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MATS DEUTSCHMANN, *Apologising in British English*. Umeå, Sweden: Umeå University, 2003. Pp. 262.

Reviewed by GILL WOODMAN
Anglistik, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich.
D-80799 Munich, Germany
Gillwood@t-online.de

One of the most significant problems in speech act research is doubtless the shortage of naturally occurring spoken language in the data under observation. Researchers have applied a battery of techniques to collect examples of speech acts, but the vast majority of the work has been characterized by elicited language, wherein the starting point for the research has been the function of the speech act itself and the aim has been to investigate ways in which it is realized linguistically. Mats Deutschmann's book marks a clear departure from this tradition. His research into apologizing in British English is based solely on data from the spoken section of the *British National Corpus* (BNC). As a result, his starting point is also different: the form (linguistic realization) of the speech act rather than its function. Furthermore, in addition to conducting a specific investigation of the speech act "apologizing," he sets himself the more ambitious target of revealing "general characteristics of the use of politeness formulae in British English" (p. 13).

Deutschmann's procedure, outlined in chap. 1, was to search the BNC for instances of apology, which he identified by virtue of the following illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs; see Searle 1969): *afraid, apologise, apology, excuse, forgive, pardon, regret, sorry*. The results were downloaded and saved in an Excel database. Each occurrence was evaluated in the context of the conversation in which it was uttered, partly to ensure that it really was an apology (e.g., not an example of reported speech). Only those instances were taken where information was available about the age, gender, and social class of the speaker. Statistical analysis was then applied to the selected instances in order to look at different groups of speakers in various situations and to compare the total number of apologies produced and the types of offences apologized for.

In chap. 2, against the background of the classical theories of face (Goffmann 1967, 1971) and politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987), Deutschmann pegs out the theoretical landscape related specifically to apologizing. His aim in doing so is largely to make it clear that traditionally apologies have been seen as negative politeness devices (ways of limiting the threat to the hearer's face needs). The claim in this book, however, is that, far from being a way of showing concern for the addressee, "an apology is probably more strongly motivated by the need to improve self-image, sometimes even at the expense of the addressee"(43). This chapter is a lucid exposition of theoretical concepts and is most pleasing in its recognition of the strong bearing that the researcher's view of politeness will

have on his or her interpretation of the usage of linguistic politeness markers such as apologies (29). For instance, throughout reading the book I was aware that my own approach to politeness phenomena has more of a pragmatic and psychological slant; this meant that I had some difficulty at times with an approach that sees politeness more as an on/off phenomenon, either present or absent. It is unfortunate that the reference that seemed best to address my reservations on this matter (Meier 1998) is missing from the bibliography. At the same time, there were enlightening insights at this interface of pragmatic, socio-cultural, and historical theoretical perspectives.

Chap. 3 looks more closely at the forms and functions of apology that were found in the corpus, with a view to furnishing the reader with the range of taxonomies utilized in the chapters that follow. The most fundamental categorization is probably that of three main functional types: "real" (prototypical) apologies, "formulaic" apologies, and "face attack" apologies. The taxonomies adopted are partly based on systems used in previous studies of apology and partly devised specifically to deal with the needs of this research. Naturally the categorization systems imply some arbitrary decisions. It may be asked, for example, why *I'm afraid* should be excluded from analysis in cases where the speaker had no responsibility for a problem (e.g., *I'm afraid it's raining*) and why *sorry*, when functioning more as a request for repetition, should be included as an apology. It is a strength of the book, however, that these controversial decisions are addressed honestly. The author is meticulous in clarifying the origins of the lines of thought he has adopted. He is quick to point out differences between his findings and those of other researchers and tries to relate these differences very objectively to the methods employed in data collection. In this way, chap. 3 provides the reader with a textured overview of research into the speech act of apologizing and a clear analytical platform as background for reading the next three chapters.

The effects of speaker gender, age, and social class on the use of the apology form is the focus of chap. 4. The major finding to emerge in this section is that younger speakers in the corpus apologized far more frequently than older speakers, and middle-class speakers more than working-class speakers. Deutschmann's overall conclusion here is that the use of the apology form may be a way of signaling one's social identity linguistically, and that "its use is primarily part of a middle-class sociolect" (206). At the same time, the author acknowledges the difficulties involved in trying to distill out how much of "real" apologizing is real and how much is purely a signal of social-class allegiance. A very useful division in this respect might have been the distinction that is sometimes made in pragmatics between social politeness (using language as a marker of social position) and tact, which is applied more strategically (Janney & Arndt 1992).

Chap. 5 addresses the effects of conversational setting on the use of the apology form. Here conversational setting is taken to include level of formality, group size, and genre (e.g. doctor-patient vs. employer-job applicant). Deutschmann's major findings in this section are that group size plays a significant role in the

rate of apology used, and that level of formality is important in the type of apology chosen. The inclusion of audience (group size) as a significant variable in the analysis of politeness is new and potentially very important. The fact that a larger audience seems to lead to a higher apology rate lends credence to the claim that minimization of damage to the speaker's image (rather than concern for hearer's face needs) was often the motivation for apologies.

The final variable considered is the effect of the relationship existing between the speaker and the addressee on the use of the apology form. This is the focus of chap. 6 and includes such aspects as relative power and social distance between the interlocutors. A surprising finding from this section is that relatively powerful speakers apologized more to relatively less powerful speakers (downward politeness) than vice versa, albeit in a more formulaic way. Deutschmann's interpretation of this finding is striking. He picks up critically on Held's (1999:22–24) claim that our increasingly democratized societies mean that politeness is no longer used so much for deference (self-preservation) but more for self-representation; Deutschmann suggests:

In reality ... it is the privileged classes who are in charge. One strategy for minimising the gap between pseudo ideals and the real state of affairs is for the powerful to appear 'humble' when confronted with the less powerful; downward politeness is one expression of such a strategy. As this mode of rhetoric becomes the norm, downward politeness paradoxically becomes a linguistic marker of power, and a tool for exercising that power. (209)

Deutschmann's doctoral research is thorough and honest, and his findings are presented very clearly. He utilizes technology in an interesting way without ever trying to gloss over the drawbacks involved in its application. The obvious advantages of using a computerized database such as the BNC are the sheer scale of the data and the fact that the language occurred naturally. The disadvantages lie in the lack of crucial information in connection with the delivery of the apologies (such as body language and prosodic features), in the inevitable inaccuracies involved in the transcription process, and in the lack of any psychological contextual information about the participants (e.g., perceived gravity of offense, degree of affection between participants). Deutschmann himself points to the particularly method-sensitive nature of speech act research results. It will be interesting to see over the course of time to what extent his method is responsible for the strikingly different results thrown up by his research. The book is an essential read for anyone working in the field of British pragmatic patterns, especially apologizing, and in new applications for corpus linguistics

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