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Agata Klimczak-Pawlak

Towards the Pragmatic Core of English for European Communication

The Speech Act of Apologising
in Selected Euro-Englishes

 Springer

Agata Klimczak-Pawlak
Institute of English Studies
University of Warsaw
Warsaw
Poland

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Abbreviations

+D	Close distance
-D	Big distance
+P	Unequal power
-P	Equal power
BE	British English
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project
CoE	Council of Europe
D	Distance
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
EEA	European Economic Area
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	European Union
EXPL	An explanation or account of the situation
FORB	A promise of forbearance
FTA	Face Threatening Act
G8	The Group of Eight
GA	General American
H	Hearer
HDI	Human Development Index
IFID	Illocutionary Force Indicating Device
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
INT	Internal intensifiers
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
Med. D	Medium distance
NA	No apology
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
P	Power
PC	Phatic Communion
R	Rating of the degree of imposition

REPR	An offer of repair
RESP	An acknowledgement of responsibility
RP	Received Pronunciation
S	Speaker
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TEIL	Teaching English as an International Language
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
W	Weight of imposition
WDCT	Written Discourse Completion Task/Test
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction

English is the most widely taught and learnt language throughout the whole of Europe, however, with pragmatic transfer and idiosyncrasies of the teachers is it really one language that is being taught across the whole of the European Union (EU)? It is a strong belief of the author of this book that English as used by Polish native speakers differs significantly from that spoken by native speakers of other languages. Therefore, the main assumption, which is put forward here is based on the belief that it is possible to talk of Euro-Englishes, with speakers from each country creating their own 'variety' of Euro-English, English with specific pragmatic behaviours, as well as lexical and grammatical constructions based on the language experience of the speakers. This belief is that underlying the variability in pragmatic behaviour of speakers of these different Euro-Englishes, there is a core of shared preferences, and it is this a part of this core which the present study sets out to establish with respect to strategies used in the production of the speech act of apologising.

With opportunities for intercultural communication and cooperation being at its highest in Europe's history, the importance of one code with clear rules of use seems of paramount importance for the sake of facilitating more effective transfer of ideas among citizens of Europe. For this reason, it is argued that research into pragmatic behaviour of non-native speakers of English from across Europe should be conducted to uncover the core, the common ground, which would be referred to as English for European Communication, and which would be a reference point for all learners of English who wish to communicate with this language within the European Union. This core is proposed to constitute an element of pan-European English standard for European communication with individual Euro-Englishes seen as regional varieties of the supra-ordinate English for European Communication.

It is an undisputable fact that English serves today as the most popular and common code of contact between people from different countries. There is, however, a significant difference between accuracy in the code and the pragmatic functions performed with the use of the code. With English being the official language of the British and the Irish, we can talk of their ownership of the English code (regardless of the English ownership debate). However, with this language being so widely used by non-native speakers, it is transformed by us and used for

our own purposes. While the code of English belongs to the native speakers of English, the actual choice of words and structures to perform specific functions is culturally specific and lies in the hands of all those who use it for communication, most of whom are the non-native speakers of English. With the European Union battling financial problems and in need of greater cooperation among member states, it would seem most beneficial to establish one official language for European communication. The obvious problem with doing so, however, is the undermining of the fundamental pillar of the EU—equality of all member states. A native language of some member states assumed as the official language of the whole of the EU would position these countries as more powerful than the others and consequently needs to be rejected. However, if we recognise the difference between the English as spoken by the native speakers of this language and the new emerging English-based shared means of communication, referred to as English for European Communication, it might prove to be the most efficient and cost-effective strategy to what has been called here the EU language dilemma. Should we assume it possible to keep the standard in the code of English, but integrate into it the pragmatic rules of Euro-Englishes, we could venture the proposal of this new, English for European Communication as not belonging to the British, or the Irish but to all of the EU citizens.

European citizens are a diverse group of people who, although different, do share a vast amount of experiences, beliefs, behaviours, and who are characterised by emerging tendencies in the way in which we communicate. Europe, being in the process of becoming a diversified unit of intertwined cultures and languages, is no longer a set of individual, isolated countries protecting and securing solely their own interest. With the hopes of an even greater union between EU member states and an ideal of a plurilingual European, fluent in intercultural communication, with European loyalty and ties to their roots, a need for action with regard to language policy and language education in Europe is needed. It is no longer enough for people across Europe to learn English, since the English being taught and learnt is not one, but many. With different Euro-Englishes being used (e.g. Polglish, Spanglish, etc.), intercultural communication is not made easy, but to the contrary the variability creates obstacles where there should be none. Pragmatic transfer, being an integral part of language learning, influences the way L2 is used, and with speakers from different cultural backgrounds the probability of misunderstanding is large due to a possible lack of a common reference point to what is polite, appropriate and desirable linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. Consistency, clarity and transparency of linguistic rules facilitate more effective communication, which is crucial for intercultural cooperation and the strengthening of ties between citizens of the member states.

The context for this study is the reality of the use of English as a *lingua franca* on the one hand, and the cultural-specificity of language use on the other. The focus is on the speech act of apologising and how native speakers of eight European languages perform this speech act in English, i.e. how a Hungarian subject performs a particular speech act in a Hungarian-English manner or a Polish in the Polish-English, etc. Respondents in this study are highly proficient

users who have chosen English as their major and most of whom tied their future with a teaching career. This group has been chosen on the basis of the prediction that their educational experience would make them most aware of the English politeness norms, however, it has been assumed that even in this group pragmatic transfer is unavoidable. Nevertheless, it is believed that the similarities in the language used by these particular groups of speakers of English will allow the specification of a core of the most typical Euro-English realisations of the speech act of apologising.

This book consists of five chapters, with the first four creating the background and providing motivation for the project, and the fifth one providing an account of the experimental study. [Chapter 1](#) aims to present the reality of the European Union, its culture, identity of its citizens, as well as the role and the place of national and international languages in it. With English emerging as the most viable language to take the place of the official language of the EU, [Chap. 2](#) focuses on English used by non-native speakers with special attention paid to the way in which non-native speakers use English in Europe. [Chapter 3](#) shifts from the pure linguistic perspective to the intercultural communication perspective; issues such as approaches to the study of communication, culture and language are discussed. Having established that English is not a destructive force necessarily constituting a threat to national cultures and languages, and having discussed the way in which it can be situated within a broader cultural and educational context in Europe, we move on to the linguistic approach to the study of language which provides the best tools for the extraction of English for European Communication norms of use. These are pragmatic norms, and it is linguistic pragmatics that offers the theoretical background to the linguistic analysis performed in the study. [Chapter 5](#) applies the linguistic pragmatic approach to the realisation of the speech act of apology, with the method, instrument, data collection procedure, results and analysis of the data. The discussion that follows puts the main findings into a broader European and educational context.

The conclusions drawn from this study point to the need for further investigations into the way in which speakers of different Euro-Englishes perform a number of speech acts in order to establish the core of English for European Communication. With a core at hand innovative teaching methods can be introduced to the educational systems across the EU. Should the EU enforce the same language policy strategy across its member states with citizens being prepared for intercultural communication from the earliest stages of schooling, then the process of fostering plurilingual citizens would be catalysed. However unlikely it may be for political reasons for the EU to take an official stance to that effect into their own hands, the citizens of the EU might well take the future of their shared opportunities by adopting this English for European Communication—English unifying the variety and wealth of European cultures together. However, before that can happen, teaching materials need to be produced that would enable the Europeans to access this new linguistic tool. Before the materials can be developed, a body of research is needed, with this study being the first in what is hoped a trend among applied linguists.