As the following example illustrates, admissions of facts tend to have a distancing function, even when they are combined with IFIDs:

(78) Sorry, your fish died. [Em-1/17]

While the illocutionary force of justifications seems to be too weak for them to serve the function of an apology on their own, combining them with admissions of facts – that is accounts involving an even lower degree of responsibility acceptance – seems to add to their illocutionary force, as illustrated by the following example:
(79) ... nie zawsze miałem czas i część rybek zdechła. [Pm-1/7]
‘... I didn’t always have time and some of the fish died.’

Ideally, the assignment of utterances to speech act categories should take into consideration the effect of strategy combinations, the conjunctions linking them and even the order in which they occur.

8.2 Accounts across scenarios

This chapter analyses the preferences for account strategies across offences and languages according to the degree of responsibility acceptance and face-threat. Although the scenarios making up each of the categories have been constructed to include particular contextual variables and offence types (see Chapter 6.1), a detailed analysis of accounts in relation to the circumstances of the offence is likely to uncover additional factors influencing their choice and form. Each of the scenarios will be discussed separately, while additional insights may be gained by comparing the use of accounts in the two scenarios comprising each category.

8.2.1 Category I

The scenarios comprising category I are based on low social distance and equal social power and describe situations in which the offender causes damage by not keeping a promise. Since in both scenarios, the hearer is absent while the offence takes place and unaware of the exact circumstances leading up to it, they are likely to elicit a high number of accounts.

8.2.1.1 Scenario 1

Scenario 1 (Dead fish) is the only scenario that has elicited the entire range of account types. The total number of accounts amounts to 186 in the English, 180 in the Polish, and 140 in the Russian data. These high numbers already indicate that relatively many responses include a combination of two or more account strategies. Scenario 1 has also elicited the greatest amount of downgrading accounts in the data. The English data show, with 124 downgrading and 62 upgrading accounts, the strongest face-saving tendency, while the Russian data, with 60 downgrading and 80 upgrading accounts, exhibit a much higher degree of face-threat and responsibility acceptance. Although the Polish respondents used more downgrading (102) than upgrading (78) accounts, the discrepancy is not as great as in the English data.
Table 8. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-criticism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>186</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses including accounts</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 8 shows, the English respondents show a strong preference for acting innocently, denying responsibility and admitting facts, with several responses containing a combination of these strategies:

(80) Some of your fish died while you were away. I fed them and everything but I turned up one day and some had died. [Em-1/25]

(81) I don’t know, when I came in they were just floating on the surface. What do you think happened? [Ef-1/49]

These examples illustrate how, by using the strategies acting innocently and admission of facts, the British respondents distanced themselves from the offence and refused to deal with the situation. The Polish and Russian respondents, in contrast, even when denying responsibility, tended to regard their addressee as deserving some kind of information on the fate of their fish. The most face-saving approach found in the Polish and Russian data consisted in using the strategy blame hearer:

(82) To nie moja wina, karma którą kazałeś mi karmić rybki była przeterminowana i zatruły się nią. [Pm-1/3]

‘It’s not my fault, the food you told me to feed the fish with was off and they got poisoned.’

(83) Ty sam vinovat, smotri na upakovku kogda pokupaeš. [Rf-1/24]

‘It’s your fault, look at the packaging when you are buying.’

When using the strategy act innocently, the Polish respondents tended to combine it with excuses, taking the form of suggestions of how the offence could have been brought about by external circumstances.
On Apologising

(84) Nie mam pojęcia – może umarły ze starości? [Pf-1/48]
‘I’ve no idea – perhaps they died of old age?’

Excuses generally consisted in suggestions why the fish are themselves responsible for their own death, and speakers of all three languages agreed that possible reasons are the advanced age of the fish (84), (86), an illness (88) and the fact that they missed their owner (85).

(85) ... they must have missed you so much they died. [Ef-1/17]
(86) Tvoi rybki byli užje starikiami. [Rm-1/41]
‘Your fish were already old (guys).’

The second category covers excuses pointing to external factors bringing about the damage, such as problems with the fish food.

(87) ... I think that the fish food was gone off. I’ve thrown it away. [Ef-1/35]
(88) Navernoe, korm byl plochoj ili rybki bol’nye. [Rm-1/43]
‘Probably, the food was bad or the fish ill.’

Since problems with the quality of the water are more realistic in Poland and Russia, arguments referring to them were found only in the two Slavic languages:

(89) Były problemy z wodą, dosypali jakiegoś środka odkażającego, rybki nie wytrzymały. [Pf-1/24]
‘There were problems with the water, they added some disinfectant and the fish couldn’t bear it.’

(90) Navernoe voda s chlorom na nich plocho dejstvuet! [Rm-1/18]
‘Probably chlorinated water is bad for them!’

Justifications were the most frequent face-threatening strategy in scenario 1 and they were particularly popular in the Russian data. The main argument provided was the lack of time suggested in the description of the scenario.

(91) ... ostatnio miałam tyle spraw na głowie, że nie zawsze byłam w stanie, aby nakarmić rybki. [Pf-1/49]
‘... I have had so many things on my mind lately that I wasn’t always able to feed the fish.’

(92) ... u menja bylo malo svobodnogo vremeni i ja ne smogla sledit’ za nimi často.
‘... I had little free time and couldn’t look after them often.’ [Rf-1/29]

Speakers of the two Slavic languages, in particular, pointed out their lack of experience in dealing with pets:
Example (93) contains two different account types, and although viewed in isolation, the second account would be classified as admission of facts, the justification preceding it links these facts with the offender’s incompetence and transforms it into a confession.

The Polish data include the highest frequency of accounts accepting responsibility. This strategy was not only less frequent in the English data, but the formulations were much more careful than those used by the Polish and Russian respondents, who chose more self-critical and emotional expressions.

Interestingly, speakers of all three languages also admitted responsibility for an offence which they regarded as less severe than the one committed. Several confessed to having overfed the fish, which has the advantage of showing good will, the reason for the offence being incompetence rather than carelessness, as illustrated by the justification accompanying this account in example (99):

One English respondent even preferred to confess that she lost the keys to the hearer’s flat to admitting that she was too busy to keep the promise:

Although speakers of all three languages used very similar arguments when providing accounts, there are interesting culture-specific tendencies emerging from the data. The English respondents not only showed a very strong preference for face-saving accounts, but whether they denied or admitted responsibility, they did so in a rather indirect, defensive way.
The Polish subjects reduced their responsibility by referring to factors beyond their control, such as excuses and justifications claiming lack of competence, but they also used relatively many self-critical admissions of responsibility. The relatively low preference for strategies denying responsibility, paralleled by the high number of justifications in the Russian data, in contrast, shows that the Russian respondents adhered most closely to the information supplied in the scenario. It appears that they regard lack of time as a sufficient form of justification under the given circumstances to a greater degree than speakers of the other two languages.

8.2.1.2 Scenario 2

In scenario 2 (Video tapes), 66 British, 77 Polish, and 58 Russian subjects used accounts. The realisations are less varied and the responses include considerably fewer downgrading accounts and combinations of account strategies than those used in scenario 1. Downgrading accounts are again most frequent in the English data, where they amount to 12 instances.

Table 9. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 2</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-criticism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responses including accounts</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responsibility was denied either by blaming the hearer or by asserting that her request has been complied with:

(101) Well, I handed them back to the shop on time. [Em-2/45]

(102) Daj mi spokój, w końcu to twoje kasety. [Pm-2/35]

‘Leave me alone, after all they’re your tapes.’

Justifications were by far the most frequent account strategy. The description of the situation names ‘forgetting’ as the reason for the offence, and it was taken up by nearly all respondents using justifications. In most cases, intensification was added:
Polish and Russian subjects, in particular, named additional circumstances that made their forgetfulness more pardonable. As examples (107) and (108) illustrate, justifications based on the offenders’ personal shortcomings overlap with the category of self-criticism:

(106) Znaeš’, ja sovsem zabyla pro kassety. Mnogo bylo del. [Rf-2/33]  
‘You know, I totally forgot about the tapes. There were many things (to do).’

(107) But you know my brain’s like a sieve! [Ef-1/26]  
(108) Ostatnio jestem taka roztargniona. [Pf-2/2]  
‘I’ve been so absent-minded lately.’

Scenario 2 has elicited the highest frequency of formulaic admissions of guilt, especially in the Polish data. The strong preference for this strategy seems to be, on the one hand, related to the speaker’s responsibility being so obvious that the face-threat involved in admitting it is relatively low. On the other hand, the admissions of guilt were mostly used in connection with offers of repair, thus providing the reason for offering compensation:

(109) That was totally my fault. I’ll give you the money. [Ef-2/48]  
(110) Zapłacę. W końcu to moja wina. [Pm-2/14]  
‘I’ll pay. After all this is my fault.’

The following Russian responses exemplify the varying degrees of face-threat underlying different realisations of explicit admissions of responsibility: From a conditional structure questioning one’s guilt (111) and an indirect admission of responsibility realised by negating the possibility of the hearer being responsible (112) to a self-humiliating expression of the speaker’s wish to be freed from his guilt (113).

(111) ... esli ja vinoven to gotov za tebja uladit’ problemy. [Rm-2/38]  
‘... if I’m guilty, I’m ready to solve the problems for you.’

(112) Davaj ja zaplaču, ved’ eto ne tvoja vina. [Rf-2/7]  
‘Let me pay, after all it’s not your fault.’

(113) ... ne mog by ja iskupit’ svoju vinu? [Rm-2/22]  
‘... couldn’t I expiate my guilt?’
Whereas examples (111) and (112) combine a statement of responsibility with an offer of repair, response (113) consists of a formulaic expression serving both functions.

Finally, a few expressions of self-criticism were found in the English and Polish data.

(114) I’m completely useless! [Ef-2/49]
(115) Przepraszam, że zawiodłam. [Ps-2/4]

‘I apologise for disappointing you.’

These two examples illustrate the different ways of expressing self-criticism by my English and Polish subjects. While the former were more likely to resort to critical remarks concerning their person, the latter preferred to critically portray their offensive behaviour – with example (115) illustrating the function of sentential complements as devices upgrading the illocutionary force of the IFID.

On the whole, there is a great degree of agreement in dealing with the situation described in scenario 2, with a focus on justifications and formulaic admissions of guilt in all three languages. Again, there is a stronger preference for accounts denying responsibility in the English and a particularly high frequency of face-threatening accounts in the Polish data.

8.2.1.3 Summary category I

As the above discussion has shown, despite similar contextual conditions, the preferences for account strategies in the two scenarios comprising category I vary greatly. Not only has scenario 1 elicited more than twice as many account strategies as has scenario 2, but a much greater proportion of these accounts occupy the low end of the face-threat continuum.

The decisive factor responsible for the higher number of face-saving and the lower number of face-threatening accounts in scenario 1 seems to be the higher probability of the offence happening without the speaker’s contribution, resulting in a greater possibility of concealing one’s offensive behaviour.

While the fish could indeed have died despite having been fed as instructed, the circumstances of the offence described in scenario 2, and particularly the call from the video shop, make it difficult to act innocently or provide excuses. In addition, since the speaker’s involvement in the offence is obvious, explicit admissions of responsibility are less face-threatening than in scenario 1 and, therefore, much more frequent. Justifications, in contrast, seem to entail a comparatively high degree of face-threat since the phrase ‘I forgot’ could also be interpreted as a confession. Accordingly, while in responses to scenario 1, a considerable proportion of the subjects tried to save face by avoiding admitting the truth, the offence described in scenario 2 being difficult to deny, face-saving strategies could easily result in a second offence and were, therefore, avoided.
8.2.2 Category II

Category II consists of space offences involving strangers. Despite the high social distance characterising the relationship between the interlocutors, offences of this type generally result in brief encounters that do not involve much face-threat. In the present data, this is not only illustrated by the high frequency of formulaic apologies (see Chapter 10.2.1) but also by the restricted choice of account strategies.

8.2.2.1 Scenario 3

In scenario 3 (Mistaking a stranger), nearly all subjects used accounts in their responses while showing a strong preference for upgrading accounts. Since combinations of account strategies were rarely employed, their frequency is similar to the number of responses, amounting to 102 tokens in the English, 120 in the Polish, and 113 in the Russian data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 3</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses including accounts</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opt out</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The account types used in scenario 3 are largely limited to justifications, which constitute 86% of all accounts, and excuses, which make up 11% of the accounts used in this scenario. The justifications largely adhere to the description provided in the scenario:

(116) ... thought you were someone else. [Em-3/5]
(117) Myślałam, że jesteś moim kolegą. [Pf-3/32]  
‘I thought that you were my friend.’
(118) Ja vas pereputala so svoim prijatelem. [Rf-3/21]  
‘I’ve mixed you up with my friend.’
Excuses have been defined as differing from justifications by providing external rather than internal mitigating circumstances leading up to the offence. In scenario 2, the external factor made responsible for the offence was the similarity between the person offended and the one who he has been mistaken for:

(119) ... you really look like my friend. [Ef-3/16]
(120) ... jest pan niesamowicie podobny do mojego kolegi. [Pm-3/18]
  ‘... you're unbelievably similar to my friend.’
(121) Vy tak pochoţi na moego prijatelja. [Rm-3/49]
  ‘You're so similar to my friend.’

As these examples illustrate, the excuses and justifications used in situation 3 are comparable in terms of efficiency and the face-threat involved in performing them. Especially elliptic expressions such as ‘wrong person’ (You are the wrong person – excuse) and ‘pomyłka’ [mistake] (I have made a mistake – justification) serve virtually the same function.

Apart from the lower frequency of excuses in the English data, there is another notable difference between the use of this strategy in English and the two Slavic languages. While the English respondents tended to use either excuses or justifications, most Polish and Russian responses containing an excuse combined it with a justification:

(122) ... pomyliłam pana z moim kolegą. Jest pan bardzo do niego podobny.
  ‘I've mixed you (V-form) up with my friend. You're very similar to him.’ [Pf-3/16]
(123) ... ja oboznalsja. Vy prosto očen’ pochoži na odnogo moego znakomogo.
  lit. ‘I've misknown myself. You (V-form) are simply very similar to an acquaintance of mine.’ [Rm-3/7]

Even though excuses have been defined as having a stronger face-saving tendency than justifications, in these responses, they are employed as additional arguments making the incident more plausible. A comparison between the function excuses serve in responses to scenario 3 and those employed in scenario 1, in particular, illustrates the significance of both situational and linguistic context in interpreting account strategies. In both cases, excuses provide external reasons for the occurrence of the offence. However, in scenario 1, they are used with the intention of avoiding responsibility, for which purpose it is necessary to resort to lies, whereas in scenario 3, they have been largely used to add credibility to the non-intentionality of the offence. Therefore, although the speakers of the two Slavic languages used more excuses than the English respondents, in scenario 3, this strategy does not constitute an attempt to avoid responsibility. Indeed, the excuses found in the English data display a stronger
face-saving tendency since the English respondents generally did not combine them with justifications.

On the whole, the responses to scenario 3 are characterised by a strong agreement across languages in using justifications as the most appropriate account type under the given circumstances. While the ambiguity of the offender’s behaviour makes it necessary to provide an explanation, it is neither possible for the speaker to deny having hit the hearer, nor is it necessary to admit responsibility for it.

8.2.2.2 Scenario 4
The preferences for accounts in scenario 4 (Heavy door) differ significantly between English and the two Slavic languages. While there are 80 accounts in the Polish and 73 in the Russian data, only 38 British respondents selected this strategy in their responses to scenario 4. Moreover, two English subjects opted out by suggesting that they would “just walk away”. As in scenario 3, the majority of the accounts are face-threatening to the speaker. The two most frequently employed account types are lack of intent and a realisation of justification closely related to lack of intent, namely claim of non-awareness.

The denials of responsibility that were used by the British and Russian subjects consisted in blaming the hearer:

(124) Look where you are going! [Em-4/26]
(125) Nado byt’ vnimatel’nym. [Rm-4/42]
‘One needs to be attentive.’

The Polish subjects preferred excuses making the door responsible for the offence:

(126) ... te drzwi są takie ciężkie. [Pf-4/29]
‘... this door is so heavy.’

They also used roughly twice as many justifications as did the speakers of the other two languages:

(127) ... naprawdę nie zauważyłem, że ktoś idzie za mną. [Pm-4/13]
‘... I really didn’t notice that someone was walking behind me.’

While in the Polish and the English data justifications are the most frequent account strategy, the Russian data contain a high number of strategies expressing lack of intent:

(128) Ja pravda ne chotela. [Rf-4/19]
‘I truly didn’t want to.’
(129) Ėto polučilos’ słučajno. [Rf-4/35]
‘This happened accidentally.’
Account realisations at the face-threatening end of the continuum, such as expressions of self-criticism, were most frequent in the Polish data:

(130) ... niezdara ze mnie, powinienem bardziej uważać. [Pm-4/29]
‘... what a clumsy guy I am, I should pay more attention.’

Scenario 4 features an offence that does not necessarily require any explanations on the part of the offender. Accordingly, the British respondents kept their responses brief and avoided unnecessary confrontation. The Polish and Russian respondents used nearly twice as many accounts as did the British subjects, which shows them more inclined to communicate with strangers. The different approaches in dealing with this situation taken by members of a negative and two positive politeness cultures illustrate the varying assessments of social distance in these cultures. Another interesting difference between the Russian and the Polish responses is that the former emphasised the accidental nature of the offence, while the latter contained numerous justifications and expressions of self-criticism, portraying the Poles as particularly effusive and communicative.

### 8.2.2.3 Summary category II

The preferences for account strategies differ between the two scenarios making up category II and in the extent of these disparities in the three languages – though these differences are less marked than in category I. While Polish and Russian respondents used 1.5 times as many accounts in scenario 3 as they did in scenario 4, in the English data – with a total of 102 account strategies in scenario 3
and only 38 in scenario 4 – this discrepancy is nearly twice as big as in the two Slavic languages.

The factor responsible for the quantitative differences between the two scenarios seems to be the victim's knowledge of the offence. While the circumstances of the offence described in scenario 4 are fairly transparent, in situation 3, the speaker's offensive behaviour is unexpected and unusual, the need to explain it leading to a higher number of accounts. Furthermore, while the offence in scenario 4 is caused by the speaker's inattentiveness, that described in situation 3 consists in treating a stranger in an over-familiar way. The deed itself, despite its deliberate character, would not be offensive with the intended person involved in it, and may be perceived as less offensive when explained. This difference leads to a high frequency of justifications in scenario 3 and a preference for various accounts expressing lack of intent and awareness in scenario 4.

8.2.3 Category III

Category III includes two scenarios based on medium social distance and high social power. In both scenarios, the speaker is dependent on the hearer and, therefore, particularly interested in maintaining social harmony. This status difference can be expected to result in a particularly careful use of account strategies, focusing on the hearer's face needs.

Both offences affect the hearer's possessions, scenario 5 (Professor's book) additionally entailing breaking a promise and scenario 6 (Landlady) a violation of the hearer's right to non-distraction. As in category I, one of the scenarios, namely scenario 5, depicts an offence which can be more easily denied and concealed than that described in scenario 6.

8.2.3.1 Scenario 5

Scenario 5 elicited 102 accounts from the English, 115 from the Polish and 78 from the Russian subjects. Although the majority of the accounts were classified as upgrading, most justifications had a face-saving function: They referred to mitigating circumstances not provided in the description of the scenario, or even contradicting the information supplied.

Strategies occupying the low end of the face-threat continuum were used almost exclusively by the British respondents, who denied responsibility and acted innocently:

(131) I put it on your desk after the lecture. [Em-5/50]
(132) I thought I'd given back. [Em-5/20]
When using excuses, speakers of all three languages resorted to the same three invented arguments. Some asserted that the book has been stolen and, thus, cannot be returned (133), others were still hoping to find it and were merely delaying the confrontation (134), still others did not conceal the fact that the book has been misplaced, but made some external circumstances responsible for the book’s absence (135):

(133) … nie jestem w stanie oddać Panu książki, ponieważ okradli mnie w pociągu. ‘… I'm not able to give you the book back because I was robbed on the train.’ [Pf-5/30]

(134) My friend borrowed it from me and hasn't returned it yet. [Ef-5/50]

(135) U menja v kvartire remont, tak čto mne nado nemnogo vremeni, čtoby ee najti. [Rm-5/43]

‘I'm decorating the flat, so that I need some time to find it.’

Polish respondents, especially, used the strategy admission of facts, thus merely stating the temporary unavailability of the book:

(136) … nie mam przy sobie książki, którą miałem oddać. [Pm-5/6]

‘… I don’t have the book with me that I had to give back.’

Justifications were also most frequent in the Polish data. They can be subdivided into two groups of arguments, both supplying information contrary to that given in the description of the scenario. One of them consists in claiming that the speaker still needs the book and / or finds it particularly interesting or useful. By pointing out the usefulness of the book and their interest in it, the respondents sought to placate the addressee and at the same time provided a valid reason for
The absence of the book. This form of justification was usually accompanied by a request asking permission to keep the book longer or return it later:

(137) Can I just borrow it a little while longer? I'm finding it really helpful. [Em-5/14]
(138) ... czy mogłabym jeszcze zatrzymać tę książkę na kilka dni? Bardzo mnie zainteresowała. [Pf-5/24]
   ‘... could I keep this book for a few more days? I find it very interesting.’
(139) Bezumno interesnaja kniga. No k sožaleniju ja ee ešče ne dočital. Možno ja nemogo ee zaderžu? [Rm-5/35]
   ‘Madly interesting book. But unfortunately I haven't finished reading it. May I keep it a bit longer?’

The other, more frequently used argument justifying the absence of the book is less efficient in that it displays a more careless attitude on the part of the speaker and does not attend to the hearer’s positive face. The subjects attempted to protect their face by claiming to have forgotten the book at home, thus reducing the severity of the offence. Similarly to the justification claiming that the book is interesting and still being used, this argument is clearly a lie, for the offender has looked for the book and has not found it. Being thus preoccupied with it, he or she was far from forgetting about it.

(140) ... I have forgotten to bring the book with me today. [Ef-5/5]
(141) Ja zabyl vzjat’ segodnja ėtu knigu ... [Rm-5/10]
   ‘I’ve forgotten to take this book today ...’

What distinguishes the Polish justifications from those occurring in the other two languages is not only their much higher frequency, but also the tendency to supply additional arguments making them more plausible:

(142) Zaspałam rano i pakowałam się w pośpiechu i zapomniałam włożyć pana książkę do torebki. [Pf-5/33]
   ‘I overslept this morning and was packing in a hurry and I forgot to put your book into the bag.’

The most face-threatening account type used in scenario 5 consists of a confession admitting that the book has been or may be lost. The preference for this strategy varies greatly across languages, with the Polish respondents being most reluctant to admit the truth.

The formulations further differ in the implied optimism as to the probability of retrieving the book, also reflected in the formulations of the offers of repair accompanying them. Responses implying that the book will be found and returned (143), (144) may be interpreted as displaying a stronger face-saving tendency than those indicating that the book has been lost and will be replaced (145), (146).
164 On Apologising

(143) I’ve misplaced the book that you lent me. I’ll have to have another look for it. [Ef-5/1]
(144) ... ta książka gdzieś się zapodziała i jeszcze jej nie znalazłam, ale na pewno to zrobię. [Pf-5/11]
   ‘... this book got misplaced somewhere and I haven’t found it yet, but I cer-
   tainly will.’

In the following examples, in contrast, the speakers admit that they do not expect to get hold of the book again:

(145) I’ll have to buy you a new one. Sorry I lost it. [Em-5/5]
(146) Ja poterjala knigu. Možno ja oplaču ee stoimost’? [Rf-5/3]
   ‘I lost the book. Could I pay its value?’

The selection and formulation of account strategies in scenario 5 illustrate the respondents’ awareness of the importance of maintaining harmony with a status superior addressee. The decision to reveal or conceal the real circumstances of the offence is indicative of the perceived face-threat underlying the encounter and of considerations concerning the ensuing consequences for the future relationship with the professor. By concealing the true nature of the offence, the respondents reduced its severity and the corresponding damage to the hearer’s and the speaker’s positive face.

Denials of responsibility, which were found nearly exclusively in the English data, display a rather careless attitude towards the hearer’s higher social status, whereas admissions of responsibility, prevailing in the English and Russian data, suggest not only that those using them are concerned about the future relationship with the professor, but perhaps also that they do not assess the situation as particularly face-threatening.

The Polish responses suggest a particularly high assessment of social power, as illustrated by the marked preference for justifications redefining the offence in the Polish data. Although these justifications are likely to have an upgrading function for an addressee who is not aware of the real circumstances of the offence, the evasive, invented arguments concealing the real offence constitute face-saving strategies minimising the severity of the offence. It is the hearer’s ignorance of the exact circumstances of the offence that makes it possible to present him with a less offensive version of it and to minimise damage to both parties’ face.

8.2.3.2 Scenario 6

In response to the Landlady’s complaint in scenario 6, 89 British, 78 Polish, and only 53 Russian respondents provided accounts, and roughly half of them had a downgrading function. As Table 13 illustrates, speakers of all three languages
mainly denied responsibility, minimised the severity of the offence and justified their behaviour.

Table 13. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 6</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses including accounts</td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies denying responsibility for the offence consisted in shifting the blame to the neighbours or flat mates:

(147) I was out last night but my mates had a party. [Em-6/1]
(148) Ėto bylo ne u menja, a v sosednej kvartire. [Rm-6/9]
‘This wasn’t at my place, but in the neighbouring flat.’

Account strategies with a minimising function mostly referred to the frequency of the offence:

(149) It’s not like we do this very often though. [Em-6/34]
(150) Do tej pory zawsze było spokojnie ... [Pm-6/8]
‘Up to the present it was always quiet ...’

Excuses appear mainly in the English and the Polish data and generally consist in blaming somebody else for turning the party into an offence:

(151) Some tearaways from a neighbouring house crashed my private dinner party. [Em-6/11]
(152) ... koleżanka przyprowadziła ze sobą osoby, których nie знаłem i których nie mogłem się pozbyć. [Pm-6/26]
‘... a friend brought with her persons whom I didn’t know and couldn’t get rid of.’
Admissions of facts occur almost exclusively in the English data and are usually accompanied by hedges minimising the offence:

(153) We had a bit of a party. [Em-6/21]
(154) We had a couple of friends over. [Ef-6/3]

A frequent realisation of justifications appearing in all three sets of data consists in naming a special occasion for the party:

(155) ... it was my mate's 21st birthday, so it's quite an important night for her. [Ef-6/44]
(156) Z kolegami ze studiów świętowaliśmy zdane egzaminy. [Pf-6/18]
    'We were celebrating passing exams with friends from university.'
(157) Provožali parnja v armiju. [Rf-6/10]
    'We were sending a guy off to the army.'

English and Russian respondents also justified their behaviour by claiming non-awareness (158 and 159), and English and Polish respondents expressed lack of control (160 and 161):

(158) ... we didn't realise we were being loud. [Em-6/25]
(159) Ja ne znala, čto nas bylo tak gromko slyšno. [Rf-6/25]
    'I didn't know that we could be heard so loudly.'
(160) Things got a bit out of hand. [Em-6/43]
(161) ... goście się tak schodzili i schodzili. [Pf-6/34]
    '... the guests kept coming and coming.'

Since lack of control reduces the speaker's responsibility for the offence, it overlaps with the category of excuses. While expressions of lack of control and excuses are absent from the Russian data, the Russian subjects were the only ones naming their young age as a factor justifying their behaviour:

(162) ... my molodye, sami ponimaete, takie že byli v svoi gody. [Rm-6/43]
    '... we are young, you understand, you were like that in your years.'

The few instances of lack of intent identified among the responses to scenario 6 took the form of expressions of good will:

(163) I tried to get everyone to keep the noise down. [Em-6/48]
(164) Staraliśmy się być cicho ... [Pf-6/38]
    'We tried to be quiet.'

Admissions of responsibility were rarely employed, and the face-threat inherent in their realisations differs across languages. Since the description of the scenario includes a complaint, most realisations confirm the addressee's right to be upset:
Although the hearer’s complaint makes it difficult to pretend that the offence has not taken place, speakers of all languages denied responsibility, e.g. by shifting the blame to the neighbours. What distinguishes the English from the Polish and Russian data is the occurrence of admissions of facts, which – in the light of the complaint – were apparently regarded as superfluous by speakers of the two Slavic languages.

Although the frequencies of the remaining account types suggest a high degree of agreement across languages, a closer look at their realisations shows some interesting culture-specific ways of dealing with the situation. The Russian responses, in particular, are characterised by a general avoidance of accounts transferring responsibility to factors beyond their control. They not only did not regard it as necessary to provide excuses, but also did not attempt, as did the English and Polish respondents, to justify their behaviour by claiming to have lost control over the situation. The Russian data also illustrate a different perception of the severity of the offence, reflected in the arguments claiming that young people have the right to celebrate parties, in particular when there is a special occasion.

8.2.3.3  Summary category III

Despite similar contextual conditions underlying the two scenarios comprising category III, the preferences for accounts differ greatly in the two scenarios. As in category I, a major factor responsible for the differences in the use of account strategies in the two scenarios seems to be the hearer’s knowledge of the offence. The professor’s ignorance of the exact whereabouts of his book in scenario 5, necessitating some form of confession, allows for the use of accounts providing invented reasons for its absence. The offence described in scenario 6, in contrast, is more difficult to conceal, the hearer having witnessed it, and the damage being still visible. Furthermore, whereas in scenario 5, accounts avoiding the acceptance of responsibility are related to the professor’s higher social status, the low number of admissions of responsibility in scenario 6 is mainly due to the complaint depicting the speaker as responsible for the offence.
8.2.4 Category IV

The main factor distinguishing the two scenarios comprising category IV from the remaining ones is their legal context, entailing a different type of consequences for the offender and virtually no threat to the hearer’s face. Therefore, the responses to scenarios 7 (Security guard) and 8 (Ticket inspector) can be expected to include a high number of accounts, in particular those occupying the centre of the face-threat continuum. While accounts explicitly accepting responsibility for a legal offence are likely to be perceived as too risky, denials of responsibility may be interpreted as un-cooperative.

8.2.4.1 Scenario 7

The ambiguous character of scenario 7, allowing the hearer to interpret the speaker’s conduct as purposely criminal, has led to the use of a range of accounts protesting the speaker’s innocence. In the light of the potential legal consequences, a great majority of the respondents employed a combination of several accounts. The English respondents used a total of 161, the Polish subjects 190, and the Russian subjects 143 account strategies. Justifications were the preferred account type. They make up roughly two thirds of all the accounts used in this scenario, while most of the remaining accounts express lack of intent.

Table 14. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account Type</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self criticism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>161</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses including accounts</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opt out</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those denying responsibility in scenario 7 preferred to do so indirectly, i.e. by acting innocently. While it seems rather risky to employ explicit denials in legal contexts, in particular on their own, acting innocently may be interpreted as a proof of one’s innocence or at least of lack of intent.
(168) Czy mógłby mi pan pomóc? Ile kosztuje ta płyta? [Pm-7/28]
    ‘Could you help me? How much does this CD cost?’
(169) V čem problema? Ja sobirajus’ kupit’ ego. [Rm-7/13]
    ‘What’s the problem? I’m going to buy it.’

Excuses, mostly taking the form of passive constructions, occur mainly in the English data:

(170) ... I got distracted by my friend! [Ef-7/43]

The arguments used by the respondents in the numerous justifications they provided in scenario 7 mostly evolved from the description of the scenario. They claimed that they were engrossed in a conversation (171), forgot (172) and didn’t realise or notice (173):

(171) I was chatting away ... [Em-7/42]
(172) A ta płyta – zupełnie zapomniałem. [Pm-7/22]
    ‘Oh the CD – I totally forgot.’
(173) ... ja ne zametila, čto ne zaplatila. [Rf-7/44]
    ‘... I didn’t notice that I haven’t paid.’

Lack of intent is the second most frequent strategy used in scenario 7, and four different ways of expressing it can be distinguished in all three languages. While formulations explicitly referring to the offence (174) appear with similar frequencies in all three languages, neutral expressions of non-intentionality (175) were mainly employed by the Russian respondents. Another possibility of stating lack of intent, favoured by the English subjects, is by claiming to have intended the opposite (176):

(174) I had no intention of steeling it. [Em-7/4]
(175) Ja ne naročno. [Rf-7/42]
    ‘I didn’t (do it) on purpose.’
(176) I meant to buy this. [Ef-7/15]

Polish respondents, in contrast, showed a strong preference for logical proofs, defined as “the best way of raising doubts about a case” (Cody & McLaughlin 1990: 231) and, thus, an effective strategy in legal contexts:

(177) No przecież, gdybym chciał ją ukrasić, nie trzymałbym jej w ręku. To jest chyba jasne. [Pm-7/31]
    ‘But if I wanted to steal it I wouldn’t be holding it in my hand. This seems to be clear.’
According to Scott and Lyman (1968), simple expressions of non-intentionality or non-awareness may not appear sufficiently credible, which is why they are often supported by additional arguments justifying lack of foresight. Hence, many responses, in particular in the Polish data, combined several account strategies.

(178) Nie uwierzy mi pan, ale tak się zagadałam, że zupełnie zapomniałam o płycie trzymanej w ręku. (...) To wszystko przez to, że jestem taka zabiegana i zupełnie straciłam głowę. [Pf-7/13]
‘You won’t believe me, but I got involved in talking so much that I completely forgot about the CD I’m holding in my hand. (...) This is all because I’m so busy that I completely lost my mind.’

Understandably, expressions of responsibility acceptance were avoided in scenario 7. The few accounts involving a high degree of face-threat that were used in this scenario were mostly expressions of embarrassment (179) and expressions of self-criticism (180):

(179) This is embarrassing. [Ef-7/10]
(180) Ale ze mnie głupek ... [Pm-7/14]
‘What an idiot I am ...’

On the whole, account strategies explicitly accepting or denying responsibility were infrequent in scenario 7, with the exception of acting innocently, which was used in order to emphasise one’s innocence and the accidental nature of the offence. Formulaic realisations of face-threatening strategies, such as expressions of embarrassment and self-criticism, in contrast, were employed to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation rather than to admit responsibility for its outcome.

The distribution of account strategies in scenario 7 shows strong agreement among speakers of all three languages to use expressions justifying their behaviour and emphasising lack of intent. However, both account types can be further divided into several sub-strategies, which appear with varying frequencies across languages. The preferences for formulaic expressions of non-intentionality in the Russian data and logical proofs in the Polish data, in particular, seem to illustrate culture-specific perceptions of the situation.

8.2.4.2 Scenario 8
The offence described in scenario 8 elicited 132 accounts from the British, 165 from the Polish, and 117 account strategies from the Russian subjects. The responses to this scenario include the highest number of the strategy opt out; mainly used by British and Russian subjects who indicated that they would not react verbally or described an attempt to avoid the confrontation.
Verbal denials, mainly used by the English and Polish respondents, consist either in acting innocently or claiming that the ticket has been purchased:

(183) Um, hang on, I put it in my pocket when I bought it yesterday. Oh fuck, these are the wrong jeans. [Em-8/34]

### Table 15. Distribution of account types across languages in scenario 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 8</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>132</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses including accounts</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opt out</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The English and Polish respondents also showed a preference for excuses transferring the responsibility for not being able to present the ticket to some other party:

(184) Sorry, my mum has our tickets, she’s just gone to the loo and will be back soon. [Ef-8/39]

(185) Opiekun naszej wycieczki jest w drugim wagonie. [Pm-8/44]

‘The supervisor of our excursion is in the second carriage.’

While these excuses imply that the ticket has been purchased and will be presented at some later stage – thus overlapping with denials of responsibility – the following examples differ in that they admit the absence of a ticket. The spontaneous character of some of them resembles the category acting innocently:

(186) O nie! Ktoś ukradł mi portfel, miałam tam bilet! [Pf-8/24]

‘O no! Somebody has stolen my purse, I had my ticket in it!’

(187) ... u menja ukrali košelek. [Rf-8/3]

‘... my purse got stolen.’
Finally, the data contain excuses admitting the lack of the ticket and the speaker's knowledge of it when boarding the train, but claiming the impracticability of purchasing a ticket:

(188) The ticket machine had broken in the station. [Em-8/9]
(189) Kasa na dworcu była nieczynna. [Pf-8/30]
   'The till at the station was closed.'

Admissions of fact were particularly popular, with more than half of the occurrences of this strategy in the corpus (84 out of 161) appearing in responses to scenario 8:

(190) U menja net bileta. [Rf-8/30]
   'I don't have a ticket.'

This strategy was generally accompanied by offers of repair, while speakers who did not offer repair probably expected a request for repair, i.e. a fine, from the hearer.

Respondents providing justifications either adhered to the information provided in the scenario (191) or claimed that the ticket or the wallet in which it was kept was left at home or lost (192):

(191) W ostatniej chwili wbieglam do pociągu. [Pf-8/1]
   'I've run into the train in the last moment.'
(192) I think that I have lost my ticket! [Em-8/1]

The respondents also provided personal reasons justifying the offence. The Russian respondents, in particular, used the argument of being a poor student and not being able to afford a ticket:

(193) ... ja bednyj student, kotoromu neobchodimo doechat’ do svoej devuški.
   ‘... I’m a poor student who needs to get to his girlfriend.’ [Rm-8/31]

Finally, Polish respondents justified the absence of the ticket by explaining that they were just about to look for the inspector in order to purchase one.

(194) Dzień dobry. Właśnie wsiadłam do pociągu i chciałabym kupić u pani bilet.
   'Good afternoon. I’ve just boarded the train and would like to purchase a ticket from you.' [Pf-8/32]

Such behaviour suggests that the speaker either does not perceive or pretends not to perceive the situation as an offence. This response can be regarded as belonging to a different speech event than that suggested in the description of
the scenario, hence showing an extremely face-saving tendency, comparable to that of opting out.

Generally, speakers of all three languages avoided using face-threatening accounts. However, the responses can be nevertheless subdivided into those in which responsibility is avoided and those in which it is accepted. The decisive factor underlying this distinction is whether the arguments used to account for the lack of ticket conform to the description of the scenario, i.e. whether the speaker admits responsibility for deliberately boarding a train without a valid ticket.

While many of the accounts were meant to avoid the penalty by denying responsibility and providing made-up excuses or justifications, admissions of facts and justifications consistent with the description of the scenario are the only strategies admitting the truth. Despite language-specific preferences, these ‘truthful’ accounts are equally frequent in all three languages, and amount to roughly half of the accounts used in scenario 8. Responses combining these account types constitute the most face-threatening approach in this scenario:

(195) I had to run to catch the train, so I didn’t get a chance to get a ticket.

(196) Niestety, ale nie mam biletu. Nie zdążyłam go kupić. W ostatniej chwili wbiegłam do pociągu. ‘Unfortunately, I don’t have a ticket. I didn’t have time to buy it. I ran into the train in the last moment.’

(197) Ja bežala, opazdyvala ... i sela v poslednij moment – ne uspela kupit’ bilet. ‘I was running and was late ... and boarded in the last moment – I didn’t manage to buy a ticket.’

Despite the surprisingly equal distribution between responses denying and accepting responsibility across languages, the discrepancies in the way the situation was approached point to cultural differences in the perception of the situation. The Russian responses, in particular, suggest a deviant assessment of the offence’s severity. While acting innocently and excuses were rarely employed, the following example of opting out illustrates the careless attitude of a Russian passenger travelling without a ticket:

(198) Sdelaju čto i vse – perejdu v drugoj vagon i na ostanovke perebegu v uže proverennuju čast’ električki. ‘I’ll do what everybody (does) – I’ll go into another carriage and at the (next) stop run into the already checked part of the train.’
8.2.4.3 Summary category IV
The analysis of account strategies used in the two legal offences confirms one of the main results emerging from the previously discussed categories, namely that factors other than social power and distance inherent in the two legal offences play an important role in the respondents’ selection of account strategies.

Although the overall quantity of account strategies is similar in both scenarios, the number of downgrading accounts used in scenario 8 is more than six times as high as that established for scenario 7. Clearly, some of the account strategies were viewed as appropriate in one situation and avoided in the other. This is especially true for the strategy admission of facts, which reaches its highest frequency in scenario 8 and does not appear at all among the responses to scenario 7. The avoidance of this strategy in this scenario is related to the fact that the speaker is likely to be accused of something more than he or she has done, which may have far-reaching consequences. Therefore, the phrase ‘I don’t have a ticket’ in scenario 8 is far less face-threatening than ‘I have walked pass the till without paying’ would be in scenario 7. Instead, most responses to scenario 7 include formulations aiming at explaining the accidental nature of the offence. Realisations of the strategy lack of intent include allusions to the potential interpretation of the offence and justifications provide additional reasons justifying the speaker’s inattentiveness as well as logical proofs of their innocence. Face-threatening accounts were avoided, confirming the risk involved in admitting responsibility in legal contexts.

What further distinguishes the two scenarios is that scenario 8 describes an offence which is, to some extent, deliberate, making strategies expressing lack of intent implausible. Apart from the time pressure, which may be used as an argument to justify the offence, no other reasons are provided in the description of the scenario, leaving it entirely up to the respondents to resort to arguments they regard as most effective in the respective countries.

8.3 Evaluation
The analysis of accounts has yielded some interesting insights into the manifold functions of account strategies, the importance of context in selecting and interpreting them, and into the preferences for the various account types in the examined languages. The broad category of accounts, subsuming the previously suggested strategies explanation and taking on responsibility, as well as its subdivision into ten account types according to the degree of responsibility acceptance and the face-threat underlying them, have proved useful in elucidating culture-specific ways of dealing with offensive situations.
As the analysis has shown, an important factor motivating the selection of accounts referring to the contents of the offence or their formulaic realisations, focusing on the speaker’s responsibility, is the hearer’s knowledge of the circumstances leading up to the offence. Hence, the distinction between explanations and statements of responsibility used in most previous studies does not necessarily reflect culture-specific preferences. A classification of accounts according to their upgrading or downgrading function, in contrast, allows for an analysis of cultural differences in the perception of the need to restore H’s damaged face and protect one’s own. Account realisations at the two ends of the continuum can both be either formulaic or semantically reflect the contents of the offence, whereas realisations occupying the centre of the scale, and constituting a great proportion of the accounts used, necessarily refer to the circumstances of the offence.

Although the analysis has largely validated the suggested order, it has also shown that the face-threat underlying a particular account type is context-dependent. The importance of linguistic context in interpreting account realisations in terms of face-threat can be illustrated by the function excuses may serve when combined with upgrading accounts. Although excuses name external factors responsible for the offence, when combined with justifications, they can add credibility to the portrayal of the circumstances leading up to the offence, thus upgrading the illocutionary force of the response.

Situational context is not only crucial when interpreting the face-threat inherent in the selected account realisations, but it also restricts the choice of account types. The present study has revealed a number of contextual factors other than social power and distance leading to a preference for or avoidance of particular account strategies.

What distinguishes the two legal offences from the remaining ones, for instance, is that they involve no direct threat to the hearer’s face, which automatically leads to a greater concern for the speaker’s face needs, resulting in an avoidance of face-threatening accounts. However, blunt denials were also avoided, since an uncooperative attitude on the part of the offender might lead to the enforcement of the designated penalty. Accordingly, account strategies providing mitigating circumstances were regarded as most appropriate in dealing with legal offences.

Although none of the scenarios describes deliberately offensive behaviour, the extent to which the offences result purely from the speaker’s lack of foresight differs across scenarios. The offence which comes closest to being deliberate is the one described in scenario 8, the only non-intentional element being the time pressure under which the decision to board the train is made. Hence, although the responses to the two legal offences coincide in the avoidance of face-threatening strategies, most of the account strategies used in scenario 7 aim at protesting
one's innocence and expressing lack of intent, while the responses to scenario 8 include a relatively high number of admissions of facts.

Similarly, although the speaker's behaviour in scenario 3 is not deliberately offensive, the situation is not primarily based on non-intentionality. The relatively strong preference for justifications in scenario 3 is mainly related to the ambiguity of the speaker's behaviour. The offence described in scenario 4, in contrast, arises due to the speaker's inattiveness and is fairly transparent, which leads to a lower frequency of justifications and a stronger focus on expressions of lack of intent.

The most important factor that influences the choice and the interpretation of account strategies is the victim's knowledge of the circumstances leading up to the offence. First of all, it determines the choice of formulaic realisations vs. formulations semantically reflecting the contents of the offence. The more obvious the circumstances are, or the better the victim is informed about them, the more likely will the account take a formulaic form. When he or she is unaware of the offence, more information needs to be supplied. More importantly still, the hearer's ignorance of the exact circumstances of the offence leaves room for manipulation.

The sheer possibility of concealing one's responsibility for the offence has led to great differences in the selection of account strategies in category I, with scenario 1 including the highest number of face-saving strategies and scenario 2 exhibiting the strongest preference for explicit admissions of guilt. These diametrically opposed approaches to relating the offence to a friend show that speakers of all three languages took advantage of the hearer's ignorance in scenario 1. The reason why scenario 2 elicited the highest number of formulaic admissions of guilt, in contrast, seems to be related to the call from the video shop, revealing the offence and depicting the speaker as responsible for the incurred fees. The considerably fewer instances of confessions and formulaic admissions of guilt in scenario 1, however, are much more face-threatening, which again illustrates that the face-threat involved in each of the account types is context-dependent.

Furthermore, whenever the victim is not aware of the offence – as in scenarios 1 and 5 – the damage to the offender's face is delayed until a confession has been offered (see Chapter 3.3). While such offences may tempt the offender to protect his or her face by redefining the offence, offences happening with both parties present, as in the majority of the scenarios, as well as offences introduced by a complaint, as the one described in scenario 6, largely preclude this possibility.

While a complaint uttered by the victim automatically damages the offender's positive face, a confession can be avoided or at least formulated in a way reducing face-loss for the speaker. The need to explain the offensive outcome of the situation, such as the dead fish in scenario 1 or the absence of the book in scenario 5, coupled with the reluctance to lose positive face by confessing, has motivated the use of upgrading accounts redefining the offence. Both scenarios elicited
responses in which the speakers admitted responsibility for a less face-threatening variant of the offence, e.g. confessions to having overfed the fish in scenario 1 or justifications claiming that the book has been merely forgotten in scenario 5. Hence, the function of several confessions in scenario 1 and justifications in scenario 5 was to minimise the offensiveness of the situation, shifting them towards the low end of the face-threat continuum.

Accordingly, the data include account realisations matching neither the information described in the scenario nor even the speakers’ subjective perception of the offence, but versions making the incident less humiliating for them. While denials of responsibility for offences caused by the speaker clearly do not correspond to the true circumstances of the offence, the data also include excuses, justifications, and even admissions of responsibility containing information contrary to that supplied in the scenarios, clearly motivated by an attempt to reduce damage to the speaker’s face.

In real life, where a denial of responsibility may indeed be motivated by the speaker’s innocence, the interpretation is left to the hearer’s assessment of the situation. The present analysis, in contrast, being based on experimentally elicited responses, allows for making judgements on the respondents’ willingness to admit responsibility based on whether their accounts of the situation correspond to the information provided in the scenario. Consequently, the assessment of account strategies in terms of face-threat and, in particular their comparisons across languages, should take into account whether they conform to the circumstances of the offence – as their plausibility is taken into account in real-life contexts.

Ideally, an approach in which the speaker distances him- or herself from the offence could make an apology dispensable. Taking advantage of such an opportunity, however, brings with it the danger of misjudging the hearer’s knowledge, which is very likely to result in a new offence. When S’s attempt to save face is recognised by H, more damage occurs to both H’s and S’s face as well as to their relationship. Hence, the speaker’s interest in maintaining his or her reputation and the relationship with the victim generally makes repair work necessary.

The discrepancy between the speaker’s portrayal of the offence and its real circumstances can be approached in terms of conversational implicatures, i.e. the non-observance of Grice’s cooperative principle, in particular the maxim of quality. Previous research has recognised that politeness is a factor motivating flouting the maxims of the cooperative principle. In the case of apologies, however, the face-saving mechanisms making the speech act less face-threatening are related to the speaker’s face needs, and – as I have already argued in 3.3 – protection of one’s own face does not result in politeness. Therefore, when analysing apologies, the motivation for non-compliance with Grice’s cooperative principle should be extended from a protective approach towards the other’s face (= politeness) to include concern for one’s own face needs.
Although speakers of all three languages made use of the entire range of account strategies, the English responses exhibit the strongest preference for face-saving, and the Russian responses for face-threatening accounts. The Polish informants, in contrast, used the highest number of accounts occupying the centre of the face-threat continuum, with a strong focus on justifications. While the distinction between face-threatening and face-saving accounts has proved very useful for the present analysis, another important finding emerging from it is that qualitative differences are much more likely to illustrate cultural values motivating the use of accounts than the quantitative differences discussed in most previous cross-cultural pragmatic studies.

A comparison of the account realisations preferred in the three languages portrays Russians as particularly direct – whether they admitted or avoided responsibility, they did so in a straightforward manner. The Polish and English responses, in contrast, were much less direct, though they differed in the way they referred to the offence. While Polish respondents named numerous mitigating circumstances, often consisting of made-up reasons and personal information, many English subjects supplied an absolute minimum of information necessary under the given circumstances, which would probably be regarded as insufficient from the point of view of the speakers of both Slavic languages.

As I have argued in Chapter 3.3, one of the crucial elements in performing an apology is the speaker’s willingness to put his or her negative face at risk, and the analysis has indeed shown members of a negative politeness culture to be more protective towards their own and also less inclined to impose on others’ negative face than members of positive politeness cultures.

The account realisations prevailing in the English data illustrate the role indirectness – a feature typical of negative politeness – plays in the speech act of apologising. The much more direct approach to accepting as well as denying responsibility taken by the Russians, in contrast, can be seen as indicative of positive politeness. Effusive explanations providing the hearer with information enabling him or her to understand the speaker’s position, which occurred predominantly in the Polish data, are also characteristic of a positive politeness culture, in which people have been shown to take more interest in one another’s lives and are thus more likely to share personal information (see 2.4.2). The analysis has further shown that the use of positive politeness was by no means restricted to the two Slavic languages, nor was negative politeness exclusive in the English data.

Since many of the differences underlying the formulation of accounts across languages can be associated with a preference for positive vs. negative politeness, I will devote more attention to these two types of politeness in Chapter 10.3. In the following chapter, I will first turn to the analysis of the remaining apology strategies attested in the data, all of which can be classified as positive politeness strategies.
CHAPTER 9

Positive politeness apology strategies

9.1 Definition

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of the remaining three apology strategies identified in the data, namely offer of repair, promise of forbearance, and concern for hearer. These strategies constitute indirect realisations of the speech act of apologising since their apologetic function is context-dependent and they are not applicable to all offensive situations. Whereas offer of repair and promise of forbearance belong to the speech act set suggested by Olshtain and Cohen (1981 & 1983), the status of concern for hearer is controversial, with some researchers treating it as an apology strategy (e.g. Bielski 1992, Frescura 1993) and others as a form of external intensification (e.g. CCSARP 1989).

What all three strategies have in common is that they exhibit a stronger orientation towards positive face than IFIDs and accounts. Incidentally, they all appear in Brown and Levinson’s chart of positive politeness strategies as “offer”, “promise”, and “attend to H”, respectively (1987: 102). Since positive face needs tend to be mutual, strategies oriented towards the hearer’s positive face are generally also beneficial to the speaker’s positive face (see Chapter 3.3).

The strategy concern for hearer classifies as a positive politeness strategy because it attends to the victim’s needs, which have been negatively affected by the offence. At the same time, an offender showing concern for the hearer avoids damage to his or her own self-image. Offer of repair and promise of forbearance are directed to both interlocutors’ positive face as they emphasise the speaker’s interest in maintaining the relationship. While the former has the function of restoring the equilibrium by repairing the damage in a more than verbal way, the latter is used to ascertain the smooth functioning of the relationship in the future. Since offers of repair and promises of forbearance fall into Searle’s category of commissives, they entail a future commitment on the part of the speaker and, therefore, additional threat to negative face.

Since the majority of the scenarios used in the study describe offences causing repairable damage, but only one scenario depicts potentially recurring offensive behaviour, and one an offence which could result in physical damage, in my data,
offers of repair are considerably more frequent than the other two positive politeness strategies.

Table 16. Distribution of positive politeness apology strategies across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Offer of repair</th>
<th>Promise of forbearance</th>
<th>Concern for hearer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, while the analysis of the strategies promise of forbearance and concern for hearer will be restricted to describing their linguistic realisations and preferences across languages, offers of repair will be additionally examined in relation to the offences for which they are intended to compensate.

9.2 Offer of repair

The situation-specific nature of the strategy offer of repair restricts its applicability to offences causing damage which can be compensated for. When offering repair, the offender “makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage that resulted from the infraction” (Cohen & Olshtain 1994: 144). According to Goffman’s distinction between substantive and ritual compensation (1971), offers of repair are clearly an example of the former. Compensation that is not directly related to the offence, in that it does not substitute an object damaged by the offence, has been dealt with under the term ‘appeaser’ (e.g. CCSARP 1989: 294). However, any type of compensation offered in an offensive context is likely to be intended to make up for the damage caused by the offence, which is why I have classified all forms of compensation as offers of repair, while reserving the term appeaser to refer to another category.

Further disagreement in defining the strategy offer of repair emerges in connection with the question whether it entails the acceptance of responsibility. While Fraser argues that repair can be offered without any implication of responsibility (1981:262), in Holmes’ classificatory scheme (1990), offer of repair is a substrategy of acknowledgement of responsibility. According to Lubecka, the function of offers of repair is to “reinforce the sincerity of the apology presented and to show the apologiser’s concern for the offended person” (2000:170) – a definition that also describes the functions of the strategy concern for hearer. However, while Lubecka seems to regard offers of repair as a form of intensification, according to
the definition offered by the CCSARP researchers, an offer of repair constitutes an apology on its own (1989:21). I would like to argue that the function of offers of repair in combination with explicit apology strategies differs from the one they serve when used on their own, in which case they substitute rather than constitute an apology. Offering material compensation instead of apologising is a face-saving strategy: It does not necessarily entail responsibility, nor does it attend to the hearer’s positive face.

In attempting to answer the question whether offers of repair involve acceptance of responsibility, one should further distinguish between responsibility assumed for past and future behaviour. Due to their commissive nature, offers of repair can safely be claimed to entail responsibility for removing the incurred damage. Responsibility for causing the offence, in contrast, is not necessarily involved.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the function of offers of repair employed in the two legal contexts differs in that they were used in an attempt to avoid penalty. Although most responses to legal offences consist of combinations of several strategies, offers of repair are central to many of them, while explicit apology strategies are added with the intention of placating the hearer. The apologetic attitude thus conveyed can be interpreted as a plea for leniency rather than an apology.

Ultimately, a better insight into the various functions and degrees of responsibility acceptance inherent in offers of repair can be gained by looking at their linguistic realisations as well as the linguistic and situational contexts in which they occur.

9.2.1 Distribution across languages

With a total of 1089 instances, offer of repair is the third most frequent strategy in the data. This relatively high frequency, equivalent to 21 % of the total of apology strategies employed by my respondents, is mainly related to the types of offences selected for the study, six of them causing repairable damage. The preferences for offers of repair are comparable across languages, for they amount to 365 instances in the English, 343 in the Polish, and 381 in the Russian data.

A total of 104 – 21 English, 30 Polish, and 53 Russian – responses consist of an offer of repair only. Consequently, about 10% of the 1089 offers of repair found in the data may not result in an apology. The remaining 985 offers of repair co-occur with other strategies, and are likely to serve the function of positive politeness strategies emphasising the sincerity of the apology and the speaker’s interest in maintaining the relationship with the hearer.
Considering that Polish and Russian show a preference for positive politeness, the fairly equal distribution of offers of repair across languages in my data is surprising. A detailed analysis of linguistic realisations, however, may reveal qualitative differences between English and the two Slavic languages, illustrating their focus on negative and positive politeness, respectively.

9.2.2 Linguistic realisations

Offers of repair can be verbalised “in a specified or general manner” (CCSARP 1989: 21), which means that their realisations can be either formulaic or refer to the damage they are intended to repair. Lubecka suggests that offers of repair “differ in their intensity and the type of compensation offered” (2000: 171). To the best of my knowledge, however, no previous apology study has attempted to create a taxonomy of linguistic realisations of the strategy offer of repair. I would like to suggest a classification according to the degree of obligation on the part of the apologiser and the level of optionality for the hearer, leading to a distinction between direct and indirect offers of repair.

9.2.2.1 Direct offers of repair

The damage caused by an offence can be repaired in a number of ways, the most direct possibility being compensation for the offence without prior notice. Accordingly, some of the respondents described actions aiming at putting things right:

(199) Hand it back. [Ef-7/4]
(200) Otwieram drzwi. [Pm4/23]
   ‘I’m opening the door.’

A great majority of offers of repair in my data, however, are verbal and a total of 830 (76%) can be classified as direct. There is strong agreement in the use of direct offers of repair across languages, with 274 instances in the English, 268 in the Polish, and 289 in the Russian data. The linguistic realisations assigned to this category convey a high level of obligation for the speaker and a low degree of optionality for the hearer. The most frequent realisations of direct offers of repair are expressions in the future tense informing H about the measures S will take in order to compensate for the damage:

(201) ... I will buy you some more. [Em-1/19]
(202) ... ja kuplju tebe nových rybok. [Rf-1/5]
   ‘... I’ll buy you new fish.’
The present tense, in contrast, can be used to express an even higher degree of readiness by indicating that the offence is already being compensated for – though the tense used in the English example could also be classified as immediate future:

(203) ... I'm just about to get the hoover to tidy up. [Ef-6/17]
(204) Już pędzę do kasy! [Pm-7/1]
   ‘I'm rushing to the till!’

Some subjects used the past tense while claiming that the damage had already been repaired. Such an approach consists in informing the hearer about the compensation rather than offering it, and it does not really fit with the description of the scenarios. It is tempting, though, as it minimises threat to both interlocutors' face and may even make the apology dispensable. Nearly all respondents using this strategy combined it with a confession or an account informing the hearer about the offence, thus making it less face-threatening:

(205) Tamte umarły, więc kupiłem nowe. [Pm-1/11]
   ‘Those died so I bought new ones.’
(206) Ty znałeś, u tebja tut paru rybok sdochlo, no ja kupil novye ...
   [Pm-1/7]
   ‘You know, some of your fish died, but I’ve bought new ones …’

Not only have the respondents resorted to all three tenses when offering repair, but some of the direct realisations were formulated in the interrogative. Although examples (207) and (208) have the form of a question, which is associated with indirectness, they emphasise the speaker's willingness to repair the damage, the question merely concerning the form of compensation:

(207) How much are the fines? [Ef-2/4]
(208) Ile płacę? [Pf-7/10]
   ‘How much am I paying?’

Another type of offers of repair which has been classified as direct, despite a syntactically indirect form, are conventionally indirect requests, such as:

(209) Can I have a ticket for x please? [Em-8/33]
(210) Chciałabym kupić bilet ulgowy do ...
   [Pf-8/37]
   ‘I’d like to buy a concession ticket to …’

Even though the primary illocutionary forces of these realisations classify them as either ability questions or want statements, their conventionalised character and the context in which they are used do not imply any optionality for the hearer nor any doubt about the speaker’s intention to deal with the need for compensation in the suggested way. The above-quoted offers of repair occur in a legal context and,
being motivated by an attempt at avoiding the penalty rather than restoring social harmony, do not fulfil the function of an apology.

9.2.2.2 Indirect offers of repair

Whereas direct offers of repair are generally oriented towards the hearer’s face needs and emphasise the speaker’s interest in maintaining the relationship with the hearer, the choice of an indirect formulation may be motivated by concern for both the hearer’s as well as the speaker’s face needs. When merely suggesting repairing the damage, the speaker leaves it open for the hearer to accept or refuse the compensation offered. Simultaneously, being dependent on the hearer’s reaction, the speaker’s obligation is lower than with explicit offers of repair.

Indirect offers of repair occur 91 times in the English, 75 in the Polish, and 92 times in the Russian data. The manifold realisations encountered in all three languages exhibit varying degrees of directness, obligation for the speaker, and optionality for the hearer. The realisations which come closest to direct offers of repair in terms of the speaker’s obligation, but nevertheless leave the hearer an option, are suggestions introduced by the word *let* in English, *pozwól* [*allow*] in Polish, and *davaj* [*lit. give*] in Russian:

(211) Let me take them back ... [Em-2/32]
(212) ... pozwól, że ja ureguluję tę należność. [Pf-2/37]
‘... allow me to settle the due amount.’
(213) Davaj ja zaplaču ... [Rf-2/7]
‘Let me pay ...’

The majority of indirect offers of repair in the data, however, are implicit suggestions taking the form of a question:

(214) Czy mogę ją podrzucić jutro? [Pf-5/12]
‘May I drop it off tomorrow?’
(215) Možno ja vozmešču ee novoj? [Rf-5/13]
‘May I replace it with a new one?’

These examples can be viewed as requests for permission, consulting the hearer’s opinion as to the appropriateness of the suggested compensation. However, offers of repair taking the form of a question are not necessarily always hearer-oriented as the selection of a more careful formulation may also be motivated by the speaker’s reluctance to compensate:

(216) Do you want me to get you some new ones? [Em-1/7]
(217) Może więc ja zapłacę? [Pm-2/41]
‘Perhaps I’ll pay then?’
It is often difficult to determine whether the motivation underlying an indirect formulation is egoistic or altruistic. Concern for the hearer’s wishes may be expressed to disguise the speaker’s reluctance. The interpretation depends on a variety of factors, one of them being the interlocutors’ cultural background.

Direct offers of repair accompanied by conditional clauses convey the speaker’s reluctance more clearly. The addition of a phrase restricting the speaker’s responsibility and/or willingness to compensate makes the offer sound hesitant and insincere. Therefore, an evaluation in terms of commitment on the part of the speaker places this substrategy at the bottom of the scale, the option left to the hearer being to insist rather than to decline:

(218) Will pay you the fine if you want me to, it’s up to you. [Em-2/27]
(219) Mogę odkupić ci je, jeśli chcesz. [Pf-1/6]
   lit. ‘I can re-buy them, if you want.’

In these examples, the speaker indirectly admits the necessity of repair, but either distances him- or herself from the responsibility for the damage or expects the hearer to decline the offer, while hoping that the matter will be dismissed without compensation.

As the categorisation of offers of repair shows, one should bear in mind that although the degree of directness underlying an utterance can be defined in terms of syntactic criteria, such as the use of declarative, interrogative or conditional structures, there is no one to one correspondence between grammatical forms and pragmatic functions.

Considering that indirectness is associated with negative politeness and directness with positive politeness, the preferences for these two realisations of offers of repair are surprisingly similar across languages. Whereas the English respondents used 274 direct offers of repair (including non-verbal compensation) and 91 indirect formulations (67 vs. 33%), in the Polish data these figures amount to 268 and 75 (72 vs. 28%), and in the Russian data to 289 and 92 (68 vs. 32%).

9.2.2.3 **Intensification**

Whereas the preferences for direct vs. indirect offers of repair show close parallels across languages, some interesting discrepancies appear in connection with the way these offers were intensified. The speaker’s commitment can, for instance, be emphasised by means of intensifying adverbials. The Russian data exhibit the strongest preference for this form of intensification, with 40 instances of the adverb objazatel’no [definitely], followed by the Polish data where na pewno [certainly] appears 16 times and oczywiście [of course] 19 times. In the English data, in contrast, there is only one instance of definitely and two of of course.
(220) I will, of course, pay the weeks fees you’ve incurred. [Em-2/39]

(221) Jutro na pewno oddam książkę ... [Pf-5/2]

‘Tomorrow I’ll definitely give the book back ...’

(222) Sejčas ja objazatel’no oplaču! [Rf-7/8]

‘Now I’ll definitely pay!’

While the addition of intensifying adverbials emphasises the sincerity of the offer and the willingness to repair the damage, the use of tags renders the formula more polite by signalling the hearer that his or her wishes are being taken into account. Tags appear exclusively in the English data and mostly take the form of conditional clauses:

(223) I’ll return it to you tomorrow, if that’s okay. [Ef-5/10]

In contrast to the conditional clauses if you like and if you want discussed in Section 9.2.2.2, which convey reluctance rather than consulting the hearer’s wishes, the linguistic devices classified as tags clearly suggest optionality.

Hence, English offers culture-specific ways of modifying the illocutionary force of the offer that take the hearer’s wishes into account, while the linguistic devices favoured in the two Slavic languages make direct offers sound more determined and committing. These preferences can be associated with negative and positive politeness, making them equally appropriate in the respective languages.

Another intensifying device used by speakers of all three languages with direct offers of repair consists of a formula aimed at appeasing the hearer or, more literarily, stopping him or her from worrying about the damage caused by the offence. The concern for the hearer’s needs motivating these appeasing formulae classifies them as positive politeness strategies. Appeasers serve a function similar to that of the expressions making up the IFID category of conciliatory expressions as both are concerned with the hearer’s well-being. Contrary to conciliatory expressions, however, appeasers are primarily related to the damage caused by the offence and only indirectly to the consequences for the relationship between H and S. Like conciliatory expressions, appeasers generally take the form of negated imperatives.

In the English data, there are 16 instances of the expression don’t worry and one of the more colloquial no worries.

(224) Don’t worry I’ll clean it up. [Em-6/2]

(225) No worries though, all paid. [Em-2/46]

The Polish data include 17 appeasers used in combination with offers of repair, with 13 instances of the expression nie martw się [don’t worry (T-form)]. Most
appeasers were used in scenarios based on low social distance and thus took the T-form, though there are also a few instances of both deferential forms in the data:

(226) Niech się pani nie martwi, posprzątam klatkę schodową. [Pf-6/1]
   ‘Don’t worry (V-form), I’ll clean the staircase.’

(227) ... proszę się nie martwić, jeśli jej nie znajdę, kupię nową. [Pf-5/50]
   ‘... don’t worry (V-form), if I don’t find it, I’ll buy a new one.’

The synonymous nie przejmuj się seems to be less frequent and less routinised, for there is only one instance of the T-form and one of the corresponding deferential form in the Polish data:

(228) Nie przejmuj się, ja zapłacę. [Pm-2/34]
   ‘Don’t worry (T-form), I’ll pay.’

(229) Proszę się nie przejmować, nad wszystkim panuję. [Pf-6/35]
   ‘Don’t worry (V-form), I have everything under control.’

Furthermore, with some reservation, the expression nie denerwuj się [don’t get upset (lit. nervous)] and its deferential variant proszę się nie denerwować – each of them appearing only once in the Polish data – have been assigned to this category.

   ‘My fault. Don’t worry (T-form). I’ll give you the money back.’

(231) Proszę się nie denerwować. Zaraz posprzątam klatkę schodową. [Pf-6/24]
   ‘Don’t worry (V-form). I’ll clean the staircase right now.’

This appeasing formula is synonymous with the conciliatory expression nie gniewaj się [don’t be angry], the difference being that the appeaser is used to signal that there is no point in getting upset about the damage, which will be taken care of.

In the Russian data, there are 30 appeasing formulae, containing four synonymous verbs expressing the state of being restless, the process of worrying and getting in a bad mood, all of which translate as don’t worry into English. The most frequent appeaser, used by twelve Russians to convince the hearer that there is no reason to worry about the damage, includes the verb bespokoit’sja. This reflexive verb is derived from the noun spokoj [calmness], which the hearer is requested not to lose:

(232) Ty ne bespokojsja, ja zapłaću i vernu ich. [Rf-2/42]
   ‘Don’t worry (T-form), I’ll pay and give them back.’

Appeasers based on the reflexive verb volnovat’sja, going back to the noun volne-nie [restlessness, anxiety] occur nine times in the Russian data:
(233) Ne volnujtes’. Ja vse uberu. [Rf-6/8]  
‘Don’t worry (V-form). I’ll clean everything.’

Furthermore, there are six appeasers including the verb *pereživat’*, literally urging the hearer not to *live through*, i.e. not to suffer from the damage:

(234) Ja zaplaču, ne pereživaj, ved’ ja vinovata. [Rf-2/10]  
‘I will pay, don’t worry (T-form), I’m the guilty one.’

Finally, three Russian appeasers contain the verb *rasstraivat’ja*, whose negated imperative form requests the hearer not to get upset:

(235) Ja tebe drugich podarju k dnju roždenija – ne rasstraivajsja. [Rf-1/31]  
‘I’ll give you other ones for your birthday – don’t worry (T-form).’

Formulae containing the verbs *pereživat’* and *rasstraivat’ja* are not only less frequent, but they occur exclusively in apologies to friends, suggesting that they are perceived as more personal than the more neutral *bespokoit’ja* and *volnovat’ja*.

To sum up, appeasers – as well as conciliatory expressions – are positive politeness strategies used to express concern for the hearer’s negative feelings caused by the offence. What distinguishes appeasers from the IFID category of conciliatory expressions is that the former were employed exclusively in combination with the strategy offer of repair. Both types of formulae signal concern for the hearer’s feelings, but while conciliatory expressions are concerned with the future relationship between speaker and hearer, the formulae accompanying offers of repair refer predominantly to the incurred damage and the hearer’s emotional state resulting from it.

### 9.2.3 Offers of repair across scenarios

Offers of repair are not only situation-specific in that their use presupposes the possibility of compensating for the damage, but also the form of compensation is determined by situational factors. As the examples quoted in Section 9.2.2 already suggest, a vast majority of the offers found in the data refer to the circumstances of the offence. Although it is possible to offer repair by means of formulaic phrases, they are very rare in my data:

(236) ... I’ll sort it out. [Em-2/13]  
(237) Ja nemedlenno vse ispravlju. [Rm-5/7]  
‘I’ll immediately put everything right.’

Since nearly all offers of repair found in the data consist of situation-specific formulae, explicitly referring to the damage to be repaired, they will be examined according to the form of the compensation offered.
Figure 3. Distribution of direct (bottom) and indirect (top) offers of repair across scenarios and languages
As Figure 3 shows, the distribution of direct vs. indirect offers of repair across scenarios is very similar across languages. Although this distinction is valuable in that it reflects the degree of obligation for the speaker and optionality for the hearer, the speaker’s willingness to assume responsibility for the offence and to compensate for it cannot be interpreted without taking into account the exact formulation of the offer and the form of repair.

An analysis of offers of repair in relation to contextual factors will not only help interpret the distribution portrayed in Figure 3, but is also likely to show that directness and indirectness carry different illocutionary forces across contexts.

9.2.3.1 Category I

The offences described in the two scenarios comprising category I affect the hearer’s possessions, allowing the speaker to offer material compensation. While nearly all offers of repair used in scenario 1 consist in offering to replace the fish or taking the hearer to the pet shop, some formulations seem to imply that a replacement is not regarded as sufficient to make up for the hearer’s loss:

(238) I’ll get some more now and they’ll be even nicer and prettier. [Ef-1/16]
(239) Ja objazatel’no kuplju tebe nových rybok, ešče daže lučšych čem byli.
    ‘I’ll definitely buy you new fish, even better ones than those were.’ [Rf-1/10]

Doubts about the appropriateness of the suggested repair are also reflected in some of the indirect formulations:

(240) ... if it’s any help, I’ll buy you some more. [Ef-1/44]
(241) Možno ja kuplju tebe drugich? [Rf-1/3]
    ‘May I buy other ones for you?’

Such carefully-voiced offers of repair are not so much indicative of the speaker’s reluctance to compensate for the damage as of concern for the hearer’s loss. They convey the speaker’s impression that the replacement of the fish will not remove all the damage caused by the offence. These considerations – along with the high frequency of responses denying responsibility – may be responsible for the relatively low frequency of offers of repair in scenario 1.

Scenario 2, in contrast, elicited the highest frequency of offers of repair in the data. Direct realisations were favoured in roughly 84% of all cases, suggesting an overall high degree of commitment. The responses to scenario 2 further suggest a correlation between strategies expressing responsibility and offers of repair, often resulting in combinations of direct realisations of these two strategies:
Chapter 9. Positive politeness apology strategies

(242) To moja wina. Nie płac, ja zaplać za ciebie. [Pm-2/25]
‘It’s my fault. Don’t pay, I’ll pay for you.’

(243) Ja sama zaplaču za vsju nedelju, ved’ vinovata ja. [Rf-2/23]
‘I’ll pay myself for the whole week, after all I’m guilty.’

Indirect offers of repair conveyed reluctance rather than consideration for the hearer’s opinion. There are even responses acknowledging the need to compensate for the damage and, at the same time, betraying a lack of intention to do so:

(244) ... mam nadzieję, że nie będziesz chciała, żebym to ja pokrył koszty za zwłokę?
‘... I hope you will not want me to cover the cost of the delay?’ [Pm-2/32]

Generally, however, the offers of repair used in scenario 2 express a great degree of obligation on the part of the speaker. The main reason for the relatively strong preference for offers of repair, and especially their direct realisations, is the high frequency of accounts accepting responsibility for the offence elicited by this scenario (see Chapter 8.2.1.2).

9.2.3.2 Category II

Although it is not possible to offer a replacement for damage caused by space offences, there are a few instances of offers of repair in the two scenarios constituting category II. All direct realisations consist of non-verbal repair while indirect formulations either take the form of offers of help or they are not directly related to the offence, as is the only offer of repair occurring in scenario 3:

(245) Možet ja tebja pivom ugošču? [Rm-3/18]
‘Perhaps I’ll invite you for a beer?’

In scenario 4, most offers of repair constitute offers of help:

(246) Can I help you with anything? [Em-4/1]
(247) ... czy mogę jakoś pomóc? [Pf-4/44]
‘... can I help somehow?’

Generally, the realisations selected by the Polish and Russian subjects indicate that they perceived the offence as more severe than did the English respondents – perhaps due to the shop doors being less ‘customer-friendly’ in these two countries:

(248) Pomagam wstać. [Pm-4/33]
‘I am helping (her) get up.’
(249) ... možet otvesti vas v polikliniku? [Rf-4/17]
‘... perhaps I’ll take you to the hospital?’
While offers of help are related to the offence, responses to scenario 4 also include compensatory strategies such as invitations to a drink or dinner. This type of offer occurs exclusively in the male data and, being directed to a female character, may be regarded as having a self-oriented component, though one Russian respondent made the following offer:

(250) ... davajte ja pomogu vam donesti gruz do doma. [Rm-4/26]
‘... let me help you carry the load home.’

Although this suggestion is not related to the offence, it is clearly motivated by the offender’s feeling of guilt and his willingness to make up for the inconvenience caused in a more than verbal way.

Strictly speaking, damage caused by space offences cannot be repaired – though the imbalance can be restored symbolically in Russian culture, where a person accidentally stepping on somebody’s foot may offer them to step on theirs in return. However, the various offers of help and invitations used in response to the two scenarios making up category II are immediate reactions to the offences and aim to make up for the damage. One could even argue that compensation offered in situations in which no material damage occurred reflects particular concern for the hearer.

9.2.3.3 Category III
In both scenarios comprising category III repair plays a central role in restoring social equilibrium and placating the hearer. The professor expects his book back and the landlady wants the staircase cleaned. Accordingly, these two scenarios elicited particularly many offers of repair, though their realisations reveal considerable variation in the use of direct vs. indirect formulations and forms of repair.

Among the responses to scenario 5, nearly 60% of the offers were direct and formulated in the future tense:

(251) I will get it to you as soon as I can find it. [Ef-5/50]
(252) Na pewno przyniosę ją jutro. [Pf-5/10]
‘I’ll certainly bring it tomorrow.’

Although the phrase “I’ll bring it tomorrow” has been classified as an offer of repair in previous studies (e.g. Bergman & Kasper 1993: 85), one could argue that the function of this utterance merely consists in informing the hearer about a delay. Indeed, the speaker is more likely to appear polite and concerned about the inconvenience caused when suggesting an alternative date of return in the form of a question. The professor’s higher status seems to be one of the factors leading to a preference for indirect formulations in scenario 5:
Chapter 9. Positive politeness apology strategies

However, not all expressions suggesting an alternative return date were classified as offers of repair. As the following examples show, some of the realisations were not requests asking permission to return the book later, but to keep it longer. Due to this very slight difference, the latter do not fulfil the function of offers of repair, again showing that grammatical criteria are not decisive in assigning expressions to strategies.

(255) Do you mind if I keep the book for a while longer? [Ef-5/13]
(256) Czy mógłbym przedłużyć termin oddania lektury o jeden dzień? [Pm-5/44]

‘Could I extend the date of returning the book by one day?’

The responses to scenario 5 further illustrate the decisive impact account strategies have on the selection of offers of repair, with the form of the suggested repair being largely determined by the speaker’s portrayal of the offence. Redefining it automatically calls for a different form of repair or even makes it dispensable. Hence, subjects who claimed to have forgotten the book simply suggested bringing it back at a later date. While assurances that the book will be returned later as well as requests asking permission to return it later only indirectly serve the function of offers of repair, offers of replacement come closest to fulfilling the criteria of this strategy.

In scenario 6, the landlady’s complaint not only had a great impact on the selection of accounts – making them largely dispensable and leaving little room for redefining the offence – but also led to a high frequency of direct offers of repair, intensifying devices and appeasing formulae:

(257) Pani się nie martwi, posprzątam wszystko. [Pm-6/36]

‘Don’t worry (V-form), I’ll clean everything.’

(258) My segodnja vse uberem, i vse budet čisto. Ne bespokojtes’. [Rf-6/44]

‘We’ll tidy up everything today and everything will be clean. Don’t worry (V-form).’

As the Russian example shows, the willingness to comply with the landlady’s wishes was occasionally emphasised by assuring that the damage would be repaired particularly soon or satisfactorily:

(259) We’ll tidy it up and you won’t spot a thing wrong. [Em-6/18]
(260) ... postaram się żeby tu zaraz był idealny porządek. [Pf-6/39]

‘... I’ll make sure to get everything perfectly clean here.’
9.2.3.4 Category IV

The two scenarios comprising category IV describe legal offences, in which repair serves a different function than it does when offered for personal offences, its form being legally determined. The offers of repair occurring in responses to scenarios 7 and 8 are, therefore, not strategies emphasising the sincerity of an apology, nor are they directed to the hearer’s positive face needs. Rather, the suggestions of alternative forms of repair made in scenarios 7 and 8 aim at avoiding the expected penalty. They may be accompanied by an explicit apology intended to placate the hearer, whose status entitles him or her to penalise the speaker.

Scenario 7 elicited a high frequency of direct offers of repair (92%), which could be related to the non-intentional character of the offence. The high degree of obligation underlying direct offers of repair could be seen as indicative of the offenders’ cooperative attitude, proving their innocence. Indirect realisations, in contrast, were avoided as they imply optionality for the hearer, whose primary option should be to follow the regulations and not the offenders’ suggestions.

The approach favoured by speakers of all three languages was to offer paying for the CD:

(261) I’ll pay for it right away. [Ef-7/22]
(262) Już pędzę do kasy! [Pm-7/1]
   ‘I’m already rushing to the till!’

An alternative form of compensation consisted in returning the CD:

(263) I’ll just put it back where it was. [Ef-7/21]
(264) Vot vam vaš disk. [Rf-7/35]
   ‘Here is your CD.’

A third form of repair occasionally offered in scenario 7 consists in indirectly expressing willingness to pay for the CD by either showing money in hand or requesting information on the whereabouts of the till – the latter overlapping with acting innocently. While indirect realisations were avoided, a few responses reflect the speakers’ awareness of the penalty they would have to face if their suggestion was rejected:

(265) I’ll pay for it straight away if that’s ok? [Em-7/38]
(266) ... davajte ja zaplaču za nego i my obo vsem zabudem. [Rm-7/35]
   ‘... let me pay for it and we’ll forget about everything.’

 Whereas repair offered in scenario 7 displays many parallels across languages, there are considerable cross-linguistic differences in the way repair was offered in scenario 8. As Figure 3 (above) illustrates, the English subjects favoured indirect
over direct realisations, while the speakers of the two Slavic languages preferred direct offers of repair.

The most frequently offered form of repair consists of various suggestions to buy a ticket from the ticket inspector – a solution favoured by the English and Polish respondents:

(267) ... can I buy one from you now? [Ef-8/28]
(268) ... czy może pani mi sprzedać bilet? [Pm-8/20]
    ‘... can you sell me a ticket?’

When resorting to indirect realisations resembling requests for permission, the respondents indirectly admit that they should have bought the ticket before entering the train. Examples (269) and (270), in contrast, even though they take the form of conventionalised indirect requests, function as direct offers of repair, creating the impression that the speaker is not aware of committing an offence:

(269) A ticket to X please. [Em-8/49]
(270) Poproszę bilet do Jeleniej Góry. [Pm-8/29]
    ‘A ticket to Jelenia Góra, please.’

What makes this strategy problematic is that, according to the description of the situation, the speaker does not have any money, which is why realisations of this type were often combined with the strategy of acting innocently:

(271) Może mi pani wypisać bilet? Ojej, nie mam portfela. [Pf-8/47]
    ‘Can you issue me with a ticket? Oh, I don’t have (my) wallet.’

In contrast to the responses offered to scenario 7, those used in scenario 8 include several offers of repair complying with the legal procedure, i.e. offers to pay the penalty:

(272) Proszę wypisać mi mandat, zapłacę jak tylko będę mogła. [Pf-8/10]
    ‘Please, give me a penalty form, I’ll pay as soon as I can.’
(273) Ja gotov zaplatit’ štraf. [Rm-8/26]
    ‘I’m ready to pay the penalty.’

While more than half of the English and the Polish respondents attempted to purchase a ticket on the train, the Russian responses show a preference for offers to leave the train:

(274) Esli chotite, ja vyjdu na sledujuščej ostanovke. [Rf-8/6]
    ‘If you want, I’ll leave at the next stop.’
Although offers of repair have been defined as situation-dependent apology strategies, their applicability being largely restricted to offences involving material damage, all scenarios elicited this strategy. Considering that offers of repair are positive politeness strategies, which would suggest a stronger preference for this strategy in the two positive politeness cultures, the quantitative differences across languages are surprisingly insignificant. Even the distribution of direct vs. indirect realisations – the former associated with positive and the latter with negative politeness – exhibits close parallels across languages. There is also a great degree of agreement as to the form of compensation, with only a few exceptions, such as the Russian respondents regarding leaving the train as an appropriate form of repair in scenario 8.

Differences emerge mainly in the modification of direct offers of repair, revealing divergent preferences for linguistic devices such as tags and adverbial intensifiers. Whereas the former were used exclusively by the English respondents, speakers of the two Slavic languages showed a much stronger preference for adverbial intensifiers, emphasising the speaker’s commitment. The effectiveness of such devices seems to be culture-specific: In a negative politeness culture, tags can be used to signal respect for the addressee’s wishes, but in a positive politeness culture, offers accompanied by similar linguistic devices may be judged as reluctant or insincere. Although offers of repair are beneficial to the hearer, making direct realisations most appropriate, for a member of a negative politeness culture, heavy use of intensifying adverbials may be interpreted as exaggerated and an imposition on the hearer’s negative face. Culture-specific differences also arise in connection with the use of appeasers – another linguistic device conveying positive politeness. Although speakers of all three languages used appeasing formulae, the Russian data include not only the highest number of this strategy but also the greatest variety of linguistic realisations.

9.3 Promise of forbearance

Promises of forbearance are generally offered in potentially recurrent offensive situations, which makes them highly context-specific. While in contexts in which the offence has been committed repeatedly, promises of forbearance are a central element of the apology, in offensive situations happening for the first time, they have mainly an intensifying function. What classifies promises of forbearance as positive politeness strategies is that they are employed when the future harmony between S and H is particularly important to S – repetitive offensive behaviour being a significant factor threatening this harmony.

Olshtain and Cohen suggest that promises of forbearance are employed when “the offender could have avoided the offence but did not do so” (1983:23), thus
restricting the applicability of this strategy to deliberate offences. Blum-Kulka et al., in contrast, argue that promises of forbearance are motivated by a feeling of responsibility on the part of the speaker (1989: 21). Due to their commissive character, promises of forbearance entail responsibility for one’s future conduct and, in contrast to offers of repair, they also express the speaker’s responsibility for committing the offence.

The total of promises of forbearance amounts to 47 instances in the English, 52 in the Polish, and 53 in the Russian data. Their occurrence is largely limited to scenario 6, where S has a particular interest in maintaining a good neighbourly relationship with H and making the impression of an orderly tenant. The majority of promises of forbearance consist of formulaic expressions negating the recurrence of the offence, which translate literally across languages:

(275) It won’t happen again. [Ef-6/27]
(276) To już się więcej nie powtórzy. [Pm-6/5]
(277) Bol’she ėtogo ne povtorit’sja. [Rm-6/1]

These formulations do not refer to the circumstances of the offence and can be employed in any offensive situation with a potentially recurring character. Promises of forbearance explicitly addressing the circumstances of the offence were most popular among the Russian subjects:

(278) I postarajus’, čtoby v sledujuščij raz bylo ne tak šumno. [Rf-6/29]
‘And I’ll try so that next time it won’t be so loud.’

While promises of forbearance generally consist of utterances in the future tense describing the measures the offender will take in order to avoid the recurrence of the offence, some realisations additionally include verbs denoting the degree of the speaker’s commitment to keeping the promise. The performative promise occurs three times in the English data, the phrase I’ll make sure was used twice by the English respondents, and the much weaker I’ll try three times. The Polish subjects, in contrast, show a strong preference for the explicit performative obiecuję [I promise], which they used 17 times. The Polish data further include one instance of the verb zapewnim [I assure (you)] and two of postaram się [I’ll try]. The Russian subjects, in contrast, used seven instances of postarajus’ [I’ll try], and five of the more committing obeščaju [I promise].

(279) I’ll make sure it will never happen again. [Em-6/30]
(280) ... zapewniam, że taka sytuacja się już nie powtórzy. [Pm-6/25]
‘... I assure (you) that such a situation will not occur again.’
(281) Ja obeščaju, čto takogo bol’še ne povtoritsja ... [Rf-6/1]
‘I promise that this will not happen again.’
Although nearly all promises of forbearance occur in responses to scenario 6 (Landlady), there are also a few instances of this strategy in situations without a recurring character. Russian and Polish respondents promised forbearance in their apologies to friends, thus showing that they value the friendship and that they can be relied on:

(282) Postaram się już więcej Cię nie zawieść. [Pf-2/49]
‘I’ll try not to disappoint you again.’

(283) В следующий раз буду внимательнее. [Rm-2/15]
‘Next time I’ll be more attentive.’

The promises of forbearance attested in responses to the legal offence described in scenario 8, in contrast, aim at avoiding the penalty by pointing out the unique character of the offence.

(284) This won’t happen again. [Ef-8/44]
(285) Обещаю, что больше такая ситуация не повторится. [Pf-8/22]
‘I promise that this situation will not occur again.’
(286) ... это в первый и последний раз. [Rf-8/27]
‘... this is the first and the last time.’

The Russian realisation differs from the remaining ones in that it is not only meant to convince the hearer that the offence will not occur again but also that it has not occurred before, which can be interpreted as an attempt at minimising the imposition.

On the whole, the analysis of promises of forbearance leads to a similar conclusion as does that of offers of repair: Considering that promises of forbearance are positive politeness strategies, both quantitative and qualitative differences in their use by members of a negative and two positive politeness cultures are less significant than expected.

9.4 Concern for hearer

The strategy concern for hearer does not belong to the speech act set of apologising suggested by Cohen and Olshtain (1981 & 1983) and is seldom addressed in apology analyses. Not only is its status as an apology strategy controversial, but there is also a practical reason why it is frequently omitted in discussions of apology strategies: Its occurrence is largely limited to offences causing physical damage.

In the CCSARP manual, expressions of concern are viewed as a form of intensification taking “explicit cognizance of the hearer’s feelings, which he or she may have offended” (1989: 291). The classification of the phrase Are you OK? as an
apology strategy labelled ‘appeals’, suggested in Frescura’s unpublished dissertation (1993), has been criticised on the grounds that such appeals standing alone would not constitute an apology (Cohen and Olshtain 1994: 144). However, what makes their argumentation and the classification of concern for hearer as a form of intensification problematic is that when concern for hearer is used on its own, it cannot intensify anything.

Another argument against reducing the function of expressions of concern to that of intensifying devices is that intensification can be added to any apology, while the applicability of concern for hearer is restricted to a very limited range of offences. Furthermore, in contrast to intensifiers, expressions of concern for hearer can reflect the circumstances of the offence.

The interpretation of concern for hearer as an indirect apology strategy depends on the context as much as do offers of repair and promises of forbearance. Of course, an expression of concern does not have to be motivated by an offence, but also the utterance “I’ll get you a new one” may be employed to stop a child from crying after he or she has lost or destroyed a toy, and the phrase “I’ll never do it again” may be uttered by somebody whose efforts were not appreciated. In other words, contextual restrictions apply to all three categories classified as positive politeness apology strategies, and all of them are equally likely to function as indirect apology strategies.

The strategy concern for hearer was most popular among the British subjects. There are 55 instances of this strategy in the English, 35 in the Polish, and 20 in the Russian data. Nearly all occurrences were found among the responses to the space offence described in scenario 4 (Heavy door), which could potentially result in physical injury.

The British informants’ relatively strong preference for expressions of concern is paralleled by a focus on formulaic realisations – with 35 instances of the phrase Are you OK? and 12 of Are you alright? in the English data. The Polish formula-tions, in contrast, centre around several variants of the expression:

\[(287) \text{Mam nadzieję, że nic się pani nie stało? / Czy nic się pani nie stało? / Nic pani nie jest? '}(I \text{hope that}) \text{nothing has happened to you?'}\]

While all these realisations aim at ensuring that no physical damage has been caused by negating this possibility in the form of a question, the following realisations differ by explicitly depicting the speaker as the agent inflicting the potential harm:

\[(288) \text{Nic panu nie zrobiłem? [Pm-3/9] ‘Have (neg.) I done something to you?’}\]
\[(289) \text{Ja ne ušib vas? [Rm-4/12] ‘Have (neg.) I hurt you?’}\]
These realisations can be regarded as particularly face-threatening, for they assign an active role to the speaker. The Russian realisations exhibit more variation than those identified in the English and Polish data. Roughly half of the Russian formulations are variants of the following expression,

(290) Vy ne (sil’no) ušiblis’ / udarilis’?
‘You haven’t hit / hurt yourself (strongly)?’

whereas the remaining realisations include the following:

(291) S vami vse v porjadke? [Rf-4/39]
‘Is everything alright with you?’

(292) Kak vy sebja čuvstvuete? [Rf-4/46]
‘How do you feel?’

(293) Vam ne očen’ bol’no? [Rf-4/5]
‘It doesn’t hurt much?’

Consequently, although the Russian data display the lowest frequency of expressions of concern, the linguistic realisations are least routinised, which stands in sharp contrast to the English data, where the vast majority of expressions of concern consists of two variants of only one formulaic expression.

Unlike most expressions of concern used in scenario 4, the realisations of this strategy used in responses to scenario 1 consist of individual formulations with a personal character:

(294) I hope they don’t have sentimental value. [Em-1/13]
(295) Mam nadzieje, że jakoś to przeżyjesz ... [Pf-1/32]
‘I hope that you’ll get over it somehow ...’

While both examples are expressions of true concern for a friend’s feelings, the Polish formulation is not only more emotional but also foreshadows the negative reaction the speaker regards the hearer as being entitled to.

Yet another type of expressions of concern was attested in seven English responses to scenario 6 (Landlady). Their linguistic realisations, coupled with the situational context, suggest a different motivation underlying the use of this strategy, e.g.:

(296) Hope we didn’t keep you awake. [Ef-6/41]

Considering that this expression was used in reply to a complaint, it not only seems superfluous but can even sound insincere – the context suggesting an overlap with the account strategy acting innocently. The similarity between these two strategies is particularly close in the following examples, which were all preceded by an expression of regret and two of them also by an exclamation indicating surprise:
... did we wake you up? [Ef-6/2] / ... did we keep you up? [Ef-6/27] / ... did I disturb you? [Ef-6/29]

As these examples show, the strategy concern for hearer can take various forms and functions. The realisations explicitly referring to the circumstances of the offence and taking the hearer’s face needs into account, in particular, speak against regarding this strategy as a form of intensification.

On the whole, it can be concluded that the English respondents show the strongest preference for expressions of concern and even use this strategy in a situation in which the speakers of the two Slavic languages regard it as dispensable. However, the formulaic realisations prevailing in the English data and the divergent motivation underlying the realisations employed in scenario 6 do not create the impression of concern for the hearer’s face being the sole motivation for their use.

9.5 Evaluation

The three positive politeness strategies discussed in this chapter fulfil, perhaps even more precisely than do IFIDs and accounts, the social function of apologies. They all attend to the speaker’s and the hearer’s (mutual) positive face needs with the aim of restoring the equilibrium and maintaining it in the future. Hence, although they are generally regarded as merely indirect apology strategies, they can be employed successfully in offensive contexts to restore social balance.

An expression of concern contributes towards the restoration of social equilibrium by expressing interest in the hearer’s well-being and restoring the offender’s self-image. Offers of repair and promises of forbearance, in contrast, focus on the future relationship between the interlocutors. I have argued that by promising forbearance, the offender assumes responsibility for his or her past as well as future conduct, whereas offers of repair do not necessarily entail responsibility for committing the offence. Occasionally, they can even be combined with denials of responsibility, as illustrated by the following example:

(298) Yeah it was quite noisy, wasn’t it? Someone must’ve had a party. I’ll help clean up if you’d like? [Ef-6/19]

It is, therefore, not possible to make general statements as to whether offers of repair entail responsibility or not, and the question whether a particular offer of repair involves the acceptance of responsibility for the offence cannot be answered without taking into account the linguistic context in which it occurs. Situational context is equally important when examining offers of repair in their potential
function as apology strategies. Contextual conditions not only largely restrict the occurrence of this strategy to repairable damage, but also reflect the speaker’s willingness to admit responsibility for the offence, as illustrated by the following offers of repair occurring on their own:

(299) I'll bring it tomorrow. [Em-5/43]
(300) Zavtra objazatel'no najdu i prinesu. [Rm-5/27]
‘Tomorrow I’ll definitely find and bring it.’

Although both utterances offer repair, they vary greatly in terms of responsibility acceptance: While the English respondent does not provide any reason for the absence of the book, thus conceal the true nature of the offence, the Russian variant includes the information that the book needs to be found before it can be returned.

As the discussion of accounts has already shown, an analysis of strategies referring to the circumstances of the offence should take them into account. For instance, the hearer’s knowledge of the offence (or the speaker’s assessment thereof) is an important factor not only allowing for redefining the offence but also for readjusting the form of compensation necessary to repair the damage caused by the offence. Accordingly, offers of repair can reflect the speaker’s willingness to assume responsibility for the offence.

The correlation between accounts and offers of repair can be illustrated by the discrepant frequencies of offers of repair in responses to scenarios 1 and 2, mirroring those of face-threatening accounts. Specifically, there is a tendency to combine explicit admissions of guilt with direct offers of repair. When the offender’s responsibility for the offence is obvious, it is easier to admit it (or more difficult to deny it), and, therefore, more necessary to repair the damage. Offers of repair not only evolve from admissions of guilt; they also have a face-saving function for the offender once his or her responsibility for the offence has been established.

In scenario 6, the complaint can be seen as an element verbalising the hearer’s guilt, responsible for the high frequency of offers of repair and the strong focus on direct forms. Hence, the reason why there is no correlation between offers of repair and admissions of responsibility in this scenario is that the latter are made superfluous by the complaint. In scenario 5, in contrast, the speaker’s decision to admit, conceal or redefine the offence is reflected in the choice of accounts and offers of repair alike. Consequently, those claiming that the book has been forgotten offered to bring it back later; those admitting that it may have got lost, to replace it.

The impact of situational context on the interpretation of offers of repair and promises of forbearance can be best illustrated by the function they adopt in the two legal offences, where they are used to avoid the penalty: Offers of repair
suggest an alternative form of compensation and promises of forbearance minimise the offence by portraying it as exceptional – both uses incompatible with the function of apologies.

Another important finding evolving from the analysis of the three positive politeness strategies is that their frequency does not correlate with a culture’s preference for positive or negative politeness. On the one hand, this finding confirms the universal character of speech act strategies; on the other, it suggests the need to look beyond quantitative differences and devote more attention to the linguistic realisations of strategies favoured across cultures.

Surprisingly, even the distribution of direct vs. indirect realisations of offers of repair exhibits close similarities across languages, though differences arise in connection with intensifying devices emphasising the speaker’s commitment to the offer. The realisations of promises of forbearance and expressions of concern for the hearer, in contrast, display interesting differences in the choice of formulaic vs. individual expressions across languages. The English respondents’ preference for formulaic realisations parallels their reluctance to refer to the circumstances of the offence when providing accounts. The preference for individual formulations linking the speaker with the offence in the Russian data, in contrast, is in accordance with the explicit reference to the offence typical of Russian accounts.
In this chapter I will interpret the results presented in the previous chapters within the frameworks developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Hofstede (1991). I will provide evidence confirming the classification of British culture as a negative politeness culture and Polish and Russian cultures as positive politeness cultures. I will also analyse culture-specific assessments of social distance and power derivable from the choice of strategies across categories and compare them with the values the cultures under investigation have received on Hofstede’s dimensions of cultural variability. Ultimately, I will address the question of whether apologies can be regarded as universal or to what extent the examined languages may have a culture-specific concept of apologising.

The present analysis confirms the universal character of the speech act set suggested by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). As Table 17 illustrates, speakers of all three languages made use of the full range of apology strategies and they used them with similar frequencies. A one-way ANOVA shows that only the differences in the use of intensifiers ($F(2, 297) = 15.118, p < .001$), upgrading accounts ($F(2, 297) = 11.623, p < .001$) and concern for hearer ($F(2, 297) = 11.374, p < .001$) reach statistical significance.

Table 17. Total numbers of apology strategies and intensifying devices across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IFIDs</th>
<th>Intensifiers</th>
<th>Upgrading accounts</th>
<th>Offer of repair</th>
<th>Promise of forbearance</th>
<th>Concern for hearer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the previous chapters have shown, considerable parallels were also found at the level of substrategies, with some linguistic realisations even constituting literal equivalents across languages. However, despite close similarities in strategy choice, the data seem to provide sufficient evidence for the possibility of cross-cultural clashes. As Suszczyńska puts it:
The fact that differences do not reveal themselves at a global level proves the universality of the model (...) but also seems to result from the global perspective itself. The differences, although not always self-evident for the researcher, are there, readily noticed and judged in cross-cultural contacts ... (1999: 1054)

10.1 Beyond the speech act set

If performing a speech act while adhering to a presumably universal model does not exclude the possibility of pragmatic mismatches across languages, it may be worth taking a closer look at the limitations of the universal character of this model. For this purpose, I will address some restrictions on the apologetic function of the strategies making up the speech act set, while taking into account cultural differences.

The present analysis has so far largely confirmed the claim put forward by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and validated by previous research that any of the strategies included in the speech act set can perform the function of an apology. Furthermore, the functional similarities of the three positive politeness strategies established in Chapter 9.4 suggest that expressions of concern can serve the function of an apology as much as do offers of repair and promises of forbearance.

However, although it is widely acknowledged that the strategies comprising the speech act set can but not always do fulfil the function of an apology, most studies conducted in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics focus on providing frequencies of the strategies making up the speech act set across groups. Interpretations going beyond the description of quantitative differences are scarce – understandably, most authors avoid statements depicting one of the examined groups as more polite than the other.

The present analysis has amply illustrated that an utterance may adopt varying functions across situations, and that the linguistic realisations of speech act strategies affect their illocutionary force. Offers of repair can sound reluctant, statements of responsibility can conceal the true offence, and even IFIDs can be insincere or not intended to be apologetic (see Borkin & Reinhart 1978 and Lakoff 2003).

Although most empirical studies offer a definition of the apology before analysing the data, they generally do not address the issue of whether or to what extent the analysed strategies fit the definition. Work explicitly devoted to the distinction between apologies and justifications, in contrast, tends to rely on Austin’s (1961) definition of justification. Rehbein (1972), for instance, views apologies and justifications as complementary speech acts. None of the apologies he lists includes an IFID, the classification of the offender’s response as an apology being largely determined by the situation requiring an apology. One of the main factors...
Chapter 10. On the culture-specificity of apologies

Rehbein names as making justifications and apologies mutually exclusive is that justifications entail acceptance of responsibility and apologies do not. He claims that by apologising, the speaker “requests the harmed to accept a statement of non-responsibility for the act” (“fordert vom Geschädigten die Akzeptierung der Erklärung der Nicht-Verantwortlichkeit für die Handlung”) (1972: 311), which stands in sharp contrast to the definition adopted in cross-cultural pragmatics.

Fillmore (1971) establishes a set of presuppositions for justifications, excuses and apologies. While his definitions of justifications and excuses adhere to those suggested by Austin (1961) – the former including the features ‘responsible’ and ‘not bad’ and the latter ‘bad’ and ‘not responsible’ (1971: 186) – apologies are defined by the presuppositions ‘bad’ and ‘responsible’ (1971: 287).

10.1.1 Apologies and responsibility acceptance

In cross-cultural pragmatics, the strategy taking on responsibility is regarded as a direct, context-independent apology strategy, though – as I have argued in 8.1 – this definition seems to apply to explicit expressions of guilt only. In my data, formulaic admissions of guilt are rare, for they amount to only eleven instances in the English, 28 in the Polish, and 16 in the Russian data. Moreover, most admissions of guilt were combined either with an IFID or with an offer of repair. While there is a logical correlation between admitting responsibility for the damage and offering repair for it, combinations with IFIDs seem to challenge the classification of statements of responsibility as explicit apology strategies. Incidentally, responses in which they were not combined with either an IFID or an offer of repair were found exclusively in the Russian data.

This finding confirms the functional similarity of IFIDs and formulaic admissions of guilt in Russian, where the word vinovat [guilty] has been accredited the status of an IFID (e.g. Rathmayr 1996, Formanovskaja 2002). While my Russian respondents did not use the adjective vinovat on its own, the data do include expressions such as: Ja vinovata pered toboj [I am guilty before you], and also: moja vina [my guilt/fault] and ja provinilsja [I have made myself guilty], which are functionally equivalent to vinovat. Furthermore, Russian not only offers a wider range of expressions of guilt than do the other two languages, but the notion of guilt is also central to formulaic offers of repair found in the Russian data, such as:

(301) ... ja choču iskupit’ svoju vinu. [Rm-2/45]
‘... I want to expiate my guilt.’

(302) Ja napravlju svoju vinu ... [Rf-2/41]
‘I’ll repair my guilt ...’
Guilt is an essential element of the Russian concept of apologising, determining not only the conventional use of the request for forgiveness but also formulations of indirect apology strategies. It also features in definitions of apologies, describing them as a “verbal expiation of guilt” (“slovesnoe iskuplenie viny”) (Formanovskaja 2002: 125).

As I have demonstrated in 7.5, the extent to which IFID formulae are accepted to serve the function of an apology is culturally determined. Although a particular linguistic formula translates literally across languages and appears in responses to offensive situations in these languages, this does not necessarily mean that it results in an apology in all of them. Accordingly, what applies to IFIDs may well also apply to the remaining strategies contained in the speech act set of apologising. The fact that the strategies making up the speech act set of apologising occur in all languages on which it has been tested confirms its universality but does not guarantee functional equivalence across languages. The emphasis on guilt in Russian apologies, affecting the formulations of both direct and indirect strategies, clearly constitutes a culture-specific feature of apologising which cannot be captured by the speech act set.

Previous research has pointed out that the acceptability of explanations as apology strategies may be culture-dependent (Wolfson et al. 1989). What appears problematic about this suggestion, though, is that there are virtually no limits to formulating explanations and that the reference to the offence may imply various degrees of responsibility acceptance. Hence, judgements concerning the ability of explanations to serve as an apology in different languages cannot be made without taking into account their linguistic realisations and the situational context in which they are employed.

Holmes (1990) is, to the best of my knowledge, the only researcher addressing the need to ensure that the analysed responses qualify as apologies. Her major objective is to demonstrate the impracticability of establishing a taxonomy embracing all potential indirect apology strategies. Hence, she suggests three “minimal felicity conditions” against which the potential apologies should be measured (1990: 161), one of them being the acceptance of responsibility for the offence:

a. an act has occurred;
b. A believes the act has offended B; and
c. A takes some responsibility for the act

Another issue discussed by Holmes, generally not addressed in cross-cultural research, is what constitutes a polite apology. Despite the fact that apologies are inherently polite speech acts, the manifold possibilities of formulating them already indicate that some are likely to be perceived as more polite than others.
Holmes suggests that “politer apologies normally include an explicit apology at some point, together with another strategy” (1990: 168) and, while referring to the transactional nature of apologies (Leech 1983: 125), she draws a parallel between the “size” of the offence and that of the corresponding apology. She argues that more polite apologies take “more account of face needs” (1990: 177) and that the degree of politeness conveyed by an apology may be increased by the use of intensifiers, “extended rather than minimal strategies (...) longer rather than shorter linguistic formulae” (ibid.), and also prosodic and kinesic features.

Although I fully agree with Holmes’ suggestions, I find it exceedingly difficult to apply them to cross-cultural analysis. Even if it was possible to establish a classification of apologies placing them on a continuum from most to least polite, the appropriateness of a particular apology realisation would always depend on situational and cultural factors.

Holmes’ preoccupation with devices making apologies more polite, i.e. with the hearer’s face needs, is consistent with Brown and Levinson’s focus on H’s face. However, by regarding apologies as face-saving acts, she neglects the fact that they threaten the speaker’s face. Whereas an elaborate, intensified on record apology is likely to be successful, it is at the same time highly face-threatening for the speaker. The employment of indirect and downgrading strategies, in contrast, not only makes the apology less polite but also reduces damage to S’s face. Consequently, although it is certainly insightful to examine linguistic devices making the apology more polite, the central role S’s face wants play in the performance of an apology suggests that strategies directed towards S’s face needs may be more decisive: As my analysis of account strategies has shown, a focus on S’s face can provide valuable information on the extent to which members of different cultures are willing to disregard their own face needs while attempting to restore the victim’s face damaged by the offence.

What can be safely claimed to be universal about apologies is that they aim at restoring social equilibrium. Despite a stronger emphasis on regret in English and guilt in Russian, speakers of all the examined languages seem to agree that responsibility acceptance is an indispensable element of an apology, be it only because an apologetic formula combined with a denial of responsibility will not result in a successful apology. Accordingly, definitions of the strategies making up the speech act set of apologising offered in previous research tend to take into account the extent to which these strategies involve the acceptance of responsibility, which has also been a recurring issue throughout the present analysis.

Although IFID formulae differ in the extent to which they link the offence with the speaker and threaten face, the most conventionalised realisations, in particular, can be regarded as strategies expressing responsibility for the offence: By uttering a formula which is generally recognised to fulfil the function of an
apology, the speaker assumes (some) responsibility for restoring the social balance destroyed by the offence.

Similarly, the three positive politeness strategies – when used in offensive contexts – all link the speaker with the offence. Offers of repair accept responsibility for removing the damage and promises of forbearance take on responsibility for the offender’s future conduct. Expressions of concern uttered by an offender can be seen as evidence for his or her feeling of responsibility for the hearer’s physical and psychological condition potentially affected by the offence.

Whereas all apology strategies may convey various degrees of responsibility acceptance – depending on linguistic and non-linguistic factors – accounts can be placed into two categories according to whether they accept or deny responsibility. The various account types intended to reduce the offender’s responsibility identified in the data are of particular interest as they provide evidence for the speaker’s intention to save face. With 294 instances in the English, 272 in the Polish, and 182 in the Russian data, downgrading accounts constitute a considerable proportion of the strategies located in the data and, therefore, deserve some more attention.

The comparatively low frequency of downgrading accounts in the Russian data indicates that the Russian informants were least concerned about reducing damage to their face. At the same time, however, they used the lowest number of IFIDs and intensifiers – that is strategies explicitly signalling and intensifying an apologetic intention. The relatively high frequency of both IFIDs and downgrading strategies in the English data, in contrast, suggests a higher probability of their combinations, in which case denials of responsibility cancel out the apologetic function of the IFIDs they accompany. Since the expression of regret does not explicitly link the speaker with the offence, such combinations appear to be more likely in English than in the two Slavic languages.

While such hypotheses throw a fully new light on the obtained results, specifically on culture-specific ways of dealing with the struggle between ego’s and alter’s face needs in performing an FTA, when based solely on comparisons of total numbers of strategies, they remain speculative. In order to account for the effect strategy combinations may have on the illocutionary force of the response, it is necessary to take the entire response as the relevant unit of analysis.

10.1.2 Strategy combinations – IFIDs vs. responsibility

Since the present analysis is based solely on production data, it does not provide any information on which of the examined groups has produced the highest number of successful apologies. The data do, however, allow for a categorisation of the responses as accepting or denying responsibility. In classifying the responses I
have taken into account two factors: Whether they contain an IFID and whether they accept or deny responsibility; and I have arrived at four categories:

| +IFID / +Resp | −IFID / +Resp | +IFID / −Resp | −IFID / −Resp |

The category [+IFID] includes all IFID realisations, irrespective of whether they are generally accepted to serve the function of an apology in a particular language or not. Viewing the less common IFID realisations in linguistic context may provide some information on the frequency with which they are used in responses assuming responsibility, and thus, on their function as explicit apology strategies. Whereas utterances combining IFIDs with indirect apology strategies [+IFID / +Resp] confirm their apologetic function, IFIDs accompanied by denials of responsibility [+IFID / −Resp] serve as face-saving devices for the speaker.

The considerations underlying the categories [+Resp] and [−Resp] are more complex as they take into account both situational and linguistic context. While responses including upgrading accounts and other indirect apology strategies carry the feature [+Resp], and those containing downgrading accounts are codified as [−Resp], there are also responses combining both. Combinations of upgrading accounts with excuses and accounts minimising the imposition still depict the speaker as responsible for the offence, whereas formulaic expressions of embarrassment accompanied by denials of responsibility do not. The data even include a few responses conveying a contradictory attitude towards the offence, i.e. admitting as well as denying responsibility:

(303) Chyba się rozchorowały. Wiesz u nas to panuje teraz straszny wirus grypy. Prawdę mówiąc nie bardzo się nimi zajmowałem. Wybacz. Odkupię te rybki i obiecuję, że następnym razem lepiej się nimi zaopiekuję. [Pm-1/12]

‘Perhaps they fell ill. You know, we’re having a terrible flu virus here. Speaking the truth, I didn’t look after them very much. Forgive. I’ll buy you new fish and I promise that I’ll look after them better next time.’

The respondent starts with a made-up excuse, followed by a humorous explanation intended to ease the tension. Apparently, he notices that this evasive approach is not likely to be successful and may lead to even more face loss for both parties involved, for he changes his mind and admits to having neglected the fish while offering an explicit apology, repair and a promise of forbearance. In this way, the response results in an explicit and sincere apology, despite the initial attempt at avoiding responsibility.

An important factor to be taken into account is the order in which the two contradictory approaches occur as it often illustrates the offender’s overall attitude.
Responses in which an apology is first offered and then downgraded are more likely to depict the speaker as reluctant to assume responsibility for the offence:

(304) Oh shit, sorry. I'll sort the fine out for you and take them back tomorrow. Hang on, why was it you couldn't take them back? [Em-2/34]

Simultaneous acceptance and denial of responsibility occurred mainly in responses to scenario 6, which describes two transgressions, allowing the respondents to admit responsibility for one of them and deny the other. Such decisions can be interpreted as an attempt to minimise the offence and one's responsibility, in particular when the part of the offence for which responsibility is assumed is too obvious to deny. Therefore, the contradictory responses to scenario 6 were classified as [−Resp]:

(305) Ja postarajus' v sledujuščij raz šumet' potiše, a lestnicu ja ne pačkal. 'I'll try next time to make less loud noise, but the staircase I didn't make dirty.' [Rm-6/37]

In contrast to the taxonomy of account types suggested in 8.1.3, the classification of responses as accepting or denying responsibility additionally takes into account situational context. Since the scenarios equate the person filling in the questionnaire with the person responsible for the offence, downgrading accounts automatically classify as [−Resp]. However, the analysis of accounts has also uncovered several instances of justifications and even confessions concealing the true circumstances of the offence. Since admitting responsibility for a less severe variant of the offence is clearly a face-saving strategy on the part of the speaker, they also carry the feature [−Resp]. In real life, such approaches may go unnoticed and succeed in placating the hearer and restoring social harmony. The experimental design of the present study, however, allows for establishing the exact circumstances of the offence, for identifying accounts diverging from them and interpreting them accordingly.

While accounts have proved valuable in their function as indicators of the speakers' willingness to admit responsibility for the offence, not all responses include them. For instance, the data contain 32 English, 20 Polish and 21 Russian responses which consist of an IFID only, and which are problematic due to the fact that IFIDs can occasionally be used without an apologetic intention. However, a great proportion of the responses in which no further strategies are added to the IFID contain intensifying devices or endearing forms of address, suggesting that they are intended to serve as apology strategies. Hence, these responses were coded as [+IFID / +Resp].
Another type of utterances which deserves some attention at this point are responses which consist solely of an offer of repair, which occur 21 times in the English, 30 in the Polish, and 53 times in the Russian data. Unlike IFIDs, which are formulaic, offers of repair generally refer to the circumstances of the offence and thus provide a better insight into the speaker’s intention. As I have argued in 9.2, offers of repair assume responsibility for compensating for the offence but not necessarily for committing it, and used on their own, may substitute the apology.

In many cases, the exact formulation and the form of the offered repair allow for their classification as entailing or lacking responsibility. The few offers of repair used on their own that do not provide any clue as to their entailing responsibility will be treated according to the *in dubio pro reo* principle, i.e. due to the lack of contrary evidence, they are regarded as strategies assuming responsibility for the offence.

Table 18. IFIDs and responsibility acceptance across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>+IFID / +Resp</th>
<th>-IFID / +Resp</th>
<th>+IFID / -Resp</th>
<th>-IFID / -Resp</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1477</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>2400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 18 illustrates, the majority of responses (1477 or 62%) include an IFID and other strategies assuming responsibility, thus fulfilling the function of apologies. Responses which do not contain an IFID and deny responsibility make up 14% of the total (= 347), and they are also unambiguous as they clearly illustrate the speaker’s unapologetic and self-protective attitude. The remaining responses, i.e. those combining an IFID with accounts denying responsibility or redefining the offence and those accepting responsibility without resorting to an IFID, deserve some more attention. The former, in particular, provide additional insights into context- and culture-specific functions of the various IFID types.

The distribution of the frequencies of the four categories across languages (significant with: $\chi^2 = 44, 36$ [df 6] $p < .0001, \text{Cramer’}s V = 0.0961$) shows that the greatest discrepancies appear between the English and Russian data in connection with responses without an IFID. Whereas English exhibits the strongest preference for responses denying responsibility and not including an IFID, and the slightest for responses accepting responsibility without an IFID (131 vs. 81), in the Russian data, the frequencies of these combinations are diametrically opposed (88 vs. 150). Consequently, although the English respondents used 645 IFIDs and the Russian subjects only 586, the number of responses combining IFIDs with responsibility acceptance is nearly equal in the two languages, and the overall
frequency of responses assuming responsibility is considerably higher in Russian where it amounts to 656, as opposed to only 588 in English.

The highest degree of responsibility acceptance characterising the Russian data is in accordance with the low frequency of downgrading accounts and confirms the incompatibility of requesting forgiveness and denying responsibility.

The differences between Polish and English are not as marked as those between Russian and English. The Polish data exhibit the strongest preference for responses denying responsibility: Those including an IFID reach the highest frequency in the Polish data and those without an IFID are nearly as frequent as in the English data. Hence, the number of Polish responses accepting responsibility is lower than the number of Polish IFIDs (575 vs. 607).

It should be borne in mind, however, that the responses classified as [−Resp] include downgrading accounts as well as upgrading accounts redefining the offence. Since the latter portray the speaker as responsible for the modified version of the offence and downgrading accounts do not, differentiating between them could provide some evidence as to whether the expression of regret indeed is compatible with denials of responsibility to a greater extent than the performative. Furthermore, whereas English IFIDs nearly exclusively take the form of expressions of regret, the Polish data include a greater variety of IFID realisations. Apart from the performative, they also include the Polish as well as the English expression of regret. Hence, it would be interesting to see how many of the [+IFID / −Resp] combinations in the Polish data include this IFID type.

The total of responses combining IFIDs with strategies denying responsibility amounts to 234 instances, which corresponds to nearly 10% of all responses and 14% of responses including an IFID. As Table 19 shows, this number is comprised of 117 instances of responses combining IFIDs with downgrading accounts and exactly as many combinations with upgrading accounts redefining the offence.

Table 19. Combinations of IFIDs with face-saving strategies across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IFID + account</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>downgrading</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>redefining offence</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td><strong>97</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>234</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This additional distinction shows that combinations of IFIDs with strategies overtly denying responsibility are most frequent in the English data while the Polish responses display the highest frequency of apologies for a less face-threatening version of the offence. These figures seem to suggest a greater degree of compatibility of denials of responsibility with the English expression of regret than with the Polish performative and the Russian request for forgiveness.
Further evidence supporting such an interpretation can be provided by distinguishing between IFID realisations co-occurring with downgrading accounts. In the English data, 50 responses combined downgrading accounts with expressions of regret and two with the disarming softener *I’m afraid*. Among the 41 Polish responses combining IFIDs with downgrading accounts, in contrast, there are two instances of the disarming softener *niestety [unfortunately]*, two of the request for forgiveness *wybacz*, three of the English *sorry* and ten of the Polish expression of regret *przykro mi*. This means that of the 30 expressions of regret in the Polish data, ten appear in responses denying responsibility. Moreover, six were combined with more explicit IFIDs and four with formulaic expressions of guilt, providing further evidence for the claim that expressions of regret do not serve as direct apology strategies in Polish.

Even though the four occurrences of expressions of regret in the Russian data are too insignificant to draw any conclusions as to their function, three of them appear in responses denying responsibility and one is accompanied by another IFID. The remaining 21 instances of Russian responses combining IFIDs and downgrading accounts contain both forms of the request for forgiveness.

The analysis of responses combining IFIDs with other strategies also sheds some new light on the predictions made on the basis of the frequencies of the conjunction *but* co-occurring with IFIDs (see Chapter 7.6). Although this conventional implicature is commonly used to signal disagreement, in my data, *but* mainly co-occurs with justifications and even with accounts accepting responsibility, thus providing counterevidence to the hypothesis that this conjunction is employed to emphasise a contrast between the apologetic function of the IFID and the downgrading function of the remaining strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>but</em>+</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deny responsibility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act innocently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excuse</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit facts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of intent</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-criticism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of repair</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On Apologising

The frequent use of *but* to connect IFIDs with justifications does not surprise if one considers that the provision of mitigating circumstances does not necessarily reduce the illocutionary force of the apology. Although justifications do not necessarily result in apologies when used on their own, they have an upgrading function when combined with IFIDs, in which case the conjunction *but* can be regarded as an element introducing an account strategy which coincides with the IFID in entailing responsibility acceptance, but is simultaneously face-saving to both S and H.

Perhaps, the relatively high frequency of the conjunction *but* in the Polish data is indeed related to the explicit character of the performative. It would certainly be interesting to examine whether responses connecting *przepraszam* with justifications by means of the conjunction *ale* are perceived differently from their asyndentic counterparts.

10.2 Contextual conditions and strategy choice

In this chapter I will resume the analysis of individual strategies and examine the impact of the social variables of distance and relative power on strategy choice. An interpretation linking the differences in the distribution of strategies across languages with social variables is likely to provide some evidence on culture-specific perceptions or perhaps even divergent conceptualisations of these variables (see Chapter 2.3). Since the applicability of the three positive politeness apology strategies is contextually restricted, I will focus on the distribution of IFIDs and intensifiers as well as downgrading and upgrading accounts.

10.2.1 IFIDs across categories

The distribution of IFIDs in my data is clearly related to the two social variables defining the relationship between S and H. While the differences in the total frequencies of IFIDs across languages do not reach statistical significance, a repeated measures ANOVA shows that the identity of the addressee has a significant effect on the use of IFIDs (*F* (3, 295) = 129,909, *p* < .001, *η²* = 0,569) and that there is a significant interaction between the variables category and language (*F* (6,590) = 6,468, *p* < .001, *η²* = 0,062). Accordingly, 57% of the variation in the use of IFIDs can be attributed to the relationship between S and H and 6% to the interaction between the variables category and language.
Chapter 10. On the culture-specificity of apologies

Table 21. Distribution of IFIDs across categories and languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Low D &amp; −P</th>
<th>High D &amp; −P</th>
<th>Med D &amp; +P</th>
<th>High D &amp; +P</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the total numbers per category show, most IFIDs were used in apologies to strangers and fewest to authority figures, while the frequencies in apologies to friends and acquaintances are comparable. Generally, the use of IFIDs appears to increase with growing social distance and decrease with growing social power.

This pattern confirms Suszczyńska’s results who found that Hungarians show a marked preference for IFIDs with strangers and avoid them with status superiors (2005: 97–98). While researchers investigating the impact of social distance on apologising tend to agree that the need to provide explicit apologies decreases with a growing degree of familiarity (Fraser 1981: 269, Olshtain 1989: 162, Holmes 1990: 185), there is no consensus as to the impact of social power on the use of explicit apologies. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989: 203) as well as House (1989: 311) agree that the use of IFIDs tends to be higher in dyads characterised by unequal social status, but House points out that this goes for both upward and downward apologies. In Deutschmann’s data, powerful speakers apologised more than twice as often to powerless interlocutors than vice versa (2003: 201). A possible reason for this result, however, is that 80% of his ‘powerful’ informants were parents and teachers, whose behaviour may have been pedagogically motivated (see Ogiermann 2004).

While contextual factors other than social distance and power should not be overlooked as an important factor responsible for these varying results, the differences across studies can also be traced back to culture-specific perceptions of social distance and power.

In my data, the strong preference for IFIDs in apologies to strangers is statistically significant in all three languages: Post-hoc t-tests comparing category II with each of the remaining categories show that all the differences are highly significant in all languages alike (p < .001). In the Polish data, however, a paired comparison of the frequencies shows statistically significant differences across all four categories.

Polish is also the language with the greatest discrepancy between the numbers of IFIDs offered to friends and to strangers, suggesting a strong effect of the variable of social distance. Strangers were offered 1.72 times as many IFIDs as friends in the Polish data, which shows that Poles attach much more importance
to formulaic apologies when apologising to strangers than in their apologies to friends. Since the Russian respondents used the lowest frequency of IFIDs with strangers and the English subjects the highest amount of IFIDs in their apologies to friends, the discrepancies are less marked in these two languages, with the ratio amounting to 1.44 in the Russian and 1.37 in the English data.

In the categories based on +P, the overall preference for IFIDs is lower than in the categories based on −P. While apologies to status equal strangers include the highest, apologies to strangers in superior positions include the lowest number of IFIDs (633 vs. 363), which illustrates not only the impact of the variable P on the use of explicit apologies, but also the different function IFIDs adopt in legal contexts. While apologies to authority figures can be used to make the situation more personal and to avoid penalty, they may also be interpreted as an admission of responsibility for committing a legal offence.

Accordingly, IFIDs were used less often with authority figures than they were with acquainted status superiors. In the Polish data, acquaintances were offered 1.54 as many IFIDs as were authority figures, in the English data this ratio amounts to 1.13 and in the Russian data to 0.86. Hence, it appears that while the Polish respondents regard explicit apologies as important in maintaining harmony in relationships with status superiors and risky in legal contexts, Russians use IFIDs in legal contexts as a means of placating the hearer and avoiding penalty.

Figure 4. Preferences for IFIDs across categories and languages

Figure 4 shows that although speakers of all three languages agree in using particularly many IFIDs with status equal strangers and relatively few with status superiors, the Polish data exhibit the strongest correlation between the use of IFIDs and social factors. As the diagram illustrates, the frequency of Polish IFIDs exceeds that in the other two languages in category II and is lowest in category IV.
10.2.1.1 IFID realisations across categories

Since the category of IFIDs contains several linguistic formulae, more interesting results can be obtained by viewing the various IFID types in relation to contextual conditions. Despite the nearly exclusive use of the expression of regret in the English data, additional insights can be gained by distinguishing between the full form *I'm sorry* and the short form *sorry*, as the choice of one of these variants affects the illocutionary force of the apology and is likely to be governed by contextual conditions.

Table 22. Preferences for the long and short form of the English expression of regret across categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low D &amp; −P</th>
<th>High D &amp; −P</th>
<th>Med D &amp; +P</th>
<th>High D &amp; +P</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am sorry</td>
<td>92 61%</td>
<td>94 44%</td>
<td>83 58%</td>
<td>67 53%</td>
<td>336 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorry</td>
<td>60 39%</td>
<td>120 56%</td>
<td>60 42%</td>
<td>59 47%</td>
<td>299 47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between the distributions of the short and long forms of the expression of regret across categories is statistically significant (χ² = 11.99 [df 3], p < .0074, Cramer's V = 0.1374). The percentages presented in Table 22 further illustrate that there is a stronger tendency to use full forms in apologies to friends and acquaintances than in those directed to strangers, where short forms are preferred. Since short forms are less likely to be accompanied by adverbial intensifiers (see Chapter 7.7.2), this distribution sheds some new light on the high number of IFIDs employed in category II, showing that their frequency alone is not necessarily indicative of particularly apologetic behaviour.

Furthermore, long forms tend to be preferred over short forms in apologies to status superiors. Hence, the frequency of the full form seems to increase with the degree of intimacy and, to a lesser extent, with growing social power. This pattern is diametrically opposed to that of the overall distribution of IFIDs, which means that in the category exhibiting the highest frequency of IFIDs, short forms were preferred over long forms.

The Polish data exhibit a slightly more varied use of IFID formulae, and while the performative *przepraszam* occurs in responses to all scenarios, the distribution of all remaining IFID realisations correlates with contextual conditions. Although the low numbers involved do not allow for generalisations, some interesting tendencies emerge in relation to the incorporated variables and other contextual factors.

Since conciliatory expressions have an emotional and personal character, six out of eight were employed in apologies to friends. The IFID categories request for forgiveness and expression of regret show a similar distribution, with roughly
half of them appearing in category I. The informal character of the English word *sorry* leads to its preference not only by young people but also in apologies to young people. In my data, this IFID realisation was used 20 times in category I and eight times in scenario 3 (Mistaking a stranger), that is in scenarios featuring an apologisee of a similar age as the respondents’. The expressions *niestety* [*unfortunately*] and *obawiam się* [*I’m afraid*] occur exclusively in scenarios 1 (Dead fish), 5 (Professor’s book), and 8 (Ticket inspector). Accordingly, these disarming softeners tend to be used in situations in which the exact circumstances of the offence are not known to the hearer in order to soften the effect the news may have on him or her.

The correlation between IFID type and category in the Russian data exhibits a parallel to that established for English. As in English, most of the IFIDs are represented by two variants of one IFID category, namely the request for forgiveness, with *prosti-te* carrying a stronger illocutionary force than *izvini-te* (see 7.3.3 and 7.5.3).

### Table 23. Preferences for the two variants of the Russian request for forgiveness across categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low D &amp; −P</th>
<th>High D &amp; −P</th>
<th>Med D &amp; +P</th>
<th>High D &amp; +P</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Izvini-te</td>
<td>94 78%</td>
<td>127 70%</td>
<td>81 80%</td>
<td>102 82%</td>
<td>404 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosti-te</td>
<td>27 22%</td>
<td>55 30%</td>
<td>20 20%</td>
<td>23 18%</td>
<td>125 24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although *izvini-te* is more than three times as frequent as *prosti-te*, both requests for forgiveness appear in responses to all scenarios. The preference for *prosti-te* is particularly strong in category II, where it amounts to 55 instances, though a Chi-square test shows that the difference between the distributions of the two requests for forgiveness across categories does not reach statistical significance. The relatively frequent use of the request for forgiveness with the stronger illocutionary force in apologies to strangers, however, stands in opposition to the high frequency of the short form of the expression of regret established for category II in the English data.

As in the Polish data, the two scenarios comprising category I elicited all the instances of Russian expressions of regret and conciliatory expressions. The stylistically marked *prošu proščenija*, in contrast, occurs in all categories but I, thus implying its greater appropriateness in formal situations marked by high social distance and unequal social status.
10.2.1.2 **Intensification across categories**

Although the differences in the use of intensifiers reach statistical significance across categories as well as languages, one should bear in mind that intensifiers co-occur with IFIDs and that their frequency partly depends on the IFID type (see Chapter 7.7). Accordingly, Table 24 shows frequencies of intensifying devices as well as the proportions of intensified IFIDs and both will be taken into account in the following discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Low D &amp; −P</th>
<th>High D &amp; −P</th>
<th>Med D &amp; +P</th>
<th>High D &amp; +P</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>77 49%</td>
<td>82 38%</td>
<td>61 42%</td>
<td>53 41%</td>
<td>273 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>35 27%</td>
<td>119 53%</td>
<td>70 45%</td>
<td>24 24%</td>
<td>248 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>27 20%</td>
<td>61 31%</td>
<td>29 25%</td>
<td>19 14%</td>
<td>136 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>139 33%</td>
<td>262 41%</td>
<td>160 39%</td>
<td>96 26%</td>
<td>657 36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A repeated measures ANOVA shows that the variable category, denoting the relationship between S and H, has a significant effect on the use of intensifiers (F (3, 295) = 35,854, p < .001, η² = 0.267) and that there is a significant interaction between category and language (F (6, 590) = 9,109, p < .001, η² = 0.076).

The overall distribution of intensifiers across categories is similar to that of IFIDs, for it suggests a positive correlation with social distance and a negative one with social power. Previous research shows a strong consensus as to the influence of social power on the use of intensifying devices. According to Olshtain (1989: 163) and Vollmer and Olshtain (1989: 203), Hebrew and German speakers use more intensification towards status superiors. Similarly, House points out that “the use of intensification devices is highest where the apologiser has lower social status than his addressee” (1989: 316), while Holmes draws a parallel between the addressee’s high status and elaborate apologies (1990: 188).

The impact of social distance on intensification has not been discussed by these authors and has received surprisingly little attention in previous apology studies. In my data, strangers were not only offered more direct apologies than the remaining addressees, but these apologies also included the highest number of intensifiers. This is especially true of the Polish and the Russian data, where nearly half of the total amount of intensifiers appears in category II (119 out of 248 and 61 out of 136, respectively). The distribution of intensifying devices in the English data, however, follows a different pattern. Not only are the differences across categories less marked than in the two Slavic languages, but apologies to strangers contain the lowest proportion of intensification. A possible reason for the low frequency of intensifiers in high D situations in the English data is that...
although they elicited the highest number of IFIDs, most of them are represented by the short form sorry, which is usually not intensified.

Another striking difference in the use of intensifying devices between English and the Slavic languages emerges in category I. Whereas the Russian subjects intensified 20% and the Polish 27% of their apologies to friends, the English data show the highest frequency of adverbial intensifiers in this category, amounting to 49%. Apparently, for British people, intensification in apologies to friends is more important than it is to Poles and Russians, who seem to agree that there is little need to intensify apologies addressed to friends. Consequently, although speakers of all languages used more IFIDs with growing social distance, intensification follows the same pattern in the two Slavic languages, but not in the English data.

Social power seems to affect the distribution of intensifiers in a similar way as it influences the use of IFIDs. Category IV exhibits a comparatively low frequency of both IFIDs and intensifiers, confirming that in legal contexts effusive apologies are not only a means of avoiding the penalty but may also be interpreted as an admission to having broken the law.

The degree of intensification in apologies to authority figures is particularly low in Polish (24%) and Russian (14%), but it remains steady in the English data (41%). The notably low degree of intensification in the Russian data stands in sharp contrast to the relatively high number of IFIDs used by the Russian subjects in this category. While the low frequency of intensifiers in the Polish data parallels that of IFIDs, in the English data, intensification remains largely unaffected by social power, perhaps implying a difference in the attitudes towards authority figures in Great Britain and the two former socialist countries.

In category III, where high social power is combined with medium social distance, the numbers of both IFIDs and intensifiers are higher than in category IV, suggesting that speakers of all languages are more willing to offer elaborate apologies to somebody who is not only socially superior to them, but with whom they are acquainted and likely to continue the relationship in the future. Again, the increase of intensification with decreasing social distance is least marked in the English data, where neither the frequency of IFIDs nor that of intensifiers in category III differ much from the overall distributional pattern in this language.

In the Russian data, IFIDs and intensifiers show a complementary distribution in the two categories based on +P. Whereas in category IV, Russian is the language with the highest frequency of IFIDs and the lowest degree of intensification, in category III the number of IFIDs is much lower but accompanied by a higher number of intensifiers. This distribution suggests a tendency for Russians to either apologise profusely to acquainted status superiors or to avoid the FTA.
As Figure 5 illustrates, the distribution of intensifiers not only exhibits an even closer correlation with social factors than that of IFIDs, but also greater discrepancies across languages. Even though the relationship between S and H has a significant effect on the use of intensifiers in all three languages (p < .001), the distributional pattern in the English data differs greatly from that emerging from the Polish and Russian responses.

In the two Slavic languages, the use of intensifiers correlates primarily with social distance. The distribution in these two languages follows a similar pattern; with the frequencies being similar in categories I and IV and reaching a peak in category II, though the discrepancies are less pronounced in Russian. The only observable tendency in the English data, in contrast, is a slight decrease in the use of intensification with increasing social power.

10.2.2 Accounts across categories

Since accounts constitute a very broad category and their linguistic realisations reflect the impact of various contextual factors other than P and D, an analysis looking solely at preferences for accounts across categories is unlikely to provide information on the influence of social variables on responsibility acceptance. House rejects the possibility of correlating expressions of responsibility with external or internal factors while arguing that the use of this strategy depends on the “nature of the situation or, more precisely, a speaker’s assessment of the potentially face-threatening expression of responsibility” (1989:319).
If one considers the divergent criteria used to assign utterances to the strategy taking on responsibility and related strategies across studies, it is not surprising that the findings reported in previous research on the impact of contextual variables on strategies expressing responsibility tend to be contradictory. The CCSARP studies (1989), in particular, illustrate that the broad scope of the strategy taking on responsibility makes it applicable in any situation, which is probably why Olshtain (1989: 163) and Vollmer and Olshtain (1989: 203) do not find any systematic correspondences between responsibility acceptance and social factors. Bergman and Kasper draw a parallel between the use of expressions of responsibility and low social distance (1993: 99) while Trosborg establishes a correlation with social distance as well as social power. Her informants “acknowledged responsibility significantly more to authority figures and to friends than they did to strangers” (1995: 404), which could be related to the brevity of encounters between strangers.

The distinction between upgrading and downgrading accounts suggested in the present study allows for establishing culture-specific preferences for admitting and denying responsibility in relation to social distance and power, as well as other contextual factors.

Table 25. Distribution of upgrading accounts across categories and languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Low D &amp; −P</th>
<th>High D &amp; −P</th>
<th>Med D &amp; +P</th>
<th>High D &amp; +P</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A repeated measures ANOVA shows a significant effect of category on the use of upgrading accounts ($F(3, 295) = 67.256, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.406$) and a significant interaction between category and language ($F(6, 590) = 4.316, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.042$). A closer look at the distribution presented in Table 25 shows that the main factor responsible for the significant effect of category is the high frequency of upgrading accounts in category IV, which seems to be typical of legal offences.

Post-hoc comparisons show significant differences between category IV and all the remaining categories in all three languages ($p < .001$). However, while in Polish and Russian further significant differences arise between the remaining categories, in English, all three categories comprising personal offences elicited exactly the same number of upgrading accounts. This pattern is consistent with the distribution of IFIDs and intensifiers in the English data, confirming a relatively low degree of sensitivity to contextual factors.
The distribution of downgrading accounts follows a totally different pattern, the main factor responsible for this distribution being the plausibility of accounts denying or reducing the speaker’s responsibility in a given situation rather than the social variables of social distance and power.

Table 26. Distribution of downgrading accounts across categories and languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Low D &amp; −P</th>
<th>High D &amp; −P</th>
<th>Med D &amp; +P</th>
<th>High D &amp; +P</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, a repeated measures ANOVA suggests that the relationship between S and H has a significant effect on the use of downgrading accounts (F (3, 295) = 97,676, p < .001, η² = 0.498) and that there is a significant interaction between this variable and language (F (6, 590) = 5,498, p < .001, η² = 0.053).

The lowest frequency of downgrading accounts occurs in responses offered to status equal strangers, space offences being difficult to deny. This stands in sharp contrast to the high amount of downgrading accounts offered to friends. The reason why scenario 1, in particular, elicited so many downgrading accounts is that the hearer is absent as the offence takes place. Incidentally, this strong discrepancy between categories I and II is in line with the distribution of IFIDs, i.e. the high frequency of IFIDs offered to strangers and the much lower number of IFIDs used in apologies to friends. The variable P seems to encourage the use of downgrading accounts since the category combining high D with +P elicited considerably more downgrading accounts than that based on high D and −P, though the offence type can be expected to play an important role, too.

Since the use of downgrading accounts is contextually restricted to situations in which the speaker’s responsibility for the offence can be denied or minimised, the distribution presented in Table 26 cannot be expected to generalise across situations. A comparison taking into account the preferences for both upgrading and downgrading accounts is more likely to provide an insight into the impact of social variables on the use of accounts across cultures. Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of both account types across categories and languages.

The English responses to friends include the highest number of face-saving and the lowest number of face-threatening accounts. The number of downgrading accounts even exceeds that of the upgrading ones, portraying the English subjects as least inclined to admit responsibility for offending their friends. The high number of upgrading accounts in the Polish and the low number of downgrading
accounts in the Russian data, in contrast, make speakers of these languages appear more willing to risk losing face in low D contexts. The discrepancy between English and the two Slavic languages appears even stronger when considering that among the downgrading accounts in the Polish and Russian data there is a strong preference for excuses, whereas the English subjects favoured explicit denials as well as acting innocently.

The distributional pattern of account strategies elicited by the two scenarios featuring status equal strangers is very similar across languages. The only notable difference is the overall higher frequency of upgrading accounts in the two Slavic languages, which is mainly due to their distribution in scenario 4. This stronger inclination to explain one’s behaviour to strangers in a largely unambiguous situation is in accordance with the collectivist component of Polish and Russian cultures.

The distribution of upgrading vs. downgrading accounts in the two categories based on +P follows a similar pattern in all three languages, with the Russians using the lowest and the Poles the highest number of both downgrading and upgrading accounts. The only notable divergence from this pattern is that downgrading accounts are most frequent in the Polish data in high D, and in the English data in medium D situations.
10.2.3 P and D across cultures

Although my findings confirm previous research in that they suggest that the overall distributional pattern of strategies in relation to social distance and social power is similar across languages, there are some interesting differences. I would now like to sketch some general tendencies emerging from the data providing evidence for divergent, possibly culturally determined, assessments of these two social variables across languages. The most remarkable finding of the discussion above appears to be that the discrepancies in strategy choice across categories are greatest in the Polish and slightest in the English data.

Polish responses offered to friends are characterised by a relatively low number of IFIDs and intensifiers. Upgrading accounts, in contrast, are much more frequent than they are in the other two languages. While Russian apologies to friends include slightly more IFIDs and intensifiers than Polish ones, the low frequency of downgrading accounts in Russian and the high number of upgrading accounts in Polish place the two Slavic languages on a similar level in terms of face-threat involved in apologising to friends.

English responses to friends differ from those offered in the two Slavic languages in that they include relatively many IFIDs and intensifiers, but also downgrading accounts, exceeding the frequency of upgrading account strategies. Combinations of intensified formulaic apologies with downgrading strategies suggest that the perception of the variable low D in English differs from its assessment in the two Slavic languages. One could say that in apologies to friends, Polish and Russian respondents attached less importance to formulaic apologies and their intensification, but were also less protective towards their own face than the British respondents.

A diametrically opposed pattern emerges in situations involving status equal strangers, with the two Slavic languages showing a marked preference for formulaic apologies and intensifying devices and English exhibiting only a slight increase in the use of IFIDs and even a decrease in their intensification with growing social distance. The greater differences between the numbers of IFIDs and intensifiers in Polish and Russian responses to friends and strangers are likely to be paralleled by a more discrepant assessment of the variable D in these two categories than in English. Whereas the short form of the expression of regret makes the English responses to strangers brief and casual, Poles and Russians not only used more IFIDs and intensifiers but also more upgrading accounts than did the English subjects.

It appears that while speakers of the two Slavic languages regard formulaic apologies to friends as dispensable, suggesting a particularly low assessment of D and, perhaps, a greater degree of intimacy between friends than in British culture,
explicit apology strategies and intensification play an important role among strangers. The use of accounts towards strangers also suggests divergent perceptions of social distance: While the British respondents kept the verbal exchange with strangers to a minimum, some Polish and Russian speakers offered lengthy explanations including personal details.

Coupled with a slightly higher number of offers of repair as well as various greeting and parting formulae and, in the Russian data, even instances of the offenders introducing themselves to the victim, the responses to high D contexts formulated in the Slavic languages suggest that more communication takes place among strangers in these collectivist cultures. As Suszczyńska puts it, Slavic people are “more publicly available to each other, which implies less social distance” (1999: 63). Apparently, the high social distance among strangers in Poland and Russia is quickly overcome when people become involved in a common situation – even if it takes the form of an offence. The formal character is preserved in the use of formulaic strategies but, at the same time, the distance is reduced through the use of positive politeness. The English responses to both friends and strangers, in contrast, convey a stronger face-saving tendency on the part of the speaker, irrespective of social distance. This seems to confirm the individualist structure of Anglo-Saxon culture, the relatively slight differences in strategy choice in encounters with friends and strangers being an example of universalism (see Chapter 2.3.2).

The impact of medium D on strategy choice is most consistent in the Polish data, with the numbers of IFIDs and intensifiers being lower than in high D situations and higher than in low D scenarios. The Russian and English responses to acquaintances, in contrast, display a relatively low preference for IFIDs and intensifiers. The distribution of accounts in medium D contexts is comparable to that in situations involving friends, with Poles using the highest number of upgrading and Russians the lowest of downgrading accounts.

The fact that the overall frequency of downgrading accounts in medium D contexts is considerably lower than in low D contexts can be, at least in part, attributed to the variable +P. The frequent use of upgrading accounts concealing the true nature of the offence in scenario 5 (Professor’s book) is clearly related to this variable. Their high frequency in the Polish data, coupled with an avoidance of accounts occupying the two ends of the face-threat continuum and a fairly strong preference for IFIDs and intensifiers, suggests a particularly high assessment of the variable P by the Polish subjects.

While this finding confirms Hofstede’s high score for Poland on the dimension of power distance, the pattern emerging from the Russian data suggests a lower assessment of P than does the distribution of strategies in the English data. The Russian respondents used remarkably few IFIDs and both upgrading and downgrading accounts in scenarios combining medium social distance with high
power, suggesting that they were neither particularly concerned about damage to their own nor to the victim’s face.

The category combining +P with high D and involving authority figures provides further evidence for a divergent perception of social power across cultures. While the Polish respondents avoided using IFIDs in legal contexts, the Russian respondents used them nearly as frequently as in apologies to friends and more frequently than in apologies to acquaintances, suggesting that Russians tend to treat legal offences in a similar way as they do personal offences.

The frequency of intensifiers in responses to authority figures is rather low in both Slavic languages, while the distribution of accounts again shows a particularly high frequency of both up- and downgrading accounts in the Polish and a rather low frequency of both types in the Russian data. It seems that in order to avoid penalty, Russians are more inclined to resort to formulaic apologies while Poles favour accounts negotiating the offence. The use of IFIDs and intensifiers in the English data does not differ much from the remaining categories, and the frequency of accounts lies between those in the two Slavic languages, again suggesting a low degree of sensitivity to contextual factors.

Further support for a low assessment of the variable P in the English data, resulting in a fairly consistent distribution of strategies across categories, can be obtained by comparing the strategy choice in categories II and IV which are both based on high social distance and differ solely by the variable characterising the interlocutors’ relationship in terms of relative social power. Despite the strong preference for IFIDs in apologies to status equal strangers in all three languages, the frequencies of both IFIDs and intensifiers in the two categories involving strangers are least discrepant in the English data.

On the whole, it can be concluded that the quantitative differences in the use of face-threatening and face-saving strategies not only suggest divergent assessments of social factors across languages, but also provide some evidence in favour of regarding social power and distance as culture-specific concepts.

The impact of social distance on strategy choice in the three languages provides support for Hofstede’s scores on the dimension of individualism vs. collectivism. The relatively low degree of variation in dealing with offences across situations in the English data is in accordance with the strong individualistic tendency shaping British culture and confirms the high degree of routinisation suggested in previous research (House 2000, 2005). The greater sensitivity to social distance in Polish and Russian, in contrast, seems to illustrate the influence of particularism on interactional patterns.

The divergent perceptions of social distance in English and Russian cultures can be corroborated by a study conducted by Vogelberg who concludes that “native speakers of English were shown to be least sensitive to distance which had
a uniformly high unmarked value for friends and strangers alike. For Russians, smaller values of D seem to be the unmarked option.” (2002: 1068).

Since Polish culture comprises both collectivist and individualistic features, the marked discrepancy between strategy choice in low and high D contexts in the Polish data may seem surprising. However, the high frequency of IFIDs and intensifiers in apologies to strangers is in accordance with the generally high degree of formality of the Polish language, as reflected in the ceremonious character of deferential address forms and the heavy use of titles (see 2.3.3).

The assessment of social power emerging from strategy choice in the Polish data fully confirms the high score Poland obtains on Hofstede's dimension of power distance. The distribution of strategies in relation to social power in the other two languages, however, suggests a lower assessment of this variable in Russian than in English, thus contradicting Hofstede's scores.

This finding may be related to the scenarios chosen for the present study, in particular to the inclusion of legal offences. The status of the landlady (scenario 6) and the ticket inspector (scenario 8), in particular, seem to have been assessed as relatively low by the Russian respondents. Another, equally plausible explanation for this low assessment of P in the Russian data is the influence of the Westernised cultural layer, which seems to be particularly strong in Moscow, where the data were collected, and among young people, such as my Russian informants.

10.2.4 Testing Brown and Levinson’s weightiness formula

Having linked the assessments of P and D in the examined cultures, as derivable from the distribution of speech act strategies, with Hofstede's dimensions of cultural variability, I will now examine whether my findings support the claims made by Brown and Levinson of the impact of P and D on strategy choice. Due to the universal character of their weightiness formula, a distinction between languages is not regarded as necessary.

According to Brown and Levinson, the social variables P and D contribute to the weightiness of an FTA on a summative basis. The authors further claim that the weightiness of an FTA “is compounded of both risk to S's face and risk to H’s face” and that “apologies and confessions are essentially threats to S’s face” (1987:76). Hence, the calculations underlying Brown and Levinson's weightiness formula suggest that the greater the social distance between S and H and the more power H has over S, the more protective the apologiser will be towards his or her own face. High P and D values can be expected to lead to the avoidance of explicit apology strategies and intensifiers and to a preference for strategies oriented towards S's face, such as face-saving accounts.
As I have argued in 6.1, the maximum value predicted by the weightiness formula is problematic in that high P and high D usually do not combine, with high D not only precluding the knowledge of a potential high P but also making it irrelevant. The solution to this problem offered in the present study was to make H's power explicit by means of a uniform and relevant for S through his or her involvement in a legal offence.

The responses to the two legal offences based on high P and D support Brown and Levinson's predictions in that they reflect a particular concern for S's face. They include the lowest number of IFIDs (363) and intensifiers (96), and the highest frequency of account strategies (927); most of them occupying the centre of the face-threat scale. Many of the relatively numerous offers of repair (260) have to be regarded as strategies attempting to avoid the penalty and not as apology strategies accepting responsibility for the offence. Moreover, although the focus on S's face characterising the responses to the two legal offences can be interpreted as confirming Brown and Levinson's predictions of the impact of high P and D on strategy choice, it can also be related to the fact that legal offences involve virtually no face-threat for the hearer.

According to the weightiness formula, the scenarios based on medium distance and high power come second in terms of face-threat involved in performing the FTA, and the responses to the two scenarios comprising category III seem to confirm this assessment. They elicited 415 IFIDs and 160 intensifiers, which means that the frequency of explicit apology strategies increases by 14% and that of intensification by 66% with social distance decreasing from high to medium. Account strategies are, with 515 instances, least frequent in category III, thus standing in sharp opposition to the high number of account strategies occurring in category IV. However, the proportions of downgrading accounts are comparable, making up 30% of the total of account strategies in category III and 26% in category IV. Offers of repair are most frequent in category III, where they amount to 443 instances, which is equivalent to 41% of all instances of this strategy in the data. In the light of the high social status of the addressee and the offence type, they play an important role in restoring equilibrium and maintaining social harmony. It should be borne in mind, however, that offers to return the professor's book later (Scenario 5) conceal the true nature of the offence. Hence, they not only have a face-saving tendency but, strictly speaking, cannot be classified as apology strategies as they do not entail responsibility acceptance.

Consequently, as predicted by Brown and Levinson, the two categories based on +P elicited a comparatively low number of strategies threatening the speaker's face. Offers of repair constitute an exception to this pattern, a possible reason being that they can substitute rather than upgrade the apology, in which case they have a face-saving function for the speaker. A comparison of the two categories
based on high social power illustrates the impact of the different D values inherent in them. It suggests a positive correlation between the use of accounts and social distance and a negative correlation between this variable and the remaining strategies: While the number of accounts is higher in the category based on high social distance, IFIDs, intensifying devices, and offers of repair are more frequent in the two scenarios based on medium social distance. The main reason for this distributional pattern appears to be that maintaining relationships requires more face-work than do encounters with strangers.

Within Brown and Levinson’s framework, FTAs performed in low D and –P contexts do not require much face redress, which suggests that apologies among status equal and socially close interlocutors include relatively many IFIDs, intensifiers and other strategies threatening the speaker’s face. The responses to the scenarios making up category I, which depict this kind of relationship, include a slightly higher frequency of IFIDs than apologies offered to acquaintances (424 vs. 415), but fewer intensifiers (139 vs. 160), a greater proportion of downgrading accounts (41% vs. 30%), and fewer offers of repair (362 vs. 443). On the whole, this pattern suggests a fairly strong face-saving tendency on the part of the speaker and, hence, contradicts Brown and Levinson’s predictions on the impact of low social distance on the amount of face redress.

Whereas contrasting the influence of D in the categories based on low and medium social distance is not fully transparent due to their divergent P values, a comparison of the responses given to friends and strangers should provide a more reliable insight into the impact of the variable D on the amount of redress to S’s face. Category II combines equal social power with high social distance, with the latter contributing to an overall greater weightiness of the two offences than those comprising category I.

According to Brown and Levinson’s weightiness formula, the higher D value should lead to a greater degree of face redress in performing the FTA, but the distribution of strategies in category II fully contradicts this assumption. The two scenarios describing offences committed against strangers elicited the highest number of IFIDs – 636, as opposed to only 424 in responses addressed to friends – the highest frequency of intensifiers (262 vs. 139) and the lowest proportion of downgrading accounts, amounting to only 11%.

What becomes evident from the distribution of strategies in relation to social distance and power in my data is that these two variables not only do not contribute to the weightiness of the FTA on a summative basis, but they also do so in different ways. While high social power has indeed resulted in a face-saving tendency on the part of the speaker, high social distance has led to the strongest preference for explicit apology strategies and intensifiers and the lowest frequency of downgrading accounts in the data.
The present analysis shows, therefore, that the apologiser becomes more reluctant to risk face loss with decreasing social distance. There are two equally plausible explanations for this pattern, the first being related to the duration of the relationship between the interlocutors. Whereas encounters between strangers are generally brief, low and medium social distance presuppose a relationship in the course of which the social distance between the interlocutors has been reduced. In contrast to strangers, each of whom goes on their way after the encounter, relationships with friends and acquaintances need to be maintained. Offensive behaviour clearly threatens them, which is why several respondents chose to save face by concealing the offence whenever (regarded as) possible instead of allowing damage to both parties’ face by revealing the offence.

Furthermore, one should not underestimate the impact of other contextual factors on the selection of account strategies, such as the hearer’s knowledge of the circumstances of the offence, which proved particularly relevant in scenarios 1 (Dead fish), 5 (Professors book) and 8 (Ticket inspector). Clearly, the hearer’s ignorance of the true nature of the offence encourages the use of account strategies denying responsibility or redefining the offence.

Another possible explanation of the avoidance of direct apology strategies and intensifiers in low D contexts is that formal, routinised apologies are regarded as dispensable in close relationships. However, this explanation, previously put forward by Fraser (1981) and Holmes (1989), does not account for the use of strategies denying responsibility.

For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that this discussion has entirely omitted one of the components of the weightiness formula, namely R, denoting the ranking of imposition. As I have shown, this variable is not only culture-specific, but also dependent on the assessments of P and D, making it difficult to analyse it in isolation (see Chapter 2.3).

Another variable not discussed here, even though it has been varied systematically across scenarios, is addressee gender. The two scenarios within each of the categories are based on similar P and D values, but each category includes one scenario featuring a male and one a female hearer. The aim of this symmetrical distribution of the hearer’s gender was to rule out the possibility of its being the factor responsible for differences across categories. However, the analysis of the strategies used by my respondents has not established any systematic correlation between this variable and strategy choice within categories either.

IFIDs occur 946 times in responses directed to males and 892 in responses to females, whereas intensifiers were used 316 times in apologies to male addressees and 341 times in those offered to female addressees. Account strategies convey a more apologetic attitude towards the female hearer in category I and a similar preference for face-threatening accounts in both scenarios comprising category II. There is a
slightly higher frequency of face-saving accounts in responses to the female hearer in category III, whereas the accounts employed in the two legal scenarios exhibit a considerably more careless attitude towards the female addressee.

Having illustrated the problems one encounters in attempting to capture socio-pragmatic choices underlying the performance of apologies in terms of Brown and Levinson’s weightiness formula, I will now take a closer look at their concepts of positive and negative politeness, while focusing on the role they play in dealing with offensive situations.

10.3 Positive vs. negative face in apologising

Many of the cross-cultural differences discussed in the previous chapters not only consisted in divergent preferences for particular apology strategies, but their formulations could often be interpreted in terms of preferences for positive vs. negative politeness. Due to the generally adopted view that apologies are negative politeness strategies, however, this distinction has been largely neglected in previous apology research (but see García 1989 and Deutschmann 2003), which has focused on analysing the data according to the speech act set.

Since Brown and Levinson associate the two politeness types with the face-threat underlying the performance of a speech act, as calculated by adding the values of P, D and R, they suggest that positive politeness implies a lower degree of face redress than negative politeness. Their definition of these two politeness types in terms of the assessment of P, D and R seems to have influenced Olshtain and Blum-Kulka’s view of the role positive and negative politeness play in the selection of apology strategies:

For apologies, we interpret a positive-oriented tendency as resulting in speakers’ preference for minimising the level of offence and assigning responsibility to other factors than himself or herself, while a negatively oriented approach would result in stronger self-blame and willingness to take on responsibility. (1985: 308)

This interpretation basically suggests that apologies based on positive politeness aim at avoiding responsibility – provided that such strategies classify as apologies – while negative politeness strategies result in the acceptance of responsibility. Within a cross-cultural context, it implies that cultures favouring positive politeness are generally less willing to apologise than those relying more heavily on negative politeness. It is, therefore, not surprising that the hierarchy in Brown and Levinson’s chart, suggesting that positive politeness is less polite than negative politeness, has met with criticism from researchers dealing with positive
politeness cultures. The theoretical considerations presented and the data analysis conducted in the present study render further support to this criticism.

As I have argued in 3.3, the function of remedial apologies, which consists in the restoration of social balance damaged by an offence, excludes an orientation towards H’s negative face needs, defined as “his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded” (Brown & Levinson 1987: 129). The fact that apologies are beneficial to H and perceived as humiliating to S shows that they mainly threaten the speaker’s negative face. Redress of the speaker’s negative face, however, does not result in politeness but in strategies aiming at minimising the offence or transferring the responsibility to external factors. It is the reciprocity of positive face wants that is central to the social function of apologies since the maintenance of relationships presupposes a mutual interest in and consideration for each other’s wants.

The present data have shown that the British respondents resort to face-saving strategies more often than do speakers of Polish and Russian. Since members of negative politeness cultures are generally more concerned about negative than positive face, it is not surprising that they are more protective towards their negative face when performing an apology than are members of positive politeness cultures.

The distinction between positive and negative politeness has been a recurring issue throughout my analysis, and it has proved to be a relevant criterion distinguishing realisations of all strategies examined. On the whole, preferences for negative vs. positive politeness in formulating apology strategies yield more interesting insights into culture-specific apology behaviour than quantitative differences in selecting strategies comprising the speech act set of apologising. In the following, therefore, I will move away from the quantitative approach of the preceding chapters and discuss the impact of the focus on positive vs. negative face on the linguistic realisations of apologies.

10.3.1 IFIDs

The routinised character of IFIDs enables language users to mark and recognise an utterance as an apology. However, it also suggests that they may function as devices employed to fulfil social conventions rather than expressions of concern for the hearer’s damaged face. Regarding IFIDs as “formalised behavioural codes” (Deutschmann 2003: 32) classifies them as negative politeness strategies. The high frequency of IFIDs in responses to strangers, i.e. in contexts in which negative face needs prevail, and in the English data, i.e. in a language favouring negative politeness, can certainly be viewed as confirming this classification. The lack of
variation characterising the use of English IFIDs is an additional factor portraying English apology behaviour as highly routinised.

Nevertheless, an analysis of the semantic and pragmatic properties of IFID formulae shows that they differ in the extent to which they threaten S’s and H’s face as well as in their orientation towards positive vs. negative face needs. The focus on one conventionalised IFID category in each of the examined languages can be viewed as indicative of cultural values shaping their concept of apologising, confirming the classification of English as a negative politeness and Polish and Russian as positive politeness languages.

An analysis of apology formulae focusing on face helps to avoid interpretations suggesting that speakers of one language are more polite solely on the grounds that they use more explicit apology strategies than speakers of another language. Accordingly, the relatively high frequency of IFIDs in the English data should not be evaluated without considering that the main English IFID realisation is a mere expression of regret. It is not particularly face-threatening to the speaker, nor does it entail a great imposition on the hearer’s face. At the same time, it does not necessarily restore H’s face nor does it link S with the offence, which is why in Polish and in Russian it is considered to be insufficient to serve as an apology. Even in English, in particular contexts, the formula *I’m sorry* can serve as a mere expression of sympathy. Whenever a particularly apologetic attitude needs to be conveyed, the relatively weak illocutionary force of the expression of regret can be upgraded through intensification, which explains the high frequency of intensifying devices in the English data.

The illocutionary force of the request for forgiveness appears to be unambiguous in all three languages. This IFID realisation is the preferred apology form in Russian, which throws some new light on the relatively low number of IFIDs used by the Russian respondents. Analogously, the low degree of intensification in the Russian data should be interpreted in relation to the IFID it is used to intensify. The request for forgiveness is not only particularly humiliating for the speaker, who puts him- or herself at the hearer’s mercy to be forgiven, but it also entails threat to the hearer’s face, which increases with intensification. The focus on an IFID which has the form of a request has led Rathmayr (1998) to suggest that Russian apologies should not be assigned to the category of expressives, as suggested by Searle (1976), but to that of directives. While the request for forgiveness involves both interlocutors in the process of restoring the equilibrium, thus showing a positive politeness tendency, the IFID realisation preferred in English, being face-saving for both parties involved, can be classified as a negative politeness strategy.

The most conventionalised Polish IFID realisation explicitly links the speaker with the offence and is regarded as the most unambiguous apology strategy. However, although the performative is more threatening to S’s face than the
expression of regret and less to H’s face than the request for forgiveness, it does not go beyond the mere performance of an apology. The performative entails neither regret nor guilt, so that from a semantic point of view, there are no objections to combining it with mitigating strategies, as evidenced by the strong preference for justifications and the conventional implicature but in the Polish data.

All in all, however, the routinised character of IFIDs makes it difficult to make comparisons of the efficiency and face-threat inherent in the IFID formulae preferred in different languages. Although cultural values have certainly been decisive in shaping a language’s repertoire of and preferences for routine politeness formulae, speakers employing them tend to be aware of their function rather than their meaning. This can be illustrated by the high acceptance of the English expression of regret sorry in Polish to serve as a substitute for przepraszam, despite the fact that the Polish expression of regret przykro mi is not fully accepted to serve as an apology.

In intercultural contexts, IFIDs can be regarded as the least problematic apology strategy, for not much can go wrong when a non-native speaker adheres to the most common IFID realisation, which is probably why dictionaries and text books tend to equate the forms I’m sorry, przepraszam and izvini-te.

### 10.3.2 Accounts

In contrast to IFIDs, the formulation of accounts is left entirely to the speaker, which is why this strategy provides a good insight into cross-cultural differences in dealing with offensive situations. The taxonomy based on the degree of responsibility acceptance and the corresponding face-threat inherent in the various account types suggested in this study has proved more effective than the distinction between taking on responsibility and explanation (Cohen & Olshtain 1983) adopted in most previous research. It allows for cross-linguistic comparison of the extent to which speakers of the three languages are willing to risk losing face – a crucial factor determining the perlocutionary effect of an apology.

The classification of accounts as positive politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson under the label “give (or ask for) reasons” (1987: 102) mainly applies to justifications and excuses. Arguments making one’s behaviour more understandable are clearly involvement strategies, though, when used in response to an offence, they focus on redress of the speaker’s positive face and may not necessarily classify as politeness strategies.

Account strategies located at the high end of the face-threat continuum, in contrast, reflect willingness to restore the damaged relationship and both interlocutors’ positive face at the expense of the speaker’s negative face. The face wants involved
in the use of upgrading accounts confirm the classification of remedial apologies as predominantly positive politeness strategies – as opposed to disarming apologies, which are used to soften the imposition of a forthcoming speech act and based on negative politeness.

The inclusion of downgrading accounts in the analysis has proved indispensable for the comparison of the extent to which speakers with different cultural backgrounds are willing to risk losing face when referring to the offence. The markedly low frequency of these face-saving accounts in the Russian data, in particular, portrays Russians as less protective towards their face than speakers of the other two languages.

Accounts are not only good indicators of S’s willingness to allow threat to S’s own face in the process of restoring H’s face, but realisations along the entire face-threat continuum can be classified as seeking or avoiding involvement. In the case of upgrading accounts, one can speak of positive or negative politeness strategies, while downgrading accounts can be viewed as face-saving strategies oriented towards the speaker’s positive or negative face.

In the following, I will take a closer look at the linguistic realisations of account strategies and the orientation towards positive or negative face that can be derived from them, while attempting to explain these linguistic choices in terms of cultural values.

10.3.2.1 Accepting responsibility
In contrast to formulaic admissions of guilt, individually formulated confessions provide valuable insights into cross-cultural differences in allowing and limiting threat to one’s face. The most interesting realisations of confessions occur in responses to scenario 1 (Dead fish), which elicited relatively many instances of accepting as well as denying responsibility.

The English data not only contain the lowest frequency of accounts accepting responsibility but also show a preference for careful formulations, such as:

(306) I probably haven’t fed them as much as I should have. [Em-1/33]
(307) I think I might not have fed them properly. [Ef-1/27]

In the two Slavic languages, in contrast, the preferred way of admitting responsibility in scenario 1 is by combining a justification with a critical description of the offensive outcome, in which case the justification not only provides mitigating circumstances but also links the speaker with the incurred damage as the person responsible for it.

(308) Niestety nie miałem czasu i to odbiło się na ich zdrowiu. [Pm-1/32]
‘Unfortunately I didn’t have time and this has affected their health.’
(309) ... vremeni u menja bio malo i očevidno nekotore rybki ne perežili goloda. 
   ‘... I had little time and apparently some of the fish didn’t survive the hunger.’
   [Rm-1/34]

The Polish and Russian data also contain formulaic realisations which do not 
refer to the circumstances of the offence but to S’s failure to live up to H’s ex-

(310) Naprawdę zawaliłem sprawę. [Pm-1/9] 
   ‘I have really failed at this business.’
(311) ... ja ne opravdala tvoego doverija. [Rf-1/38] 
   ‘... I haven’t lived up to your trust.’

While these emotional and self-critical expressions seem to be characteristic of 
both Slavic languages, speakers of Polish also admitted responsibility by naming 
actions which would have been necessary to avoid the offence, simultaneously 
criticising themselves for not having behaved accordingly.

(312) Powinienem był się obejrzeć i sprawdzić, czy za mną ktoś idzie. [Pm-4/46] 
   ‘I should have looked and checked if somebody was going behind me.’

The account strategy explicitly labelled self-criticism is most frequent in the Pol-

ish data, where it occurs three times as often as it does in the other two languages. 
Expressions of self-criticism are an indirect but highly face-threatening way of 
accepting responsibility and can be described as strongly hearer-oriented. At the 
same time, they disregard the speaker’s negative face needs and may even dam-
age his or her positive face. In expressing self-criticism in an offensive context, S 
enhances H’s face by taking over the role of the accuser. Self-criticism not only 
confirms the victim’s right to be offended, but often also exaggerates the offender’s 
guilt, showing a particular concern for the hearer’s damaged face.

(313) Ale niezdara ze mnie. [Pf-4/15] 
   ‘What a clumsy person I am.’
(314) Ja byla očen’ nevnimateln’na. [Rf-4/20] 
   ‘I was very inattentive.’

The English expressions of self-criticism generally consist of more routinised and 
less self-humiliating formulations, such as: typical of me [Ef-7/38], some of them 
overlapping with expressions of embarrassment, as in: I feel so stupid [Ef-7/12], 
or with lack of intent:

(315) I don’t know what I was thinking. [Em-4/38]
In the two Slavic languages, self-criticism was also used in account types providing mitigating circumstances. Polish and Russian respondents made self-critical comments on their personal shortcomings when justifying their offensive behaviour and even provided self-critical excuses:

(316) Wiesz, one nie mogły znieść mojego widoku. [Pm-1/17]
‘You know, they couldn’t bear my sight.’

(317) Nekotorye rybki ne vyderžali obščenija so mnoj. [Rf-1/20]
‘Some fish couldn’t bear my company.’

Although these responses are very self-critical, they primarily function as evasive, humorous excuses, distracting from the speaker’s responsibility for the offence. Nevertheless, the manifold uses of self-critical remarks in the Polish and, to a lesser extent, the Russian data portray speakers of the two Slavic languages as less protective towards their face and more concerned about the restoration of the victim’s face than the British subjects.

Self-criticism can be seen as being motivated by modesty, which has been discussed as a cultural value shaping politeness norms in all three cultures examined (see Zemskaja 1997, Lubecka 2000, Marcjanik 2001 & Fox 2004), and shown to be operative in apologies (Leech 1983: 132). However, while the data provide sufficient evidence for the impact of this cultural value on Polish, and to a lesser extent, Russian apology behaviour, the few formulaic and carefully formulated expressions of self-criticism found in the English data suggest that in British culture, this cultural value is not very powerful when dealing with situations threatening the speaker’s face.

Another explanation has been offered by Suszczyńska whose study of Polish and English apologies has led her to conclude that Polish people are “more ready (and expected) to display their weakness” than are British people who tend to avoid these strategies, for “admitting one’s deficiency can be quite embarrassing, discrediting, and ultimately unnecessary in a society that values personal preserves and egalitarianism” (1999: 1063).

While expressions of self-criticism were rare in the English data, at the high end of the responsibility continuum, the English respondents displayed the strongest preference for accounts expressing embarrassment, i.e. focusing on the speaker’s discomfort caused by the situation. A strategy referring to the speaker’s emotions might seem misplaced in a negative politeness culture. However, this strategy was almost exclusively represented by formulaic expressions, such as This is embarrassing [Ef-7/10], thus showing a negative politeness tendency and entailing a relatively low degree of face-threat.
10.3.2.2 Providing mitigating circumstances

The two account strategies which are mainly responsible for the overall high frequency of accounts in the Polish data are those best fitting the positive politeness strategy 'give reasons' suggested by Brown and Levinson, namely excuses and justifications. The frequencies of these two account strategies in the English and Russian data are very similar, so that excuses are roughly 1.6 times as frequent in Polish as they are in these two languages, while in the case of justifications this quotient amounts to 1.3. The fact that the total number of justifications in the Polish data exceeds that in the other two languages by roughly 120 tokens shows that it is this account type that has mainly contributed to the high number of upgrading accounts in Polish. Not surprisingly, the Polish data display the strongest tendency for combining several justifications and other account types intended to make the apology sound more convincing and the offender's behaviour more comprehensible, e.g.:


'I forgot to take this book today. I was reading yesterday before going to sleep and didn’t put it on the desk. When I got up, I completely forgot about it because it was out of sight.'

(319) ... o kurde, gdzie jest mój portfel? W portfelu miałem bilet! Stałem wcześniej w kolejce w sklepie i to musiał być ten moment kiedy wyciągnęli mi portfel! Zaraz potem szybko pobiegłem na pociąg, bo myślałem, że mi ucieknie.

'... o shit, where is my wallet? I had the ticket in the wallet! I was queuing in a shop earlier and that must have been the moment when they pulled out my wallet! Right after that I was running to catch the train because I thought I would miss it.' [Pm-8/15]

These examples illustrate the tendency to share personal details in Poland and Russia, typical of positive politeness cultures (see 2.4.2). While the extensive use of justifications in the Polish data shows a particular concern for the speaker's positive face, at the same time, it clashes with the cultural value of directness named as characteristic of Polish interactional style. The effusive character of Polish justifications appears to be a decisive factor distinguishing Polish from Russian communicative styles, with the latter being much more direct. The Russian respondents not only tended to refer to the offence in a brief and straightforward manner, but also used relatively many expressions of lack of intent, which are more face-threatening than justifications as they do not attempt to reduce responsibility by providing mitigating circumstances.
The preference for accounts supplying additional information on the circumstances of the offence in the Polish data also stands in sharp contrast to the approach favoured by the British subjects who tended to refer to the offence in a vague and reluctant manner. The Slavic respondents generally assessed the need to provide accounts differently from the British subjects, for they tended to use more account strategies in situations that did not necessarily need explaining. This difference is particularly marked in scenarios involving strangers, in which Poles and Russians were more communicative than the British respondents, who kept the dialogue short. The discrepancy between the total numbers of accounts across languages is particularly marked in scenario 4 (Heavy door), where the Polish as well as the Russian subjects used roughly twice as many accounts as did the English subjects. In scenario 3 (Mistaking a stranger) in which most respondents told the hearer that he was mistaken for another, the English subjects tended to limit their responses to this piece of information whereas Polish and Russian respondents combined several accounts:

(320) ... wrong person. [Ef-3/9]
(321) ... sądzilam, że to mój kolega, którego już dosyć dawno nie widziałam. Najwyraźniej się pomyliłam. ‘... I thought it was my friend, whom I haven’t seen for quite a while. Very clearly, I’ve made a mistake.’ [Pf-3/5]
(322) ... ja prinjala vas za odnogo moego očen’ chorošego prijatelja, no vidimo ja ošiblas’. [Rf-3/34] ‘... I took you for one very good friend of mine, but apparently I’ve made a mistake.’

The greater willingness to engage in conversations with strangers characterising the Polish and Russian responses can be interpreted as confirming their classification as collectivist and positive politeness cultures. The stronger tendency towards the use of negative politeness in British culture, on the other hand, has not resulted in brevity, which is more typical of the Russian responses, but is reflected in the formulaic and vague formulations favoured by most British respondents.

Avoiding burdening the hearer with (personal) information is a feature of negative politeness, which explains the importance of small talk and the existence of relatively many taboo topics in British culture. Accordingly, the English respondents generally avoided providing details on the circumstances of the offence – for instance, by stating facts where they were obvious, as in scenario 6 (Landlady):

(323) Sorry, we had a few friends around last night. [Em-6/29]
This does not mean, however, that accounts involving positive politeness are entirely absent from the English data. In scenarios 5 (Professor’s book) and 8 (Ticket inspector), in particular, speakers of all three languages show strong agreement in employing positive politeness. Hence, in scenario 5, the British respondents told the professor that they liked the book, as did the Polish and Russian ones, and in scenario 8, they provided personal reasons making the lack of ticket more pardonable. However, in these two specific cases, positive politeness was used instrumentally – with the aim of obtaining permission to keep the book longer in scenario 5 and to stay on the train or avoid paying the penalty in scenario 8.

In the two Slavic languages, in contrast, positive politeness in the form of personal information was employed in situations where it had no practical function, for instance in scenario 4 (Heavy door), again showing a greater readiness to communicate with strangers:

(324) ... byłem zdenerwowany i dlatego puściłem drzwi. [Pm-4/2]
‘... I was upset and that’s why I let the door go.’
(325) Ja ne zametil vas potomy, čto plocho sebja čuvstvuju. [Rm-4/45]
‘I didn’t notice you because I don’t feel very well.’

In scenarios where speakers of all three languages provided personal information, a major factor distinguishing the realisations favoured in the two Slavic languages from those prevailing in English is that the former often match another positive politeness strategy established by Brown and Levinson, namely “exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)” (1987: 102). The use of a combination of these two positive politeness strategies in offensive contexts has also been observed by García (1989) who found that her Venezuelan subjects tended to exaggerate when portraying the circumstances leading up to the offence.

The responses to scenario 8 offer numerous examples illustrating cross-linguistic differences in providing personal information intended to elicit understanding. Although personal reasons making the situation exceptional were supplied by speakers of all three languages, the British respondents favoured rather vague formulations,

(326) I was late and I had to run for the train to visit a sick relative. [Ef-8/41]
(327) You wouldn’t believe the morning I’ve just had (...) I really can’t miss my appointment. [Ef-8/46]

which stand in sharp contrast to those preferred by the Polish and Russian subjects:

(328) Tak się spieszyłam, moja siostra dostała właśnie kurczów przedporodowych ... [Pf-8/28]
‘I was rushing so much, my sister has just started having contractions ...’
On Apologising

While such approaches, meant to ‘soften the hearer’s heart’, are more likely to be successful in Poland and Russia, among the younger generation, there seems to be a growing preference for vague explanations, which resemble the English realisations in that they do not provide more information than necessary:

(330) Strasznie się śpieszyłam, gdyż mam ważną sprawę do załatwienia. [Pf-8/22]
‘I was rushing terribly because I have important business to do.’

(331) U menja očen’ važnaja vstreča i ja ne mogu ne prisutstvovat’. [Rf-8/2]
‘I have a very important meeting and can’t be absent.’

On the whole, however, attempts to elicit understanding in this manner are more common in English than in the two Slavic languages, where they can be regarded as a recent influence of the Western cultural layer.

10.3.2.3 Avoiding responsibility

Whereas the addition of an IFID to both positive and negative politeness realisations of accounts marks the response as an apology, reactions aimed at minimising or denying responsibility are more likely to cause cross-cultural clashes between members of positive and negative politeness cultures. Generally, the data show that in reducing damage to their face, members of positive politeness cultures are more likely to employ strategies oriented towards their positive face, while members of negative politeness cultures are more concerned about their negative face.

Considering that the threat underlying an apology concerns mainly the speaker’s negative face, it is not surprising that the English respondents, i.e. members of a negative politeness culture, show the strongest preference for downgrading accounts. They denied responsibility 1.5 times as often as the Polish and 2.7 times as often as the Russian subjects. Denials of responsibility avoiding referring to the offence, in particular, are oriented primarily towards the speaker’s negative face. The greatest discrepancies arise in connection with indirect denials of responsibility, i.e. the strategy act innocently which is particularly frequent in the English data and occurs mainly in responses to scenario 1:

(332) I don’t know what happened, they must have died. [Em-1/32]
(333) I don’t know, I didn’t really look at them when I fed them. [Ef-1/37]

The high degree of directness underlying most Russian responses, in contrast, has not only led to a relatively low number of accounts denying responsibility, but also to the preference for brief formulations, such as:
(334) Ponjatija ne imeju! [Rm-1/5]
‘I have no idea!’

(335) Tvoi rybki drug druga požrali. [Rm-1/6]
‘Your fish ate one another.’

This short and direct way of referring to the offence exhibits not only a highly careless attitude towards H’s face but also towards S’s own self-image, who blatantly refuses to deal with the situation.

Interestingly, although British downgrading accounts aim at avoiding confrontation and are fairly face-saving to both interlocutors’ negative face while the Russian responses tend to include a direct reference to the offence disregarding both parties’ face needs, both signal the hearer that the matter is regarded as settled. In this respect, they differ from denials of responsibility identified in the Polish data, which classify as involvement strategies.

The following responses avoiding responsibility illustrate the difference brought about by the preference for distancing strategies, such as statements of facts or acting innocently in the English data, and the use of strategies providing new information and making the speaker’s offensive behaviour more comprehensible, such as excuses, in the Polish data:

(336) I’m not sure, they must have died last night! They were fine yesterday. [Ef-1/5]

(337) Sorry, ale wydaje mi się, że niektóre rybki zachorowały. Były jakieś otepiałe, a następnego dnia zdechły. Nie wiedziałam, co mam robić! Mam nadzieję, że nie jesteś na mnie zły. [Pf-1/35]
‘Sorry, but it seems to me that some of the fish fell ill. They were a bit dull and the next day they died. I didn’t know what to do! I hope you are not angry at me.’

The British informant restricts her response to a carefully formulated statement (must have) of the obvious, while distancing herself from the offence by pretending that she is not aware of the circumstances leading up to it (I’m not sure) and by claiming that she has just learnt of the offence herself (they were fine yesterday). The Polish respondent, in contrast, attempts to provide a valid reason for the offence, accompanied by an explanation based on a close observation of the fish, and an expression of helplessness implying good will. The entire response aims at showing that the fish died despite the attention they received and, thus, at avoiding loss of positive face and limiting damage to the relationship.

The following face-saving approaches taken by an English and a Polish respondent suggest that these two languages exhibit great potential for cross-cultural clashes when denying responsibility:
(338) Well, I handed them back to the shop on time. [Em-2/45]
(339) Daj mi spokój, w końcu to twoje kasety. Ja mam dom, rodzinę i pustą lodówkę na głowie. [Pm-2/35]

‘Leave me alone, after all they are your tapes. I have a house, a family and an empty fridge to worry about.’

In the attempt to protect his face, the English respondent seeks to avoid the confrontation by denying responsibility for the offence. Such an approach may work when the hearer is also a member of a negative politeness culture, who prefers to limit damage to both parties’ face and pretend that he or she believes the offered explanation. However, this approach is less likely to be successful when employed with a member of a culture in which personal information plays an important role in restoring social balance. The emotional character of the Polish response emphasises the speaker’s need to be understood, even at the price of blaming the hearer for his lack of consideration for his situation. Whereas employing such a strategy in a negative politeness culture would probably result in a new offence, the approach taken by the British respondent is more likely to lead to renewed accusations on the part of the victim in Polish culture.

10.3.3 Approach vs. withdrawal

The general picture emerging from the use of accounts in my data portrays the English responses as indirect and evasive, thus confirming a negative politeness tendency and distinguishing them from the Polish and Russian accounts. However, although both Slavic languages display a positive politeness tendency, and both Poles and Russians seem to be less protective towards their negative face when apologising than Britons, the formulations preferred in the two Slavic languages differ greatly.

As predicted by Zemskaja (1997), Russians attach great importance to directness, which has resulted in avoidance of mitigating strategies delegating the responsibility to other sources – whether they accepted or rejected responsibility, the Russians did so in a rather straightforward way. Although both Slavic cultures have been characterised as valuing directness and honesty (see Wierzbicka 1985b, 1991, 1992), the Polish data do not suggest a strong influence of these cultural values on dealing with offensive situations. Instead, Polish displays the strongest preference for upgrading accounts, in particular for justifications presenting the apologiser’s offensive behaviour in a better light. At the same time, there is a tendency in the Polish data to accompany direct confessions by expressions explicitly marking them as honest:
(340) Przepraszam, nie ma sensu kłamać. Nie codziennie udało mi się przyjść i je
nakarmić. [Pm-1/19]
‘I apologise, there is no point in lying. I didn’t manage to come every day to
feed them.’

(341) Powiem szczerze, nie będę ściemniać. Byłam zawalona nauką, a twoje miesz-
kanie jest kawał drogi ode mnie. [Pf-1/2]
‘I’ll speak honestly, will not conceal. I was buried in study and your flat is quite
a way from mine.’

Although similar expressions were found in the English data, they differ in two
ways: Firstly, they are restricted to the formulaic to be honest, and secondly, unlike
in Polish, they were also combined with accounts avoiding responsibility:

(342) Well, to be honest mate, I don’t really know, I did notice that a couple of them
were looking a bit ill ... [Ef-1/39]

The Polish respondents’ desire to appear honest and present themselves in the
best possible light goes hand in hand with a heavy use of excuses and justifica-
tions, making the Polish responses sound particularly effusive and often emo-
tional. Although emotionality is central to both Russian and Polish conversa-
tional styles, it is mainly Polish authors who describe apologies as emotional (e.g.
Masłowska 1992, Lubecka 2000). Incidentally, responses that are both emotional
and self-critical, thus including two features associated with positive politeness,
are exclusive in the Polish data:

(343) ... być może cię to pogrąży i masz pełne prawo mnie zabić ... [Pm-1/10]
‘... perhaps this will bring you down and you have the full right to kill me ...’

(344) Mam nadzieję, że jakoś to przeżyjesz i nie znienawidzisz mnie. [Pf-1/32]
‘I hope you’ll get over this somehow and will not start hating me.’

The only responses found in the other two languages that could be described as
emotional appear in legal contexts and were employed to make the strategy act
innocently more convincing:

(345) Hang on a second (look in bag). Oh I don’t believe this, I haven’t brought my
wallet with me and my ticket is in there, uh, what shall I do? [Ef-8/9]

(346) Vy znaete, ja tol’ko čto obnaružila čto u menja ukrali košelek! Gospodi, beda
to kakaja! Čto teper’ delat’?! [Rf-8/39]
‘You know, I’ve just found out that my bag has been stolen. God, what a mis-
ery! What can be done now?!’
10.3.3.1 Reference to the offence through complements

Whereas the brevity of many Russian accounts and the vague reference to the offence characterising most English accounts create the impression that they provide a similar amount of information, some new evidence arises in connection with the preferences for complements. As the discussion of syntactic frames in 7.6 has shown, IFIDs can introduce complements which take up the contents of the offence without providing new information and which often have an upgrading function. This type of complements was most frequent in responses to scenario 6 (Landlady) and included the following realisations:

Sorry about:
- last night [Em-6/16]
- the noise [Ef-6/48]
- the noise and stuff last night [Ef-6/39]

Przepraszam za:
- kłopot [Pf-6/3] ‘trouble’
- ten bałagan [Pf-6/39] ‘this mess’
- te hałasy i nieporządek [Pf-6/33] ‘this noise and disorder’
- wszelkie niedogodności [Pm-6/47] ‘all inconvenience’

Izvinite za:
- шум [Rf-6/50] ‘noise’
- besporjadok [Rm-6/8] ‘disorder’
- bespokojstvo [Rf-6/35] ‘disturbance’
- nevnimatel’nost’ [Rm-4/32] ‘inattentiveness’

These examples suggest that the Polish and Russian realisations tend to refer to the offence slightly more critically than the English ones. The use of complements, however, is not restricted to IFIDs, and the data indicate even greater discrepancies across languages in the use of complements accompanying justifications. In response to scenario 7 (Security guard), for instance, the British subjects favoured elliptic formulations, such as I didn’t realise [Em-7/7] or I forgot I had it [Em7/21], which merely hint at the committed offence, while the Polish respondents were more likely to explicitly refer to the contents of the offence:

(347) Zapomniałam o tej płycie. [Pf-7/15]
   ‘I forgot about this CD.’
(348) ‘... zapomniałam, że trzymam w ręku płytę. [Pf-7/16]
   ‘... I forgot that I’m holding the CD in my hand.’
(349) ‘... zapomniałem, że nie zapłaciłem za tę płytę. [Pm-7/8]
   ‘... I forgot that I haven’t paid for the CD.’
The Russian data not only exhibit the highest frequency of this type of complements, but their realisations are very straightforward, reflecting a high degree of carelessness about ego’s face:

(350) Ja i ne zametila kak vyšla iz magazina. [Rf-7/34]
‘I didn’t notice that I left the shop.’

(351) Ja sovsem zabyla, čto disk ostalsja u menja v rukach. [Rf-7/6]
‘I totally forgot that the CD has remained in my hands.’

(352) Ja tak zagovorilas’, čto ne zametila, kak vyšla s neoplačennym diskom.
‘I was so busy talking that I didn’t notice how I left without paying for the CD.’ [Rf-7/41]

These differences not only illustrate the importance attached to directness and explicitness in Russian culture but also suggest that a systematic analysis of complements may provide important insights into culture-specific ways of information sharing. Unfortunately, such an analysis would go far beyond the scope of this study.

10.3.4 Positive politeness apology strategies

The application of Brown and Levinson’s concepts of positive and negative politeness to the analysis of account strategies has enabled me to assign a positive politeness tendency to particularly effusive, emotional and straightforward accounts, and a negative politeness tendency to vague, indirect and impersonal realisations of this strategy. In the present analysis, I have also examined three indirect apology strategies, all of which address both parties’ positive face needs and have been classified as positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987: 102).

10.3.4.1 Repair, forbearance and concern
As I have shown in Chapter 9, the distribution of the strategies offer of repair, promise of forbearance and concern for hearer is similar across languages, with concern for hearer even reaching its highest frequency in the English data. The preferences for direct vs. indirect formulations of offers of repair also show considerable parallels in all three languages, though differences arise in relation to devices making direct offers more determined, such as intensifying adverbials and performative verbs, or less imposing, such as tags. Coupled with the high frequency of appeasers in the Russian data, the realisations of offers of repair can be interpreted as providing some evidence for a preference for negative politeness in English and positive politeness in the two Slavic languages.
Furthermore, an analysis of the linguistic realisations of the other two positive politeness strategies reveals a marked preference for formulaic realisations in the English data. Consequently, as was already the case with accounts, a major criterion distinguishing formulations of the strategies promise of forbearance and concern for hearer is the way in which they refer to the offence. The greatest discrepancy in the choice of formulaic vs. situation-specific realisations of these strategies arises between English and Russian responses, with the former including mainly formulaic expressions and the latter often containing an explicit reference to the offence:

(353) It won't happen again. [Ef-6/30]
(354) ... ja obzhazateln'no uberu za soboy musor v sleduujuschij raz. [Rf-6/24]
   ‘... I'll definitely clean the mess after myself next time.’

Even greater disparities than in the use of promises of forbearance appear in connection with concern for hearer, whose realisations centre around two highly routinised expressions in English and take a variety of individual formulations in Russian (see Chapter 9.4)

House’s contrastive work on English and German politeness styles (e.g. 2000, 2005) has shown that formulaic realisations are very common in English while German exhibits a more frequent use of ad hoc formulations, which confirms Deutschmann’s suggestion that formulaic language use is typical of negative politeness (2003: 32). Routine formulae can generally be regarded as less face-threatening to both interlocutors than individual expressions as they provide them with pre-patterned conversational turns facilitating smooth communication in accordance with social conventions.

10.3.4.2 Eliciting understanding
Apart from offers of repair, promises of forbearance and expressions of concern, Brown and Levinson’s chart of positive politeness strategies includes strategies other than those comprising the speech act set of apologising, some of which have been identified in the data.

The positive politeness strategy among those distinguished by Brown and Levinson that is most evidently based on the mutuality of positive face needs is the one named: “Presuppose / raise / assert common ground” (1987: 102). In my data, this strategy is represented by explicit appeals to the hearer’s understanding for one’s offensive behaviour, in legal contexts often exploited for instrumental purposes, e.g. taking the form of requests to be let off.

Strategies asserting common ground are most frequent in the Russian and least frequent in the English data. Among Russian and Polish responses, there are varying expressions referring to shared knowledge, such as:
(355) Ty že ponimaeš’, čto ja očen’ zanjata. [Rf-1/36]
‘You do understand that I ‘m very busy.’

(356) No vy tože dolžny ponjat’ nas! [Rm-6/18]
‘But you should also understand us!’

(357) Proszę o zrozumienie. [Pf-8/35]
‘I beg for understanding.’

(358) ... niech pani zrozumie ... [Pf-6/41]
‘... do understand me ...’

The English appeals to the hearer’s understanding all appear in responses to legal
offences and take the form of requests not to be arrested in scenario 7 (Security
guard) and to be allowed to stay on the train in scenario 8 (Ticket inspector):

(359) Please, don’t arrest me I’m not worth it. [Em-7/13]

(360) Please, could you let me stay on? [Ef-8/8]

In the Polish data, requests for understanding were voiced rather explicitly in
scenario 7:

(361) ... niech mnie pan nie spisuje? Proszę? [Pm-7/46]
‘... don’t put down my details? Please?’

One Polish respondent even uttered a request going far beyond the understand-
ing for the committed offence:

(362) Bardzo pana proszę, ja ją szybciutko przegram i zaraz przyniosę! Kolega tylko
na dzisiaj pożyczył mi przegrywarkę. [Pm-7/15]
‘I beg you very much, I will quickly (dim.) record it and immediately bring it
back! A friend has lent me a recorder only for today.’

In scenario 8, in contrast, the Polish respondents used much more careful formu-
lations:

(363) Jeśli to jest możliwe, bardzo proszę o wyrozumiałość. [Pf-8/2]
‘If this is possible, I beg you very much to understand me.’

(364) ... to może jakoś pani przymknie na to oko – bardzo proszę. [Pf-8/23]
‘... so perhaps somehow you could close an eye to it – I beg you very much.’

Even the English respondents were less diplomatic in this situation:

(365) Is there any way I can stay on the train and get to where I need to go?
[Ef-8/13]

The Russians, in contrast, phrased their requests very explicitly:
Polish and Russian respondents, in particular, tried to elicit understanding by providing personal information emphasising the importance of their staying on the train:

(368) Pani konduktor, nie mam biletu, nie mam pieniędzy. Jestem bezrobotny i jadę właśnie na rozmowę kwalifikacyjną w sprawie pracy. Niech pani mi da szansę. ‘Mrs inspector, I don’t have a ticket, I don’t have money. I’m unemployed and am going to a job interview. Please, give me a chance.’ [Pm-8/47]

(369) Ja edu vstrečat’ mamu i zabyl vzjat’ den’gi. Ona budet volnovat’sja esli ja opozdaju. ‘I’m going to meet (my) mother and I forgot to take money. She’ll worry if I’m late.’

The following response even goes as far as to indicate that a lack of understanding for the speaker’s offensive behaviour is not likely to be successful:

(370) Delajte so mnoj, čto chotite, no ja edu naveščat’ moju bol’nuju babušku i iz električki NE vyjdu. ‘Do with me whatever you want, but I’m going to visit my sick grandmother and I will NOT leave the train.’

Another strategy, found exclusively in the Polish data, expressing interest in H and, hence, fitting Brown and Levinson’s criteria for positive politeness strategies (1987: 102), consists in telling the hearer that his presence is appreciated:

(371) Dobrze, że pani przyszła. Chcę kupić bilet. ‘It’s good that you have come. I want to buy a ticket.’

(372) Dobrze, że panowie tu pilnują, bo bym miała kaça moralnego gdybym się zorientowała w domu, że nie zapłaciłam. ‘It’s good that you are paying attention here because I’d have had a moral hang-over if I had realised at home that I haven’t paid.’

10.3.4.3 Diminutives

Considering the central role that has been assigned to diminutives as linguistic devices conveying politeness in Polish and other Slavic languages (e.g. Wierzbicka 1985b, 1992), the present analysis would be incomplete without devoting some attention to their use. However, the frequency of diminutives is surprisingly low
in my data. The Polish respondents used a total of 19 diminutives: Six of them are diminutive forms of first names and six are represented by the word *sorki* (see 7.3.2).

Among the remaining seven, there is the diminutive form of the adverb *szybko* [quickly], used in example (362) with the function of minimising the imposition of a request, while three nouns in the diminutive were used to convey irony:

(373) Codziennie karmiłem rybki, ale w pierwszy dzień było ich już o 5 mniej. *Kotek* zgłodniał. [Pm-1/15]
‘I fed the fish daily, but the first day there were already five missing. The cat (dim.) got hungry.’

Finally, three diminutive forms occur in the fixed expression *proszę chwileczkę poczekać* [please wait a moment (dim.)], which is highly routinised so that the diminutive it includes does not necessarily constitute a conscious choice. Interestingly, the Polish respondents also tended to avoid the diminutive where it was the expected form. The diminutive form *rybka*, for instance, narrowing down the semantic field of the word *fish* to refer to pets, was replaced by the original form *ryba*.

(374) Jeśli pozwolisz, jutro przyniosę Ci *ryby*, kupię Ci nowe. [Pm-1/41]
‘If you allow, tomorrow I’ll bring you fish, I’ll buy you new ones.’

In the Russian data, only ten diminutives were found: Three address forms and seven diminutive forms of nouns, adverbs and adjectives. Irrespective of grammatical category, they were either used to convey a humorous effect:

(375) Ja sirota, invalid ili ljubaja drugaja l’gotnaja kategorija naselenija, poėtomu ja, tovarišč kontroler, bez *biletika*. [Rm-8/30]
‘I’m an orphan, disabled or other special category of the population, that’s why I’m, comrade inspector, without a ticket (dim.).’

or to minimise the offence:

(376) ... ja zamečtalsja *nemnožko*. [Rm-7/5]
‘... I’ve been dreaming a bit (dim.).’

(377) ... proizošła *ošibočka*. [Rm-4/19]
‘... a mistake (dim.) has occurred.’

The data suggest that in offensive contexts diminutives are not only less frequent than in other situations but also that they fulfil a range of functions. Previous literature on Polish and Russian diminutives (e.g. Wierzbicka 1991, 1992) tends to focus on their function as positive politeness strategies, referred to as “in-group
identity markers” by Brown and Levinson (1987:109). What has been largely overlooked in previous research on Polish and Russian diminutives, however, is that they can also be classified as negative politeness strategies when they function as hedges or minimisers (ibid: 157, 177), as they often do in apologies.

Clearly, more research is needed to provide a reliable answer to the question of how frequent diminutives really are in Slavic languages, in which situations and by whom they tend to be employed, and what functions they adopt.

**10.3.4.4 Forms of address**

As I have already mentioned, address forms in the diminutive constitute realisations of Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategy termed in-group identity markers. Apart from diminutive forms and other informal address terms, however, the data contain formal address forms, employed to convey respect rather than solidarity and, therefore, functioning as negative politeness strategies.10

Address forms are not only most frequent in the English data, where they appear 62 times (see Table 27), but the British respondents also show a strong preference for informal address terms, in particular for the word *mate*, which was used 45 times. This address form, along with the much less frequent *dude, pal* and *love*, as well as first names, serve the function of in-group identity markers and exhibit a high degree of informality, indicating low D values when used towards strangers. The formal address terms *professor, sir or madam*, in contrast, were very rarely employed, for they amount to only 10 instances, which is equal to 14% of all address forms used in the English data.

The Polish subjects used a total of 60 address forms, with 42 of them occurring in scenario 5 (Professors book), where they were used to convey a respectful attitude towards the professor. Among the remaining address forms, two formal realisations were used with the ticket inspector and 15 informal with friends, six of which were diminutive forms of first names, such as *Ewuś* [*Ewa (dim)*]. While in English, the word *mate* was frequently employed to address strangers, only one Polish respondent used the informal *bracie* [*brother (voc.)*] to address a stranger of a similar age in scenario 3 (Mistaking a stranger).

In the Russian data, 40 forms of address were identified, and 20 of them were used to address the professor in scenario 5, where they have a formal character. Friends were addressed with *drug* [*friend*], *dorogaja, rodnaja* [*dear*], and with diminutive forms of first names, such as *Kat’ka* [*Katarina (dim.)*]. Strangers, irrespective of their status, were generally addressed with informal terms, such as *brat* [*brother*] or its diminutive form *bratok* in scenario 3 (Mistaking a stranger), the neutral *devuška* [*girl*] in scenario 4 (Heavy door), and *molodoj čelovek* [*young person*] or *mužik* [*guy*] in scenario 7 (Security guard).
Surprisingly, informal address forms are most frequent in the English data, and more than half of them occur in responses to strangers. While in Russian the distribution between formal and informal address forms, that is negative politeness and positive politeness strategies, is fairly equal, in Polish most address terms were employed to express respect and emphasise social distance.

10.4 Evaluation

This chapter has discussed the data in the light of the issues addressed in the theoretical part of this study, and the empirical evidence has confirmed some of the predictions made. Chapter 10.1 re-introduced the question of what constitutes an apology. It has offered a critical discussion of the universal nature of the speech act set of apologising and pointed out contextual and cultural restrictions on the strategies’ potential to serve as an apology.

It has provided some evidence on the culture-specificity of apologies, suggesting that the cultural implications underlying the IFID category preferred in a particular language may carry over to the remaining strategies. The most important cross-linguistic differences appear in connection with the extent to which responsibility acceptance is regarded as an indispensable element of an apology, affecting the plausibility of responses uniting an explicit apology strategy with a statement denying or minimising responsibility.

Since combinations of IFIDs and downgrading accounts, as well as IFIDs and accounts concealing the true nature of offence, are most effective in situations in which the hearer is not aware of the exact circumstances of the offence, their occurrence in the present data is largely limited to two scenarios. Testing this phenomenon on a larger number of situations might yield more reliable information on the function IFIDs adopt as strategies concealing an unapologetic attitude, as well as into the culture-specific perceptions of the apologetic force of expressions of regret and other IFIDs.

The analysis of strategy choice in relation to the social variables of power and distance presented in Chapter 10.2 has shown a generally high degree of agreement across languages as to the necessity of adjusting the use of both apologetic and non-apologetic strategies to the status of the hearer. In all three sets of data,
strategy choice correlates mainly with social distance. More specifically, the use of IFIDs and intensifiers increases and that of downgrading strategies decreases with growing social distance. The distribution in the English data follows a slightly different pattern from that established for the two Slavic languages, suggesting a lower sensitivity to contextual factors and a higher degree of routinisation.

On the whole, the analysis has confirmed the culture-specific assessments of social power and distance predicted by Hofstede’s (1991) scores on the cultural dimensions of power distance and individualism vs. collectivism given to the cultures under investigation – the only unexpected outcome being the relatively low assessment of P emerging from the Russian data.

The analysis of strategy choice in relation to social variables has further enabled me to test the applicability of Brown and Levinson’s weightiness formula to an inherently polite speech act. It has provided counterevidence to the claim that social power and distance contribute to the weightiness of an FTA on a summative basis and it has disconfirmed Brown and Levinson’s predictions as to an overall lower assessment of these social variables by members of positive politeness cultures.11

The final part of the analysis has taken a qualitative approach to interpreting the data while focusing on the extent to which formulations of apology strategies are oriented towards positive or negative face. From among the many strategies Brown and Levinson define as positive politeness strategies, the strategy best capturing the identified differences seems to be ‘give / ask for reasons’. A closer look at the linguistic realisations of the large category of accounts yields interesting insights into the politeness norms in the cultures under investigation.

While sharing personal details is clearly motivated by positive face needs, the use of vague and formulaic accounts seems to reflect negative face needs. The English accounts in my data indeed sound reluctant and reflect a stronger tendency to avoid imposition than do those formulated in the two Slavic languages. Apparently, in a negative politeness culture, the provision of personal information can be seen as an unnecessary self-exposure and even as imposition on the hearer’s negative face. Avoidance of involvement beyond the necessary minimum further illustrates the role indirectness plays in apologising.

Speakers of the two Slavic languages were less protective towards their negative face, which resulted in more direct responses in Russian and more effusive apologies in Polish, respectively. Accordingly, although both Slavic cultures have been defined as positive politeness cultures, in my data, this type of politeness is represented by different strategic preferences. Whereas Russian responses, whether they accept or deny responsibility, reflect the influence of cultural values such as directness and honesty, the much more effusive and self-critical Polish responses seem to be mainly influenced by such cultural values as emotionality.
and modesty. Apparently, while for Russians directness is the best way to limit damage to both parties’ face, Poles not only put more effort into enhancing the victim’s face but were also quick to assert ego’s positive face needs when taking an evasive approach, thus ascertaining that their wants remain desirable despite their offensive behaviour. What distinguishes both Polish as well as Russian responses from the British ones, though, is that they do not avoid referring to the contents of the offence while displaying a relatively careless attitude towards potential damage to negative face.

Although accounts based on positive politeness are not absent from the English data, their realisations differ significantly from those preferred in the two Slavic languages. On the one hand, they are less personal and less effusive, on the other, they were often used instrumentally as they mainly appear in situations where positive politeness directly benefits the speaker. Use of positive politeness in order to signal concern for the hearer’s face, in contrast, occurs predominantly in the two Slavic languages.

As with accounts, the main criterion distinguishing the three positive politeness strategies offer of repair, promise of forbearance and concern for hearer in the three languages was the way in which they referred to the offence, the English subjects again showing the strongest preference for formulaic realisations. The use of diminutives in the two Slavic languages was rather marginal and they served as positive as well as negative politeness devices. Informal address forms, an example of the former, were even most frequent in the English data – in particular in responses to strangers, suggesting a low assessment of social distance.
CHAPTER 11

Conclusion

11.1 Main findings

The present study has investigated cross-cultural differences in dealing with offensive situations and revealed some culture-specific perceptions of what constitutes an apology and what constitutes politeness in two Slavic and an Anglo-Saxon culture. The analysis of two Slavic languages within a framework that has been developed by ‘Western’ researchers (Brown & Levinson 1987) has allowed me to test the applicability of this framework to the study of East European languages and its claims to universality.

I have argued against the correlation between indirectness and politeness characterising Brown and Levinson’s work not only by applying their theory to two languages that rely less heavily on indirectness in conveying politeness than does English, but also by focusing on a speech act that does not become more polite through indirectness. While previous research has shown that speakers from cultures with a preference for directness tend to be regarded as less polite by British people, the present study has provided ample evidence that speakers with an Anglo-Saxon background may be perceived as less polite by Slavic people when performing speech acts whose polite realisations are direct. At the same time, it has illustrated the effect indirectness has on a speech act which is beneficial to the hearer and necessary to restore social equilibrium.

Although the expression of regret is the most frequent IFID realisation in English, it only indirectly fulfils the function of an apology. In Russian and Polish, the applicability of the expression of regret as an apology strategy is more restricted than in English as it does not explicitly link the speaker with the offence, but even the English (I’m) sorry can be used as an expression of condolence and even sarcastic defiance. As I have shown, it also allows for combinations with downgrading strategies to a greater extent than do other IFID types.

Accordingly, the high frequency of IFIDs in the English data cannot be interpreted without taking into account the strong focus on one highly routinised and indirect IFID form, the frequent use of downgrading accounts and upgrading accounts that only vaguely refer to the offence, and the formulaic realisations of
positive politeness apology strategies in this language. While these preferences seem to be motivated by an avoiding tendency focusing on negative face, the responses offered in the two Slavic languages display a relatively careless attitude towards both interlocutors’ negative face.

Interestingly, although speakers of both Polish and Russian attach more importance to positive than to negative face, the emphasis on positive face takes different forms in these languages. While Polish apologies display a particular concern for the hearer’s as well as the speaker’s positive face, for Russian speakers, offensive situations seem to involve a lower degree of face threat than in the other two languages. Their responses illustrate the central role of directness in Russian: The main IFID form being a bald on request, account strategies being brief and precise, and many positive politeness strategies consisting of individual formulations referring to the offence in a straightforward manner. Coupled with the relatively low frequency of downgrading accounts, the data suggest that directness and honesty are regarded as a proved method of restoring and maintaining relationships in Russian culture.

The Polish responses, in contrast, exhibit a stronger concern for both interlocutors’ positive face. Particular attention to S’s positive face is reflected in the effusive explanations and the emotional style underlying many of the responses. The effort put into repairing one’s own self-image seems to be at odds with the numerous, partly highly humiliating, self-critical remarks found in the Polish data. However, both approaches depict S as willing to restore the equilibrium and both benefit H’s positive face.

On the whole, the cross-linguistic differences in dealing with offensive situations established in the present study suggest that speakers of languages with a positive politeness tendency are less protective towards their negative face when performing speech acts addressed to positive face needs than are members of negative politeness cultures. Accordingly, the greater concern for negative face needs characterising the British responses may come across as reluctant, superficial and even insincere to Poles and Russians.

Contrary to the commonly held view of apologies as negative politeness strategies, mainly shaped by Brown and Levinson viewing them in their disarming function, the present study has amply illustrated the central role positive face plays in the performance of remedial apologies. Since apologies are used to restore and maintain relationships, they presuppose a mutual interest in each other’s wants, which is a central aspect of positive politeness.

Although IFIDs are highly routinised and have, therefore, been associated with negative politeness, they are the most explicit means of signalling interest in the restoration of social equilibrium. Strategies expressing responsibility acceptance, on the other hand, are less conventionalised than IFIDs and more
threatening to S’s negative face. At the same time, they pay more attention to H’s positive face than do IFIDs, thus constituting an efficient means of eliciting forgiveness from the offended party.

Account strategies occupying the middle of the scale, justifications being by far the most frequent type, are mainly directed towards S’s positive face, though they also take H’s positive face into account by acknowledging H’s right to know the circumstances leading up to the offence. Downgrading accounts, in contrast, can be successfully employed to protect S’s face in situations where they are plausible; otherwise they jeopardise the offender’s positive face and the relationship with the victim.

The strategies offer of repair, promise of forbearance, and concern for hearer have all been defined as positive politeness strategies. Offers of repair aim at restoring harmony in a more than verbal way, promises of forbearance are a means of ensuring a smooth continuation of the relationship, and expressions of concern focus on H’s well-being. By showing interest in re-establishing the equilibrium and maintaining the relationship, these strategies also contribute towards the restoration of S’s positive face.

Modifying Olshtain and Cohen’s speech act set by integrating Brown and Levinson’s concept of face into the classification and analysis of the data has not only contributed towards the description of the speech act of apologising, but also extended the analysis beyond the comparison of the frequencies of apology strategies across languages characteristic of most previous apology research. While studies conducted in cross-cultural pragmatics generally confirm the universal character of the speech act set of apologising, the present study has shown that even though the strategies making up the speech act set appear to be universal, the utterances assigned to these strategies vary greatly in their pragmatic forces across contexts and cultures.

The analysis of formulaic apology expressions has clearly shown that although speakers of all three languages use a similar repertoire of apology formulae, the illocutionary forces assigned to them are culture-specific. Likewise, literal equivalents of indirect apology strategies, which have often been classified on the basis of semantic or even grammatical criteria in previous research, tend to carry different illocutionary forces across cultures.

The less specific the categories, the more likely they will appear to be universal and, at the same time, the less room they provide for revealing cross-cultural differences. One way of capturing these differences is by making finer distinctions, for instance, by devoting more attention to the various IFID formulae and their culture-specific implications. The detailed analysis of IFIDs conducted in the present study has not only shown that the potential of a particular strategy to
serve as an apology is culture-specific, but also that the examined cultures have
their own distinct concepts of apologising.

On the other hand, broad categories, such as the distinction between posi-
tive and negative face and the corresponding types of politeness provide informa-
tion on a culture’s concept of politeness going beyond the analysed speech act. As I have shown, when assessing the face-threat involved in the performance of a speech act, it not only needs to be established whose face is threatened but also which face is threatened by that particular speech act. Accordingly, the way in which this speech act will be performed is, to some extent, culturally determined by a stronger emphasis on either positive or negative face needs.

This is particularly interesting in speech acts affecting both face types in dif-
ferent ways. Apologies threaten the speaker’s negative face and restore both par-
ties positive face, which leads to culture-specific ways of using face-threatening as well as face-saving strategies. A classification based on face shows how the tension between the need to apologise and to minimise risk to one’s own face is solved in different cultures.

Despite a number of limitations of Brown and Levinson’s theory discussed throughout the present study, their distinction between positive and negative po-
liteness has proved very useful. While an analysis contrasting the preferences for strategies making up the speech act set of apologising restricts the applicability of the results to one speech act, placing the findings within Brown and Levinson’s framework allows for generalisations concerning politeness norms and the inter-
actional styles prevailing in the examined cultures.

11.2 Suggestions for future research

The present study has not only provided some insights into culture-specific ap-
proaches to dealing with offensive situations, but also demonstrated that much more research needs to be conducted on the various forms apologies and polite-
ess take across languages. An empirical analysis of responses to offensive situa-
tions necessarily focuses on remedial apologies and does not provide any infor-
mation on disarming apologies and other functions apology forms can adopt (see Deutschmann 2003).

It appears that apologies serving the function of negative politeness strategies have a broader applicability in British culture than they have in Polish and Rus-
sian cultures. It has been claimed, for instance, that Poles apologise less often than Britons for trifles and when they want to express disagreement (Ronowicz 1995, Jakubowska 1999). What seems to distinguish the English concept of apologising
from that in the two Slavic languages is not only a more frequent use of disarming apologies but also that of mutual apologies.

When two people bump into each other or get into each other’s way in a crowd, it may be difficult or even unnecessary to assign fault to one of the parties involved. In British culture, the matter is often quickly dismissed by means of a mutual apology, sometimes even with the harmed party uttering sorry first. The possibility of exchanging expressions of regret suggests that in Anglo-Saxon culture, the apology can be used to signal recognition of both parties’ right to non-distraction. In Polish and Russian cultures, in contrast, the roles of apologiser and apologisee are more distinct. The Polish performative clearly identifies the apologiser as the one responsible for putting things right while the Russian request for forgiveness emphasises the offender’s guilt and the apologisee’s role in granting forgiveness.

Russian further differs from both English and Polish in that it offers numerous routine formulae for various situations in which disarming apologies are used in English and Polish. A Russian intending to leave a crowded tube, for instance, asks “Vy vychodite?” (“Are you getting off?”), in answer to which the other passengers either proceed towards the door or step aside.

An interesting question concerning these culture-specific rituals is to what extent they may fall prey to cultural globalisation. As I have already mentioned, Poland and Russia are in the process of casting off their socialist past and are currently undergoing a rapid process of assimilation to Western cultures. The emergence of a new Russian elite class, the Novorusskije, whose status is mainly based on economic success, illustrates a high degree of adaptation to American lifestyle. Cultural changes affecting everyday life routines and interpersonal relationships are also reflected in language use. Kronhaus’ study of greetings and partings on Russian TV, for instance, identifies a shift of Russian politeness norms towards the European (2004: 164, 175). Nikolaeva observes that apologies are increasingly used in situations which, according to Russian etiquette, require thanking or saying please (2000: 7).

Similarly to the Russian performative izvinjajus’, which was adopted from another language, the expression of regret mne žal’ may become increasingly acceptable as an apology (compare Rathmayr 1996). The present data have further illustrated that young speakers of both Slavic languages have developed a preference for the English word sorry and a tendency to formulate vague, impersonal accounts.

The changes Polish and Russian politeness systems have been undergoing since the fall of the Iron Curtain have become most visible in the increased use of politeness formulae in service encounters, though Polish (Marcjanik 2007) and Russian (e.g. Zemskaja 1997) researchers take a rather critical attitude towards
them. The increasing politeness characterising service encounters in Polish shops has been described as “mercantile” ("kupiecka"), and it has been claimed that it may even transform into rudeness when the transaction is not completed (Marcjanik 2007: 34).

In a large-scale survey conducted by Rathmayr (2008), positive attitudes prevailed, and the Poles I have interviewed (Ogiermann & Suszczyńska 2008) were mainly concerned about the deteriorating politeness standards and lack of respect among young people. However, while the increased degree of politeness in service encounters was appreciated by most of my informants, it was often referred to as neutralna (neutral), pozorna (apparent), sztuczna (artificial), nieszczerza (insincere), udawana (made-up), wymagana (required), and szkolona (trained).

A controversial issue that remains unsolved in politeness research is the choice of a framework that is best suited for the study of politeness across cultures. Although Brown and Levinson’s theory has been severely criticised in recent years, it continues to be the most frequently applied theory in contrastive politeness research, and all recent theoretical work on politeness devotes considerable attention to their framework.

There seems to be a great degree of agreement that some of Brown and Levinson’s concepts are exceedingly useful, once freed from the Anglo-Saxon perspective in which they are presented. The distinction between positive and negative face becomes exceedingly valuable when it does not place one type of face over another. Instead, the weight given to the two face types in different cultures can be viewed as a parameter for the cross-cultural comparison of politeness (see Arundale 2006, Terkourafi 2007, O’Driscol 2007).

In criticising Brown and Levinson’s overemphasis on negative face, some researchers go as far as to claim that in cultures that place the group over the individual, there is no such thing as negative face (see O’Driscol 2007: 470 for references). I think that it remains to be proved that there indeed are cultures whose members attach no importance to negative face; that they have no need for privacy under no circumstances in their lives. For now, it seems more convincing to adhere to the assumption that members of all cultures have both a positive and a negative face and that the emphasis placed on either of them varies across cultures. Clearly, more research is needed on how face is conceptualised across cultures and how it affects interactional styles and the production and perception of politeness.

Although Brown and Levinson focus on the hearer’s negative face, they acknowledge that verbal interaction can affect up to four faces, namely both interlocutors’ positive and negative face, thus providing the tools for the investigation of a variety of speech acts, including impolite ones. While Brown and Levinson have been criticised for neglecting the impolite end of the politeness continuum,
applying their framework to an inherently polite speech act allows for looking at its impolite realisations. As I have shown, in apologising, the threat to the speaker’s face can be reduced by employing downgrading accounts, which can easily be perceived as impolite.

Similarly, viewing verbal interaction as face-threatening and politeness as a form of face-redress is useful only if this view is not exaggerated to the point where all interaction becomes threatening and if it accounts for forms of politeness that are motivated by other factors than face-threat.

The strategies for performing an FTA suggested by Brown and Levinson are invaluable for a cross-cultural comparison of politeness phenomena. However, viewing differences in the degree of directness in terms of face-redress and presenting the strategies in a hierarchical order seems to suggest that certain cultures attach more importance to face-redress than others. Instead of equating directness with lack of attention to face, one should take into account the manifold ways in which directness is interpreted across cultures. While in some cultures it is associated with a high degree of imposition, others may value it as a sign of honesty or a means of acknowledging the hearer’s role (see Ogiermann 2009).

In sum, the two face types and the strategies for performing an FTA suggested by Brown and Levinson constitute useful tools for the cross-cultural study of politeness if applied in a way that does not make one culture appear more polite than others. The same applies to the social variables of power and distance and their culture-specific assessments, though the weightiness formula has proved problematic. As I have shown, P and D do not contribute to the estimation of face-threat on a summative basis, and there is a wide range of other contextual factors that need to be taken into account.

While the weightiness formula simplifies the sociopragmatic analysis of politeness, Brown and Levinson’s speech-act based approach reduces the insights that can be gained into the pragmalinguistic resources available for the use of politeness in a given language. Although some routinised speech acts consist of a single conversational turn, many evolve over several turns, with the participants negotiating issues such as their rights and obligations and the necessary amount of politeness in a given context.

Researchers adopting Brown and Levinson’s speech-act focus tend to employ data collection methods that aim at eliciting isolated speech acts and do not take into account their sequential organisation and broader discourse context; notably DCTs. In my study, this proved largely unproblematic in responses constituting an apology, but the data also include a few responses in which the apology was avoided and the offence negotiated.

During the interviews, some of my respondents explained that they first gave an evasive or joking answer while hoping to “get away with it” and that they would
apologise more explicitly if this was made necessary by the hearer’s reaction (see also Bergman & Kasper 1993: 85). Since DCTs usually provide space for only one turn, the respondents do not have the option of splitting the information strategically into several units as they might do in real life. Instead, they have to decide to either use the initial or the final turn or a combination of several. The first approach does not necessarily result in an apology and it reduces the total number of apology strategies in the data, which then does not necessarily correspond to their frequency in real life contexts, in which the respondents might ultimately apologise. Whenever the subjects adjust their responses to the design of the DCT and write all that they would have said in just one conversational turn, in contrast, their responses may contain more strategies than would be necessary in a natural conversation because the matter might have been dismissed by the offended party right after the first strategy used. The following response shows how ambiguous situations encourage negotiation of the offence. It consists of several conversational turns constructed around an implied dispreferred second on the part of the hearer:

‘O, I apologise most strongly. I forgot to put this back. I don’t have anything else. Me? Stealing? If I wanted to steal I wouldn’t carry it in my hand.’

While cases like these were very marginal in my data, it should be borne in mind that even the meaning and function of highly conventionalised conversational routines can be altered and jointly produced by the speaker and the hearer.

This emergent property of politeness is central to postmodern politeness theories. In contrast to Brown and Levinson’s speech-act focus, postmodern politeness theories rely on longer stretches of discourse and view politeness as a concept that is constructed and negotiated in ongoing conversation. They also make an important step in moving away from an understanding of politeness as a set of strategies used to mitigate face-threat by a rational model person towards lay members’ commonsense interpretations of politeness.

At the same time, however, postmodern theorists avoid making generalisations and predictions in respect to politeness, while regarding it as unpredictable, which suggests that everything is open to an interpretation as anything and there is no way of predicting the effect of one’s behaviour on other people. A similar approach is taken to conceptualising culture, which is regarded as heterogeneous and treated as an “argumentative practice” (Eelen 2001: 238).

According to Watts, polite behaviour is what goes beyond politic behaviour; a concept for whose definition there are no objective criteria, and which is associated with an individual’s “feel for the game” (2003: 149), in accordance with his or
her *habitus*. Relying on one's *habitus* is certainly helpful when analysing language use in one's own culture – and a great majority of postmodern studies use data collected in Western contexts. Mills (2003) insights into gender and politeness are based on data collected from middle class British women, while Watts (2003) analyses the speech of his relatives and friends. His main interest in other cultures seems to consist in stating their otherness. His interpretation of two e-mails he received from Iran and China is largely limited to the statement that, according to his personal *habitus*, he would expect something else (2003: 163). Such an interpretation does not seem to further the understanding of other cultures any more than saying that “Poles/ Russians etc. are never polite”.

While every categorisation scheme and every interpretation necessarily carries the interpreter’s personal note, the danger of subjectivity appears much more acute when, instead of an analytical framework, there is only one's *habitus* to refer to. Taking the emergent aspect of first order politeness as “the object of investigation, the input, and thus the starting point of the scientific analysis” (Eelen 2001: 252) is likely to lead to a bias towards the analyst’s culture.

The focus on individual evaluations of politeness in postmodern work is in accordance with the authors’ cultural background, and the criticism directed at Brown and Levinson for neglecting the normative function of politeness appears even more valid when applied to postmodern politeness theories. According to Scollon and Scollon, in individualistic societies “the ways of speaking to others are much more similar from situation to situation, since in each case the relationships are being negotiated and developed right within the situation of the discourse” (1995: 134). The fact that postmodern theories reject the existence of literal meanings shows that they rely on implicatures even more than do Brown and Levinson – another aspect of their theory that has been criticised by Non-Western researchers.

Although I agree with the postmodern view that utterances can only be classified as polite when they are interpreted as such by the addressee, I would argue that the extent to which particular utterances are likely to be interpreted as polite or interpreted literally is culture-specific. Every language has at its disposal a range of culture-specific routine formulae which carry “politeness default values” (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 643).

Another fundamental problem relating to postmodern theories is that “empirical analyses are always and necessarily theoretically informed” (Eelen 2001: 254). A question which inevitably arises in relation to postmodern theories is whether approaches which avoid defining their subject matter and which make no predictions and generalisations can be called a theory (Terkourafi 2005: 245). Generalisations are indispensable when investigating culture-specific features of politeness,
and a contrastive analysis of politeness phenomena cannot be conducted without a framework within which they are clearly defined and can be compared.

In the present study Brown and Levinson’s theory was chosen as the best available and most practicable politeness theory for cross-cultural comparison. At the same time, I have tried to amend some of its shortcomings by critically discussing and complementing their framework with concepts from other theories. The concept of first order politeness introduced by postmodern researchers, in particular its conceptual side, has a great potential in accessing native speakers’ ‘commonsense notions’ of what constitutes polite behaviour in their culture.

Although much more research is needed to gain an insight into lay members’ culture-specific concepts of politeness, cultural values discussed in previous literature, such as honesty, modesty or privacy not only exert a great influence on the perception of politeness, but can be interpreted in terms of preferences for positive vs. negative politeness. In this way, culture-specific, first order politeness concepts can be integrated into Brown and Levinson’s theory of second order politeness, thus accounting for culture-specificity within a universal framework.

Another important contribution to the study of politeness made by postmodern theorists is their emphasis on the co-constructed nature of politeness, moving away from Brown and Levinson’s speech-act focus. However, they employ discourse and conversation analysis to illustrate the ongoing construction of politeness in conversations, and to portray politeness as a negotiable and unpredictable concept. While they clearly overemphasise the significance of deviant cases, CA can be employed to explore culture-specific patterns of how meaning, understanding and politeness are constructed in different languages.

On a much more global level, theories of cultural comparison (e.g. Hall 1976, Hofstede 1991, Trompenaars & Hampden Turner 1997) provide cultural dimensions and values that govern behaviour and that can help to explain patterns emerging from people’s language use. Even though these theories have been criticised for being imprecise, with researchers pointing out that cultures do not talk and that individuals cannot be averaged (Bond, Žegarac & Spencer-Oatey 2000), the extensive research on an increasing number of cultures conducted in this field provides a valuable basis for the cross-cultural study of politeness, allowing for predicting areas of potential clashes before they are empirically tested.

While I have confined my analysis to Hofstede’s dimensions overlapping with Brown and Levinson’s social variables, the investigation of other dimensions can help pinpoint further cultural differences governing interactional patterns. Culture-specific ways of handling space and time, for instance, can be expected to have a decisive impact on the assessment of the imposition brought about by space and time offences – a member of a culture that has a flexible concept of time, for instance, is less likely to perceive being late as offensive.
Appendices

Appendix 1a. English Questionnaire

Your native language(s):
Your age:
Your gender:
The subject(s) you study:

Imagine yourself in the situations below and try to react as spontaneously as possible (don’t think). Please, use direct speech.

Example:
You are returning a book at the library and the librarian notices that you have spilled coffee over it.

I am terribly sorry. My little brother pushed me when I was reading in the kitchen.

1. When going on holiday your friend gave you his flat keys and asked you to feed his fish. You have not always had the time and some of the fish have died. When you return the keys your friend asks what happened.

2. You have borrowed a book from a professor. Now you are supposed to give it back to him, but you cannot remember where you put it.

3. You got ill and cannot attend an important lecture. You ring up a fellow student to ask if you can copy his notes.

4. When leaving a crowded shop you let go a heavy door and it hits a woman behind you.
5. Your friend had asked you to return some video tapes for her. You totally forgot and she has just received a call from the video shop, saying that the films are required by another customer and she owes a week's fees.

6. You see a friend of yours in the crowd, run up to him and hit him on the back. Only then you realise that it's not your friend, but a complete stranger.

7. You are just in time to catch your train and have neither a ticket nor money with you. You have just taken a seat when the ticket inspector enters the compartment. She asks you for your ticket.

8. You had a party at your flat. The next day you meet the landlady, who lives in the same house. She complains about the noise and the dirty staircase.

9. You have lent a book to a friend of yours and she returns it in a bad condition.

10. You are at a shopping centre and having an interesting conversation with your friend. You are so engaged in it that you don’t realise that you are holding a CD in your hand that you were going to buy. You leave the shop and the alarm goes off. A security guy comes up to you.
Appendix 1b. Polish questionnaire

Wiek:
Płeć:
Język ojczysty:
Kierunek studiów:

Wyobraź sobie, że znajdujesz się w następujących sytuacjach. Jak zareagowałbyś?
Staraj się nie zastanawiać i używaj mowy niezależnej.

Przykład:
Oddajesz w bibliotece książkę, na którą wyłała Ci się kawa. Bibliotekarka zwraca uwagę
na plamę.

Bardzo przepraszam, młodszy brat potrącił mnie, gdy czytałem w kuchni.

1. Przyjaciel, wyjeżdżając na urlop, dał Ci klucze od swojego mieszkania i poprosił o karmienie rybek. Nie zawsze miałeś czas i okazało się, że część rybek zdechła. Gdy oddajesz klucze, przyjaciel pyta się, co się stało z rybkami.

2. Pożyczyleś książkę od profesora. Dzisiaj powinieneś ją oddać, ale gdzieś Ci się zapodziała.


4. Wychodząc z zatłoczonego sklepu, nieuwажnie puszczasz ciężkie drzwi, które uderzają idącą za Tobą kobietę.
5. Przyjaciółka poprosiła Cię o oddanie kaset video do wypożyczalni. Zupełnie wyleciało Ci to z głowy i w międzyczasie wypożyczalnia upomina się o kasetę, ponieważ chce ją wypożyczyć ktoś inny. Okazuje się, że Twoja przyjaciółka musi zapłacić za cały tydzień.

6. Spostrzegasz w tłumie swojego kolegę, podbiegasz do niego od tyłu i klepiesz go w plecy. W tym momencie stwierdzasz, że jest to obcy człowiek.

7. Wskażesz w ostatnim momencie do pociągu, nie mając ani biletu ani pieniędzy. Właśnie znalazłeś wolne miejsce, gdy wchodzi pani konduktor i pyta Cię o bilet.


10. Jesteś z kolegą w sklepie muzycznym i jesteście tak pogrążeni w rozmowie, że wychodząc zapominasz o płycie kompaktowej, którą trzymasz w ręku. Włącza się alarm i podchodzi do Ciebie ochroniarz.
Appendix 1c. Russian questionnaire

Родной язык:
Возраст:
Пол:
Факультет:

Представьте себя в следующих ситуациях. Как вы отреагируете? Запишите ваш ответ в прямой речи и постарайтесь не раздумывать долго.

Например:
Вы возвращаете книгу в библиотеку и библиотекарь замечает, что вы пролили кофе на страницу.

Ой, извините. Я не хотел. Мой младший брат толкнул меня, когда я читал.

1. Уезжая на каникулы, ваш друг поручил вам кормить его рыбок. У вас было мало времени и некоторые рыбки сдохли. Когда вы возвращаете ему ключи от квартиры, он спрашивает, что случилось.

2. Вы взяли книгу у вашего профессора. Теперь вам нужно ее отдать, но вы забыли, куда вы ее положили.

3. Вы заболели и звоните сокурснику, чтобы он одолжил вам свои конспекты.

4. Выходя из переполненного магазина, вы отпускаете массивную дверь, которая ударяет идущую за вами женщину.
5. Ваша подруга попросила вас вернуть кассеты в видеотеку. Вы совершенно забыли об этом, и теперь ей звонят из видеотеки и говорят, что фильмы хотел бы взять другой и что она должна заплатить за всю неделю.

6. В последний момент вскакиваете в электричку. У вас нет ни денег, ни билета. Вы только что заняли место когда к вам подходит контролерша и хочет проверить Ваш билет.

7. Вы видите в толпе вашего приятеля, подбегаете к нему и хлопаете его по плечу. В этот момент вы замечаете, что это незнакомый человек.

8. У вас в квартире, которую вы снимаете у хозяйки живущей в другой квартире на том же этаже, была вечеринка. На следующий день она ругает вас, потому что было очень шумно и лестница грязная.

9. Вы даете вашей подруге книгу почитать. Она возвращает вам ее в плохом состоянии.

10. Вы находитесь в универсмаге и ведете увлекательную беседу с вашим другом. Вы так погружены в разговор, что выходя не замечаете, что у вас в руке диск, который вы хотели купить. Звонит сигнализация. Охранник подбегает к вам.
Notes

1. Although Austin is generally credited with founding speech act theory, it should be mentioned that similar ideas had been formulated before. The modern concept of pragmatics was introduced by Morris in his “Foundations of the Theory of Signs” (1938) as a subdiscipline of semiotics and defined as “the study of the relation of signs to interpreters” (1938: 6). In his later works, Wittgenstein suggested that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (1953: 20), and concepts such as ‘Sprechhandlung’ and ‘Sprechakt’ can be found in Karl Bühler’s “Sprachtheorie” (1934). Ultimately, one could argue that the roots of speech act theory can be found in pre-Socratic philosophy. For a comprehensive overview of pre-Austinian speech act theory see Smith (1990).

2. Although ‘communist’ is the word preferred in the cited literature, there never was a communist government in any of the countries behind the Iron Curtain. The political systems of Poland and the Soviet Union were officially labelled socialist – though the system that best describes the reality of the former Soviet Block would have to be ‘totalitarian’.

3. It should be borne in mind that affect / liking are closely related to social distance in that they tend to constitute an element of low D. A close relationship between friends automatically implies a high degree of affect, for people who know each other well and do not like each other (anymore) usually become more distant. Whereas among strangers, the suggested variable of affect is largely irrelevant, in relationships based on medium social distance its assessment varies depending on the circumstances of the acquaintance. It seems that relationships based on medium social distance allow for the greatest discrepancy between the degrees of social distance and affect / liking. In professional contexts, in particular, the addition of the variable +P may lead to polite behaviour towards the socially more powerful party despite a strong dislike on the part of the less powerful.


5. Stubbs (1983) cites two studies to demonstrate the amount of time transcription can involve. In one of them, narrow phonetic transcription of the data took up to 30 hours for a five-minute interview (Pittenger et al. 1960). In the other one, Birdwhistell (1970) examined kinesic features and claimed that the transcription lasted between one hour and hundred hours to render one second of conversation (Stubbs 1983:222).

6. The awareness of the effect of observation on the naturalness of the data has led to the development of various techniques aimed at overcoming or at least reducing the Observer’s Paradox. In the attempt to circumvent the Observer’s Paradox, Labov used group sessions, in which the interviewer adopts the role of a participant observer and the “interaction of members
overrides the effect of observation” (1972:109). He also distracted his subjects from the interview by eliciting emotional narratives (ibid: 93).

While these methods proved helpful in research on phonological variation based on interviews, studies focusing on interactional styles are more challenging as they do not only require the participants to speak with their usual accent, but also to behave naturally and spontaneously, with the presence of a researcher being often substituted by that of a camera.

Work on leadership discourse based on recordings of business meetings has shown that the use of a camera did not affect the participants’ interactional styles (Schnurr 2009: 17–18). However, the camera tends to remain more noticeable in non-institutional settings, where there is no agenda to adhere to. My own experience in recording family conversations (see: http://www.ca-across-cultures.org/) shows that the camera becomes the focus of conversation in nearly all participating families, though the unpredictable behaviour of the children leads to some very spontaneous reactions on the part of the parents.

TV reality shows are another source of conversational data that are public and largely unaffected by the Observer’s Paradox. Although it is difficult to say to what extent the speakers who participate in reality shows can be regarded as representative of their cultures, the fact that similar formats are broadcasted in various countries offers an excellent opportunity to study interactional patterns and politeness phenomena across cultures. Incidentally, this type of data has already been used to study apologies (e.g. Koutsantoni 2007).

7. It should be borne in mind, however, that the agreement across languages may be an artefact of the employed scale. The estimation of the variable of social power has shown, for instance, that professors are regarded as socially superior to students in all three countries (S<H), but since Poland and Russia score much higher on power distance than does Britain, these ‘identical’ assessments are not comparable. This problem can be partly solved by employing finer scales, such as the 5-point scale developed by Barron (2003) or the 7-point scale used by Spencer-Oatey (1993). Although a scale making finer distinctions is better suited to reveal cross-cultural differences in the perception of social variables, the assessment of the low and high end of the scale, indicating its range, will always be culture-specific.

8. When izvinjajus’ was first introduced into the Russian language, it was referred to as a “Bolshevik politeness formula” (“bol’shevistskaja formula vežlivosti”) (Kolesov 1988: 232). Gornfeld regards it as reflecting the new reality and mentality developing under the Soviet regime, while arguing: “if they say ‘izvinjajus’ in a tram, this only means that, having pushed you once, they will push you twice and thrice” (“esli v tramvaje govorjat «izvinjajus»’, to ēto značit toľko, čto, tolknuv vas odnaždy, vas tolknut dvaždy i triždy”) (1922: 60, quoted in Gasparov 1993: 110).

9. Etymologically, the form prosti-te, as well as its corresponding imperfective form proščaj-te, go back to the permission to stand up after bowing (Rathmayr 1996:66, following Vasmer 1987: 380). In modern Russian, only the perfective form of the imperative is used as an apology, while the imperfective imperative of this verb is now a parting formula. Until the beginning of the 20th century the two forms were interchangeable, thus implying a closeness of the concepts of parting and forgiving.

10. Although the DCT used in the present study was not designed to elicit address forms, both their formal and informal realisations appear in all three sets of data and show an interesting distribution. One should bear in mind, however, that address forms are a broad research field in
its own right and a systematic analysis of cross-cultural differences in their use requires a data collection instrument better suited for this purpose than the DCT.

11. Holmes (1990) suggests that the correlation between apology strategies and social variables can be better accommodated within Wolfson's bulge model (1988), which links the "certainty" of a relationship with speech act performance. According to this theory, most effort needs to be put into apologising to friends and acquaintances, whereas the more stable relationships with strangers and intimates, which are placed at the two ends of the bulge, require less attention. Since the present study does not cover the category of intimates, Wolfson's model cannot be tested. However, the fairly elaborate apologies offered to strangers in my data, in particular by Polish and Russian respondents, seem to contradict the predictions of the bulge model.
References


teness/apologiesinarabicandenglish.htm


Koutsantoni, Dimitra. 2007. “I can now apologize to you twice from the bottom of my heart’: Apologies in Greek reality TV.” *Journal of Politeness Research* 3: 93–123.


References

289


Index

A
account see downgrading accounts, upgrading accounts, justification, excuse
address forms 14, 33–34, 88, 254–255 see also T-forms and V-forms
adjacency pair 71
adjunct 113–120
anticipated politeness 14
apology see disarming apology, remedial apology, ritual apology, substantial apology
appraiser 180, 186–188, 193
asyndetic 113, 117, 120
Austin, John L. 7–9, 45, 58, 63, 96, 132, 275 see also speech act theory

B
Bachtin, Michail M. 21, 63–64 see also speech genres
behabitives 45
BNC 75, 129

C
CCSARP 61, 65, 68, 133–135, 224
commissives 57, 179
communities of practice 16, 90
complaint 52, 71, 81, 193, 200, 202
complement 113–120, 248–249
confession 51–52, 96, 100, 145, 176–177, 238
conventional implicature 48, 113, 127, 215

D
downgrading accounts 59, 137, 146, 219–212, 214–215, 225–226, 244–246
diminutives 37, 98, 252–254
directives 57, 126, 236
disarming apology 47, 55, 262–263
downgrading accounts 59, 137, 146, 219–212, 214–215, 225–226, 244–246

E
exclamation 124–125
excuse 58, 132, 136–138, 141, 175, 207
expressives 45–46, 57, 114, 126

F
felicity conditions 7–8, 46, 208
first-order politeness 15, 23, 38, 41, 69 see also Watts, Richard J.
formality 28, 37, 83, 86, 88, 230

G
gender 28, 85, 88, 90–91, 233–234
Goffman, Erving 11, 13, 47, 54, 134 see also face, remedial interchange
Grice, Paul 8–12, 16, 177 see also conversational implicature, cooperative principle

H
habit 16, 267
Hofstede, Geert 24, 29–30, 32, 42, 228–230, 268 see also cultural dimensions

I
conciliatory expression 99–100, 102, 111–112, 126, 186–188, 219
disarming softener 97, 100, 103, 112, 118–119, 126, 220
illocutionary act 7–8, 45–46, 110 see also locutionary act, perlocutionary act
illocutionary force 7, 9, 45, 63, 104–105, 112, 148–149
primary illocutionary force 9, 104–105
secondary illocutionary force 9, 104–105
inferred politeness 14
J

L
Leech, Geoffrey N. 10, 17, 36, 40, 46, 47 see also politeness principle, sociopragmatic, pragmalinguistic
literal meaning 8–9, 19, 36, 104, 261, 267
locutionary act 7, 45

N
non-natural meaning 8, 64 see also Grice, Paul
normative politeness 14, 33, 48

O
observer’s paradox 73, 275
off record 12, 35, 129
offence type 84
on record 11–12, 14, 50, 128
opt out 138, 146, 170
P
perlocutionary act 7, 45
politeness principle 10 see also Leech, Geoffrey N.
politeness see anticipated politeness, inferred politeness, normative politeness, strategic politeness, first-order politeness, second-order politeness
politic behaviour 14–15, 23, 266 see also Watts, Richard J.
pragmalinguistic 17, 26, 34, 67 see also Leech, Geoffrey N.

R
remedial apology 43, 47, 49, 51, 55, 262
remedial interchange 11, 47, 51–54, 71 see also Goffman, Erving
request 9, 36–37, 47, 50
ritual apology 47–48, 53

S
Searle, John R. 7–9, 36, 45–46, 56–57, 104, 107, 114 see also speech act theory
second-order politeness 15, 23 see also Watts, Richard J.
social norms 14, 18, 24, 47
sociopragmatic 17, 26, 34, 67, 265 see also Leech, Geoffrey N.
speech act set 56–57, 62, 133, 206, 261–262
speech act theory 7–10, 15, 57, 63–64, 275 see also Austin, John L., Searle, John R.
speech event 63, 72
speech genre 63–64 see also Bachtin, Michail M.
strategic politeness 48
substantial apology 47–48, 53, 71

T
T-forms and V-forms 33, 88 see also address forms

U
universality 10, 12–13, 17, 23, 29, 31, 57, 203, 205–206, 255, 261
upgrading accounts 59, 137, 146, 224, 226, 238–240

W
Watts, Richard J. 14–17, 23, 38–41, 266–267 see also politic behaviour, first-order politeness
ranking of imposition 11, 27, 37, 50, 85, 140
Wierzbicka, Anna 33, 36–39, 46, 87 see also cultural values
Pragmatics & Beyond New Series

A complete list of titles in this series can be found on www.benjamins.com

194 KÜHNLEIN, Peter, Anton BENZ and Candace L. SIDNER (eds.): Constraints in discourse 2. Expected February 2010


192 FILIPI, Anna: Toddler and Parent Interaction. The organisation of gaze, pointing and vocalisation. xiii, 265 pp. + index. Expected November 2009


190 FINCH, Jason, Martin GILL, Anthony JOHNSON, Iris LINDAHL-RAITILDA, Inna LINDGREN, Tuija VIRTANEN and Brita WÅRVIK (eds.): Humane Readings. Essays on literary mediation and communication in honour of Roger D. Sell. xi, 156 pp. + index. Expected December 2009


185 MAZZON, Gabriella: Interactive Dialogue Sequences in Middle English Drama. 2009. ix, 228 pp.

184 STENSTRÖM, Anna-Brita and Annette Myre JØRGENSEN (eds.): Youngspeak in a Multilingual Perspective. 2009. vi, 206 pp.


175 GÓMEZ GONZÁLEZ, Maria de los Ángeles, J. Lachlan MACKENZIE and Elsa M. GONZÁLEZ ÁLVAREZ (eds.): Languages and Cultures in Contrast and Comparison. 2008. xxii, 364 pp.


168 PROOST, Kristel: Conceptual Structure in Lexical Items. The lexicalisation of communication concepts in English, German and Dutch. 2007. xii, 304 pp.


TANSKANEN, Sanna-Kaisa: Collaborating towards Coherence. Lexical cohesion in English discourse. 2006. ix, 192 pp.


86 IFANTIDOU, Elly: Evidentials and Relevance. 2001. xii, 225 pp.
76 MATSUI, Tomoko: Bridging and Relevance. 2000. xii, 251 pp.


FRETHEIM, Thorstein and Jeanette K. GUNDEL (eds.): Reference and Referent Accessibility. 1996. xii, 312 pp.


