

Apologizing – How Genre Affects the Changes in the Speech Act

Monika Zaśko-Zielińska¹

Abstract

The goal of the paper is to show how external situations (cultural, institutional, social) of the suicide note genre and its component speech acts (especially: Last Will Instructions, Saying 'I love you' and Thanking) impact the choice of the strategies of apologizing. The results of the research conducted using Polish Corpus of Suicide Notes were compared to the description of apologizing as found in the Polish part of project Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns. Natural communicative situation reflected in the analyzed texts reveal a complex structure of the apologizing speech act with its overlapping strategies. The most noticeable differences between everyday apologizing and apologizing in the suicide note emerge in the strategy of Taking of Responsibility whose form depends not only on the type of the offense but also on the recipients. In suicide notes, the author knows the rules of apologizing but he adjusts them to his situation and he subordinates the text to his goals. The most important person in the sender-recipient relationship appears to be the author himself and the injured party remains in the shadow. In the sender's mind, both the acceptance of the apology and the direct contact are not necessary.

Keywords: speech act, apologizing, genre, suicide note

1. Introduction

During the pragmatic annotation of the Polish Corpus of Suicide Notes (PCSN) act of apologizing was singled out. In order to define the boundaries of the apologizing act in suicide notes, I referred to the structure of the apologizing act described in cross-cultural research. The differences in the structure observed between suicide notes and other material discussed in literature led me to conclude that a speech act varies across cultures as well as within one culture when it is immersed in the specific context of a given genre.

¹Prof., Institute of Polish Philology, pl. Nankiera 15, 50-140 Wrocław, Poland.
E-mail: monik@uni.wroc.pl

This hypothesis can be verified using numerous cross-cultural studies about the speech act of apologizing. The part of research that focuses on the Polish language inspired me to compare its results with Polish authentic data collected from suicide notes.

1.1. Data for Investigation of Speech Acts and Polish Corpus of Suicide Notes

In order to obtain representative data to reveal the pattern of speech acts, researchers attempt to meet certain conditions: language material has to come from situations that vary in terms of social status and distance between interlocutors; data which occur naturally have to be used; large amount of linguistic material needs to be collected. Unfortunately, it is difficult to meet these requirements in one research project. Therefore, Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) data were obtained by discourse completion test focused on the examination of apologies based on sequences with interlocutors with different status and distance (e.g.: professor, student, staff manager, waiter, customer, driver, passenger) (Blum-Kulka, Olshtain 1984, 211-212). It allowed researchers to collect various apologies otherwise difficult to obtain through other methods, e.g. recording spoken apologies in selected situations and places. The usage of corpus-based methods (e.g. corpus of casual conversations) gives authentic conversational data (Meyerhoff, 1999, 228) which may be limited in its scope. More extensive data can come from the reference corpus, e.g. British National Corpus (Deutschmann 2006, 205). In such cases, the challenge is to isolate an apology out of texts collected in the reference corpus. Expressions used in apologies became the key words for the search of the speech act of apologizing. It limits, to an extent, the results of the search because we find only acts with strong Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID). However, it is a very useful method for validation of the results obtained from other sources, e.g. a comparison of apology expressions in a specialized corpus and in a reference corpus or in survey data and a reference corpus.

The current research uses Polish Corpus of Suicide Notes which is a genre-based corpus constructed for forensic linguistics purposes. Even though the collected material is written, it represents the texts which can be located on the written-spoken continuum closer to the spoken end. Thus, they are similar to completion test responses which refer to spoken situations but are recorded in writing.

The context of the genuine suicide notes is natural and different from the one in a hypothetical survey material and the situation connected with suicide is rather non typical for everyday life events or scenes which were recorded for the pragmatic research.

PCSN is a collection of 614 genuine suicide notes which were obtained from prosecutor offices throughout Poland. The suicide notes were written in the years 1999-2008 (74.26% of men and 25.73% of women). PCSN, as a specialized corpus, is not large but its size exceeds typical research material for the analysis of speech acts. All suicide notes were transcribed and they are annotated structurally and pragmatically.

1.1.1. Ethics of the Research

Suicide notes are personal documents and it is very important to protect the senders' identification. Therefore, all quotations used in the paper were anonymized which means removing the information about names, surnames, telephone numbers and other proper names. The anonymization in the quotations is marked by the crossing-outs (-----).

1.2. Polish Apologizing Speech act in the Cross-Cultural Research

Polish apologizing speech act has been analyzed in two ways. First, there is a description of Polish language etiquette, often using prescriptive method (Ogiermann 2009, 64) where the starting point is a Polish apology (Ożóg 1985, Marcjanik 1985, Zgólkowie 1992). The second approach is more descriptive and uses cross-cultural pragmatics, which considers multiple languages including Polish (Suszczyńska 1999, Ogiermann 2009). The goal is to check how the apologizing speech act is realized in Polish in comparison with other languages. The comparison is possible provided the data from different culture are collected in the same way. Therefore, the Polish part of the cross-cultural research of apologies used translated version of Discourse Completion Test and a model of apology developed and tested within CCSARP. The model consists of six main strategies: Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFID); Explanation or Account; Taking of Responsibility; Concern for the Hearer; Offer of Repair and Promise of Forbearance (Suszczyńska 1999, 1056), which is sometimes described as Promise *not to Repeat Offense*.

Ogiermann (2009, 940), using CCSARP, found that 76% of Polish respondents used IFIDs (for comparison: 80% English and 73% Russian). Based on tests of 76 Polish subjects, Suszczyńska (1999, 1057) distinguished four main IFIDs for the Polish language: *przepraszam* (*I apologize*), *przykro mi* (*sorry*), *wybacz* (*forgive*), *nie gniewaj się* (*don't be angry*). Nevertheless, it is not self-evident how to match Polish and English equivalents *przepraszam* – *I apologize*. *Przepraszam*, which is dominant in Polish, belongs to the neutral language register and for this reason alone it differs from the English *I apologize*.

1.3. A Genre and its Pragmatic Structure

The notion of genre can be defined in two ways. From the outside perspective genre is captured as any formally distinguishable variety of text which can be recognized by virtue of form or function (Huang 2012, 130) or sharing a set of communicative purposes (Swales 1990, 58). The inside perspective is represented by van Leeuwen's definition of generic structure whose basic unit is a speech act (van Leeuwen 1993, 195).

A suicide note is written before the suicide death as the last component of the pre-suicidal discourse (Oravec 2004, 156). Polish suicide note as a genre consists of a several speech acts, including: Apologizing; Saying 'good bye'; Last Will Instructions; Saying 'I love you'; Thanking; Prayer, Threat and Curse. The speech act which emerges as the most significant is apologizing. It is very developed and sometimes it remains the only speech act in one-word suicide notes. Polish corpus material shows that each speech act can occur in the suicide note once (Apologizing act – Saying 'I love you' – Saying 'good bye') or it is repeated (Apologizing act – Last Will Instructions - Apologizing act – Last Will Instructions – Thanking - Apologizing act - Saying 'good bye').

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. Impact of the External Situation of the Suicide note on Apology

The apology act found in the suicide note genre differs from the speech act of apologies functioning in the everyday casual situations.

Therefore, I will describe selected determinants influencing apology in this particular genre: cultural, institutional and social factors as well as the type of offense and the time of an apology.

2.1.1. Suicide in the Polish Culture and Apologizing in Suicide Notes

In order to discuss the cultural dimension of the suicide notes genre, it should be acknowledged that suicide in Polish culture was considered a bad death. Today, the perception of suicide has changed in the light of the official Roman-Catholic Church's teaching (dominant denomination in Poland) and psychological understanding of suicide, but nevertheless previous prejudices continue and preserve the taboo of suicide in Polish culture. This is why some suicides claim that their bodies cannot be treated with respect after a suicidal death and their family will be stigmatized. Others apologize for the suicide act, for the shame and the family disgrace which their loved ones will go through or they express their satisfaction that all people guilty of their suicide will pay for it when they are humiliated in their community. Even though suicide takes place in the community which perceives suicide as unequivocally wrong, it can be seen as equivocal by the person committing suicide during the process of making the decision to take their own life. Accordingly, in some suicide notes we find double perspective: author does not feel that they violate the norms and, at the same time, they know that the recipients and the entire community can treat suicide as the infringement of social and cultural rules.

2.1.2. Suicide Note and its Social Dimension

Suicide notes belong to the personal documents along with private letters. The dominant social distance is the closest one found between family members (mother, father, wife, husband) or friends. Rarely, are the participants of the interaction: colleagues, boss, neighbors or strangers (police, prosecutor, random person). The more official the situation, the more the text transfers from the spoken language to the written form of the official letter. Even though social distance between senders and addressees is mostly similar in the suicide notes and in private letters, the nature of the relationship is different. The author of the letter writes his text because face to face interaction with the addressee is impossible and a suicide writes because he does not want a face to face interaction.

This occurs when there is a large psychological distance between the participants of the interaction even if physically they are in close proximity. Moreover, the addressee is denied the right to voice their response and it constitutes power asymmetry to the advantage of the author. Distinctive dimension of personal distance in a suicide note is likewise connected with the context of death. It imparts solemn character to the interaction which drives the participants further away and affects the linguistic form of the text.

Suicide notes are marked by a complicated sender-recipient context where one text can be intended for a few people or one sender writes a number of suicide notes to various people (Zaśko-Zielińska 2013, 147-149). We observe that the same content changes under the influence of the interactions with each recipient: (1) *Przepraszam, że Was zawiodłem (I'm sorry I let you down)* – a letter to children; (2) *Dzięki za zgaszenie mojej świecy Dzięki za rozdeptanie wszystkiego co mogło być piękne (Thank you for putting out my candle Thanks for stamping out all that could have been beautiful)* – a letter to wife; (3) *Nie chcę się tłumaczyć. Tak musiało być (I don't want to make excuses. It was meant to be this way)* – a letter to parents; (4) *Nie wiem, czy kiedykolwiek będziecie w stanie zrozumieć mój czyn i wybaczyć mi. (I don't know if you will ever be able to understand my action and forgive me)* – a letter to daughters.

2.1.3. Suicide Note – Institutional Dimension

Suicide itself is not considered a crime under Polish law. However, a suicide note is an object which should be seized as a material evidence to confirm if a third party was not involved in the suicide death by aiding and abetting (section 151 of Polish Criminal Code). This is the reason why that police look for a suicide note at the scene of the suicide and when found it is filed with other evidence of the case. Unfortunately, Polish law does not require for suicide notes to be examined by forensic professionals. The authors of suicide notes are aware that the note may implicate a third party and the police will be looking for the note. The suicide notes include the following statements: (5) *wiem że mnie systematycznie truli zgłoś to na policję (I know they have been systematically poisoning me report it to the police)*; (6) *Policji masz pokazać tylko tę kartkę co napisałem gdzie jestem (You must show to the police only this piece of paper where I wrote where I am)*; (7) *to pan Doktor ----- odbierając mi lek ----- doprowadził mnie do samobójstwa (It was doctor ----- who by withdrawing the medicine ----- drove me to suicide)*; (8) *Niech córka moja odpowie też za moją śmierć (Let my daughter be held responsible for my death).*

The impact of the institutional context on the suicide note is seen most clearly where the author draws from last will and testament formula: (9) *Będąc w pełni władz umysłowych i pod niczyją presją To co zrobiłem byłem całkiem świadomy (Being of sound and disposing mind and not acting under duress I am entirely responsible for what I did)*; (10) *Pisząc te słowa jestem w pełni trzeźwy i zdrowy na umyśle (As I write these words I am fully sober and of the sound mind)*.

2.1.4. Type of Offense

The offenses typical for apology include events with various degrees of seriousness. J. Holmes (1990,178) listed them: inconvenience, entering personal space, infringement of the polite talk rules, losses of possessions and social gaffe.

When one needs to ascribe the degree of seriousness to a suicide, it should be assessed from a double perspective: the sender and the recipient. The former will see the suicide as an offense mitigated by circumstances and the latter as the heaviest offense. In situations other than suicide, this difference of opinion may be treated by the offended party as an unwillingness to admit guilt by the transgressor. At the same time, the question arises – is it possible to apologize for suicide so that good relations between participants could be restored as it happens in a regular apology (Holmes 1990, 156)? Some apologies do not serve the purpose of redressing the wrong but are simply an expected behaviour. This is the case with suicide or when the transgressor is forced to apologize publicly.

2.1.5. The Time of Apology

A typical apology is a post-event fact (Blum-Kulka, Olshtain 1984, 206) but in a suicide note it happens post-event for the recipient but pre-event for the sender. Thus, some of the explanations are not present in suicide notes, e.g. randomness or unconscious action while the significance of necessity and justification grows. This is the case because the author is convinced to have made the right decision. They are not going to negotiate it or change it because the recipient cannot respond, what can sometimes occur in other cases of pre-event apology. All these circumstances affect the explanations in the suicide notes where authors use different tenses: (11) *Zrobiłem to aby uchronić ciebie od jeszcze większych cierpień (I did it to protect you from even bigger suffering)*; (12) *Chcę umrzeć i skrócić mój ból i cierpienie, które mi zadałeś (I want to die and cut short the pain and suffering that you inflicted on me)*; (13) *Tak będzie najlepiej dla mnie (It will be best for me)*.

2.2. Structure of Apologizing act in Suicide Notes Genre

J. Holmes (1990, 184) noticed that seriousness of offenses causes more formal way of apologizing using IFID. Indeed, the rank list for PCSN shows that the performative verb *przepraszać* (to apologize) has a high 40th place. But, the whole structure of apologizing in a suicide note is sometimes very elaborate. The authors use combined strategies of apologizing in one speech act or emphasize some sequences of apologizing and minimize others. It is not always in keeping with typical realization of the apologizing speech act (especially in formal apologizing) but it enables the formation of a generic whole where the apologizing speech act is one of many and modified in the presence of other speech acts.

The most noticeable strategy of apologizing in suicide notes is the use of IFID. The order of verbs used as IFIDs in CCSARP research is slightly different than in the Polish results obtained in other research of apologizing. PCSN – *przepraszam* (I apologize) 179 times, *wybacz* (forgive) 113 times, foreign word: *sorry, sory, sorki* 9 times, *przykro mi* (sorry) 6 times, *nie gniewaj się* (don't be angry) 2 times. Polish data in CCSARP – *przepraszam* (I apologize) 291 times, *przykro mi* (sorry) 47 times, *wybacz* (forgive) 27 times, *nie gniewaj się* (don't be angry) 6 times (Suszczyńska 1999, 1057). Rare use of IFIDs in PCSN and lesser concentration of performative verbs show that probably the authors of suicide notes think that in order to apologize for a suicide it is not enough to use expressions which appear in everyday situations and yet are not fully accepted in apologizing. (Ogiermann 2009, 237).

Apart from IFID, suicide notes include other strategies of apologizing which are presented below. It is worth noticing that in the elaborate structure of the speech act it is difficult sometimes to distinguish individual strategies because they overlap with each other.

2.2.1. Explanation

Explanation in suicide notes is the answer to the reader's question why the author has committed suicide. It can take three different forms. The first form is a short articulation of the reason, which is attached to the performative verb with conjunction *but*:

(14) *Przepraszam ale ja nie mogłam już tego wytrzymać* (I apologize but I couldn't take it any longer); (15) *przepraszam ale nie miałem już innego wyjścia* (I apologize but I had no other choice).

The second form builds on the previous one. It starts with an articulation of a general reason for suicide, which is followed by a self-narrative about specific events and persons which drove the author to suicide: (16) *Zrobiłam to, ponieważ zmarnowałam sobie życie. Chcę powiedzieć że latem nie wzięłam ze sobą zielonych rybaczek ze sklepu...* (*I did it because I wasted my life. I want to say that in the summer I did not take the green cropped pants from the store*); (17) *Problemy. Nie zdalem nowa klasa taekwondo kontakty z policja...* (*Problems. I failed my finals new class taekwondo contacts with the police*). The last form is a complaint which gave an account of the author's mental, emotional and physical state: (18) *Brak mi już sił* (*I don't have strength to go on*); (19) *Brak mi miłości* (*I am deprived of love*); (20) *Cierpiałam tak strasznie że nie umiem tego opisać* (*I suffered so much that I cannot describe it*).

In some Explanations, sometimes one finds traces of blame mitigation hence they can be considered as two separate strategies of apologizing: Explanation and Taking on Responsibility.

2.2.2. Concern for the Hearer/Reader

Concern for the Hearer/Reader in suicide notes belongs to the positive strategies of apologizing. The authors express their interest in the reader's feelings when they learn about the suicide and when the message about the suicidal death in the reader's family reaches people around them: (21) *Wiem, że tym co zrobię bardzo Was skrzywdzę* (*I know I will hurt you very much by what I am going to do*); (22) *Najbardziej boli mnie to, że Was skrzywdzę moim postępkami* (*What hurts me the most is that I'm going to hurt you by my action*). The Concern for the Hearer/Readers is often combined with the Confirmation of their Innocence: (23) *Nie martw się, to nie twoja wina* (*Don't worry it's not your fault*) or with the greetings related to Saying good bye act: (24) *Życzę Ci żebyś ułożył sobie życie* (*My wish to you is that you would settle in your life*); (25) *nie zalamuj się* (*Don't give up*); (26) *nie płaczcie* (*Don't cry*); (27) *mam nadzieje, że się pogodzisz z moim odejściem* (*I hope that you will come to terms with my departure*); (28) *nie przejmuj się* (*Don't worry*).

The strategy Concern of the Hearer/Reader occurs also with the act Say I love you, which offers a positive message for the recipient and it should compensate for the rest of the note's content.

2.2.3. Taking on Responsibility

Strategy of Taking on Responsibility described as continuum from Self-humbling to Denial of responsibility (Blum-Kulka, Olshtain 1984, 207) is in the suicide note extended by Confirmation of innocence of other people or by ascribing blame (Blaming the hearer). The presence of these two sequences, new for apologizing act, results from the legal context of the suicide notes, which can confirm or exclude the participation of the third person in the suicide act: (29) *To co zrobiłem to zrobiłem sam* (What I did I did it alone); (30) *Żeby było jasne nikt nie jest winny temu co się stało* (Just so it is clear that nobody is to blame for what happened); (31) *Zabiłaś Zabiłaś Zabiłaś Zabiłaś* (You killed You killed You killed You killed); (32) *Wiem że mnie systematycznie truli* (I know that they were systematically poisoning me). Ascribing responsibility in the suicide note depends not only on the offense but also on the recipient of the suicide note. It was noticed in research of blaming in suicide notes (McClelland, Reicher, Booth 2000, 235) and it is noticeable in PCSN, where the same author confirms that e.g. children are innocent but the wife or husband are guilty or a spouse is justified but the mother-in-law is blamed. Being focused on oneself, the author does not try to justify the action of the reader. Sometimes he exculpates only one person and blames others.

The strategy of Taking on Responsibility may take various forms:

Explicit self-blame, Lack of intent, Expression of self-deficiency, Expression of embarrassment, Self-dispraise, Justify hearer and Refusal to acknowledge (Suszczyńska 1999, 1096). Therefore, I checked which of them occur in suicide notes. From among the listed forms, two are the most distinctive: Explicit self-blame and Refusal to acknowledge guilt. Therefore, they can overlap with other forms.

Moreover, we observe that there is no form which expresses Lack of intent or Expression of self-deficiency. A suicide note is often the message about a decision already made and the authors emphasize that it was thought-out, which is expressed with words like: (33) *jestem trzeźwy i zdrowy rozum* (I am sober and of sound mind); (34) *jestem na tyle zdrowa że wiem co jest dla mnie dobre a co złe* (I am well enough to know what is good for me and what is bad). We find information about mental illness but it is brought up not as a part of the discussion of the intent but as an Explanation strategy: (35) *Jestem za słaby psychicznie* (I am too weak emotionally); (36) *jestem chory psychicznie* (I am mentally ill); (37) *jestem chory zacząłem tabletki na uspokojenie* (I am ill I started sedatives).

2.2.4. Expression of Embarrassment

Expression of embarrassment is not always present in suicide notes. Its presence depends on whether the author feels guilty or not. The sense of guilt can be expressed in words:

(38) *Przepraszam tak mi wstyd (I apologize I am so ashamed)*; (39) *Nie zasługuję na miano mężczyzny i ojca jest mi wstyd*; (40) *bardzo was przepraszam za ten wstyd (I don't deserve to be called a man and a father I am ashamed I sincerely apologize for the shame)*; (41) *To okropne, ale nie potrafiłam inaczej zrobić (It's horrible but I couldn't do it in any other way)*. While we notice blaming in suicide notes, the Expression of embarrassment disappears: (42) *Ten list możesz pokazywać wszystkim bo podobnej treści wysłałam w różne miejsca żeby narobić ci wstydu (You can show this letter to everybody as I sent letters of similar content in various places to embarrass you)*; (43) *Nie myślcie, że jestem winny i się powiesiłem Bardzo przykro i wstyd że powiesiliście się na mnie (Don't think I am to blame and I hanged myself Sorry shame on you that you hanged on to me – the Polish word used here carries also the idea of nagging)*. The last example shows how lack of Expression of embarrassment can be combined with Pretend to be offended strategy.

2.2.5. Self-Dispraise

Self-dispraise in suicide notes apparently co-occurs with Self-blaming or even mitigates self-blaming: (44) *Ja to też nie jestem święty (I am no saint)*; (45) *Nie daję rady i faktycznie może jestem tym samolubem (I can't manage and maybe I really am this selfish person)*; (46) *jestem bardzo zła (I am very bad)*; (47) *jestem niczym (I'm nothing)*; (48) *jestem szatanem (I am Satan)*; (49) *jestem tchórzem i nieudacznikiem (I am a coward and a failure)*; (50) *Jestem zerem kompletnym zerem!(I am a total zero)*.

2.2.6. Offer of Repair

In the investigated suicide note, there is no Offer of repair, due to the nature of the offense. However, sometimes the authors want to do something good for their family and friends and they promise to look after them after death: (51) *nie zapomnę o was (I will not forget you)*; (52) *będę czuwać nad wami z góry (I will watch over you from above)*; (53) *będę się wami opiekować w innym świecie (I will be looking after you in another world)*; (54) *duchem będę przy was (I will be with you in spirit)*.

This strategy of apologizing co-occurs with other positive actions for somebody like Last Will Instructions including donating possessions in suicide notes.

2.2.7. *Promise not to repeat Offense*

As death excludes the repetition of suicide the *Promise not to Repeat Offense* is unnecessary. Most likely, following the general convention of apologizing, the authors remind their readers that the suicidal death guarantees that no wrong will be done or repeated by the author. The strategy of the *Promise not to Repeat Offense* is used in suicide notes as authors apologize not only for suicide, but also for other acts preceding suicidal death: (55) *Nigdy już nikomu nie zrobię krzywdy (I will not hurt anybody again)*; (56) *Zawsze twierdziłem że nie chcę nikogo krzywdzić I dlatego zrobiłem to co zrobiłem (I have always said that I didn't want to hurt anybody And this is why I did what I did)*.

2.2.8. Request to Convey Apologies

It seems that the apologizing act requires direct face to face contact. Even if it is to take the written form, like a letter, it is expected at least to stay limited to one on one communication. This rule does not apply to suicide notes where we often see that one note includes a number of messages for different people. Therefore, in the suicide notes one finds numerous Requests to Convey the Apologies to others: (57) *Przepróś całą rodzinę i znajomych (Apologize to the whole family and friends)*; (58) *bardzo przepróście wszystkich za mnie (sincerely apologize to everybody for me)*; (59) *przepróś ode mnie tatę (apologize to dad for me)*. Most apologizing requests are made using IFIDs and only in rare cases do they include less typical strategies. One of those strategies is Explanation: (60) *Wytłumacz moim dzieciom (Explain it to my children)*; (61) *Powiedz mojej rodzinie, że to najlepsze co mogłam zrobić że tego chciałam (Tell my family that this is the best I could do that I wanted it)*; (62) *Bardzo bym chciała abys to zrozumiała i wytłumaczyła moim rodzicom (I would like it very much for you to understand it and explain it to my parents)*. The strategy of Request to Convey Apologies should be recognized as typical for apologizing in the suicide note genre.

3. Conclusion

The apologizing act in suicide notes is not a ritual. It is apparent in its developed structure with interpenetrating parts (strategies of apologizing) and in the overlapping of various speech acts in the genre of suicide note.

This is the reason why it is very difficult to separate apologizing strategies from other speech acts in suicide notes and to come up with the pragmatical quantitative data in the suicide note genre. Probably the final form of the suicide note is related to the attitude of the authors. He is focused on himself and it destroys the interpersonal interactions in the pragmatical activity. The effective apology is the accepted apology but the author of the suicide note does not care about it and he denies the recipient the opportunity to reply. The author knows the rules of apologizing but he adjusts them to his situation and needs.

The cultural, social and institutional dimension of the genre results in the change of the writers' goals where, when it comes to apologizing, they become limited to the use of a performative verbs, ascribing blame or self-blame and the remaining strategies are subordinate to them. It is necessary to look at suicide notes not only from the perspective of the genre but also from the perspective of the discourse. The suicide notes in the pre-suicidal discourse are directly preceded by an extended period of silence and this last statement is the accumulation of all communication which was blocked during that time. As a result, the authors try to realize all the goals in their final communication.

Abbreviations

CCSARP – Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns

PCSN – Polish Corpus of Suicide Notes

IFID – Illocutionary Force Indicating Device

Acknowledgements

Research project was funded by Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (2010-2012) - Project number: N N104 058439.

References

- Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, Olshtain, Elite, 1984. Requests and Apologies: A Cross Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics* 5(3), 196-213.
- Deutschmann, Mats, 2006. Social variation in the use of apology formulae in the British National Corpus. In: Renouf, A., Kehoe A. (Ed.), *The Changing face of Corpus Linguistics*, Amsterdam-New York, pp. 205-222.
- Holmes, Janet, 1990. Apologies in New Zealand English. *Language in Society* 19 (2), pp. 155-199.
- Huang, Yan, 2012. *The Oxford Dictionary of Pragmatics*. Oxford.
- Marcjanik, Małgorzata 1995. Funkcje komunikacyjne performatywu przepraszam. *Poradnik Językowy* 2, pp. 22-30.
- McClelland, Lynn, Reicher, Stephen, Booth, Nicholas, 2000. A Last Defence: The Negotiation of Blame within Suicide Notes. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 10, pp. 225-240.
- Meyerhoff, Miriam, 1999. Sorry in the Pacific: Defining communities, defining practices. *Language in Society* 28, 225-228.
- Ogiermann, Eva, 2009. *On Apologising in Negative and Positive Politeness Cultures*. Amsterdam.
- Oravec, Robert, 2004. Roots of discursive suicidology. *Horizons of Psychology* 13(1), pp. 151–156.
- Ożóg, Kazimierz, 1985. Przeproszenia w dzisiejszej polszczyźnie mówionej. *Język Polski* LXV, pp. 256-276.
- Van Leeuwen, Theo, 1993. Genre and Field in Critical Discourse Analysis: a Synopsis. *Discourse and Society* 4 (2), pp.193-223.
- Suszczyńska, Małgorzata, 1999. Apologizing in English, Polish and Hungarian: Different languages, different strategies. *Journal of Pragmatics* 31, pp. 1053-1065.
- Swales John., 1990. *Genre Analysis: English of Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge.
- Zgólkowie, Halina i Tadeusz, 1992. *Językowy Savoir-Vivre*. Poznań.
- Zaśko-Zielińska, Monika, 2013. *Listy pożegnalne: Wposzukiwaniu lingwistycznych wyznaczników autentyczności tekstu*. Wrocław.