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# The Role of Modifiers in Apologetic Discourse: English vs. Macedonian



УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ  
ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ

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# Speech acts - introduction

- all utterances in addition to their meaning, also perform specific acts via a specific communicative force of that utterance.
- Apologies are speech acts that express regret or remorse for an action or event that has caused harm or offense to another person.
- Apologies are a type of expressive speech act whose primary purpose is for a speaker to acknowledge a violation (real, potential, or perceived) of a social norm, expectation, or obligation, and to manage the resulting social consequences.

# Apologies

- ❑ **An apology is a speech act in which a speaker:**
  - Acknowledges a wrongdoing or offense and
  - Expresses responsibility, regret, or remorse,
  - With the intention of maintaining, restoring, or repairing social harmony.

- Universal acts;
- Multiple acts;
- Expressive acts;
- Acts of politeness;
- Culturally shaped acts;
- Acts with a social function.

# How do modifiers fit into the structure of an apology ?

- Modifiers are elements that modify the strength, tone, or socio-pragmatic force of the apology.
- They do not introduce new actions but adjust how the apology is interpreted.
- Modifiers can be grouped into: internal & external.

- ❖ **Central head act**  
the illocutionary force of the apology. (“I’m sorry.”)
- ❖ **Additions**
  - opening & closing acts.
  - expressions of responsibility, explanation, repair, forbearance, empathy.
- ❖ **Modifiers**
  - internal or external modifiers or overlay elements that modify the act.

# Types of modifiers

## Internal Modifiers

- These appear inside the central head act itself.
- They modify the illocutionary force of the apology.

## External Modifiers

- These occur outside the head act (before or after it).
- They modify the context rather than the IFID itself.

<b>Internal modifiers</b>	Upgraders	1	Openers	
		2	Intensifiers	
		3	Commitment upgraders	
		4	Expletives	
		5	Overstaters	
	Downgraders	Softeners	6	Downtoners
			7	Understaters
		Fillers	8	Hedge
			9	Appealers
			10	Cajole
			11	Subjectiviers
<b>External modifiers</b>		12	Alerters	
		13	Preparators	
		14	Grounders	
		15	Disarmers	
		16	Sweeteners	

# Methodology

## □ **Instrument:**

- Open-ended DCT.

## □ **Participants:**

- University students.
- Native speakers of English.
- Native speakers of Macedonian

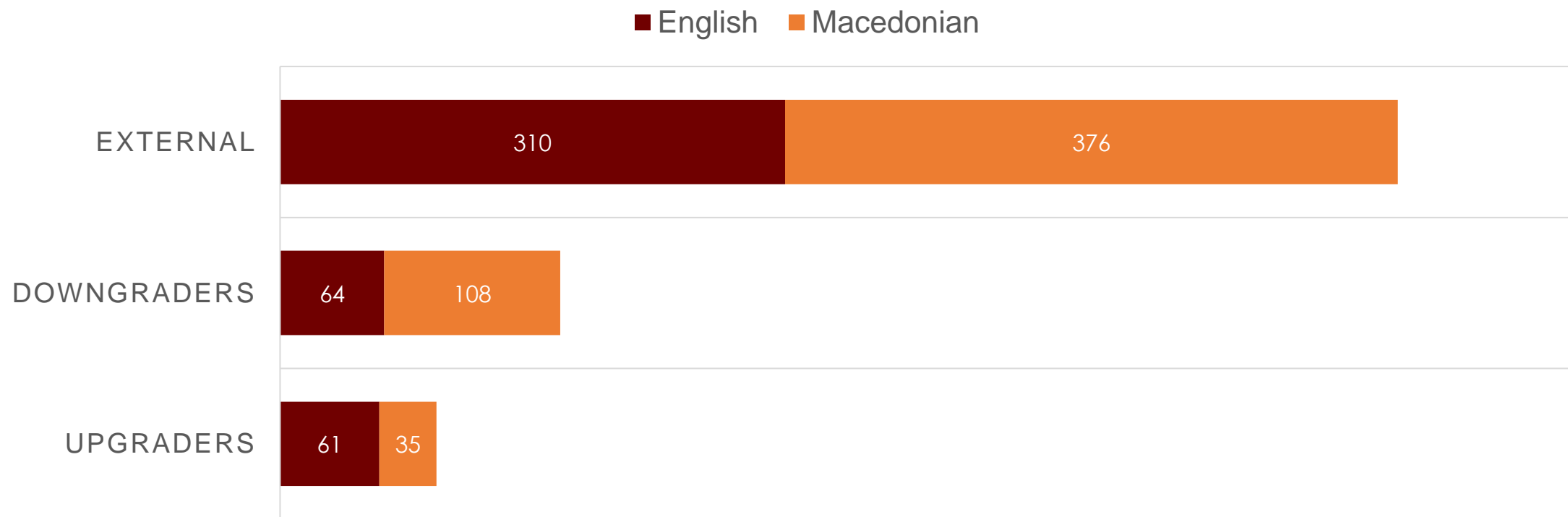
- Applied modifiers categorized through a mixed typology in relation to the obtained data.

## □ **Quantitative & Qualitative method of analysis.**

- Used to correlate the statistical data with the sociocultural features.

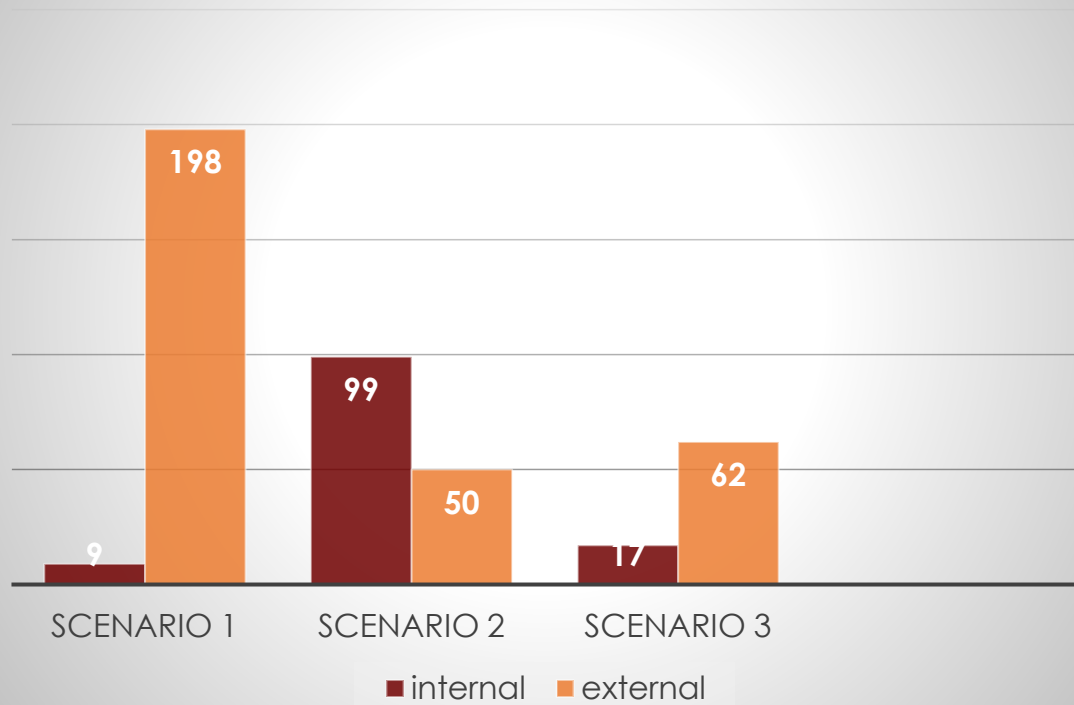
Speech act	Scenario	Social distance	Social status	Degree of imposition
<b>APOLOGY</b>	You mistake a stranger for your friend.	distant	neutral	Low severity
	You break your friend's charger.	close	equal	Medium severity
	You lose a book that your professor lent.	medium	unequal	High severity

# Overall results

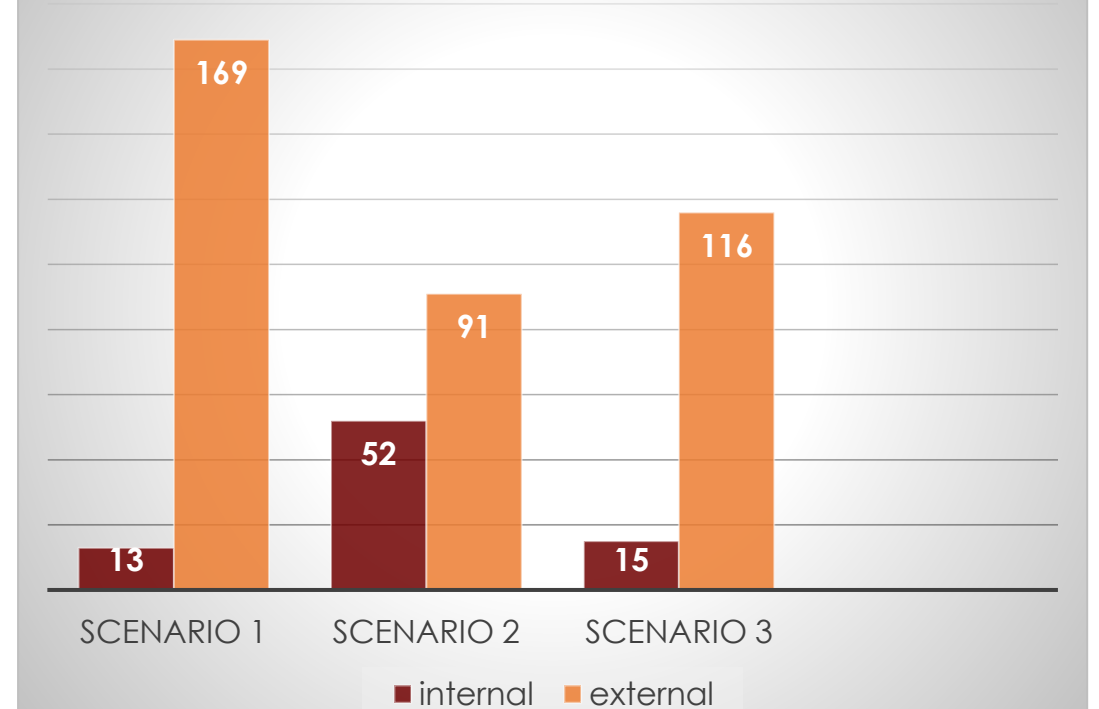


# Specific results

## English



## Macedonian



# Analysis

- external modifiers are more numerous than internal modifiers in both languages.
- Macedonian respondents generally use more modifiers than the American respondents.
- Macedonian apologies are filled with intensifiers, downtoners, alerters and **grounders**.
- American apologies are filled with: **disarmers** and alerters as external modification, downgraders and upgraders as internal modifiers.

## Examples:

- accidentally, unfortunately... (downtoners - softeners)
- **Sorry to bother, Oh sorry, Sorry... (disarmers)**
- Oh, Hey, Professor, Hi professor ... (alerters)
- Многу, премногу (intensifiers)
- Се извинувам, извини, Еј, Здраво, Професоре... (alerters)
- Ненамерно, случајно, несакајќи, (downtoners)
- **Имав мала незгода, сум ја изгубил, мислев дека, грешка... (grounders)**

# Discussion

- Both groups apply more external than internal modifiers in their responses.
- External modifiers are mostly used in S1 with **disarmers** as top strategy in EN responses and **grounders** in MK.
- Shift of pattern on S2 and raise in internal modifiers for both groups in the form of downgraders (downtoners in MK; understates for EN).
- Again external modification in S3 with alerters for EN and alerters + grounders for MK speakers.

# Summary

- **English apologies** are: externally modified to alert the hearer/listener for the forthcoming apology.
- internally modified to downtone the apology (with friends as interlocutors).
- The social distance influences the participants differently (EN – individualistic culture; MK – collectivist);
- Macedonian apologies are:
  - externally modified to alert the hearer and justify the apology.
  - internally modified to downtone the request.
  - Grounders are a characteristic feature (explanations and justifications to strangers).
  - Prefer positive politeness and directness.

# Concluding remarks

- Modifiers are used usually in a set mixing both internal and external modifiers with differences in the frequency of use.
- the variations that appear are due to the different influence of the social parameters over the respondents as part of a different type of cultures.
- the similarities outnumber the differences in the act of apologizing between the two cultural groups.