The purpose of this paper is to analyze constructions of the type Izvinit'sja by mne and Popit' by emu. How does the listener know whether they refer to the past (and hence are regrets or afterthoughts) or to the present (and hence are wishes, requests or suggestions) both in and out of context? There are a number of factors that come into play.

• The type of construction, i.e. affirmative vs. negative
• The choice of aspect, i.e. perfective vs. imperfective
• The type of verb, i.e. willful vs. non-willful; willful verbs may in turn be internal or external
• The person involved, i.e. 1st person vs. 2nd person or 3rd person
• The sentence stress, i.e. logical subject vs. verb

An action may be of such nature that its performance depends strictly on the will and desire of the Logical Subject (internal verbs), such as izvinit'sja or rasskazat', which are locutionary verbs of communication (in strict definition), and also podumat', porazmyslit' etc., which are mental verbs. Some physical activity verbs that are triggered by mental decision also belong here: udarit', otkazat'sja, bežat' and others.

In contrast there are actions (requests) that may (if accepted) involve some form of participation from another person (external verbs), such as popit', poexat'. And then there are actions that may (if requests) or may not (if internal) involve another participant’s actions, such as napisat’, pozvonit’ and others.

Some examples of non-willful verbs are vljubit'sja, umeret', etc.

The following are some examples that combine the various factors. For affirmative, perfective aspect:

-- The combination of an internal verb and 1st person with verb stress invariably means regret, hence a past event. (Mne by izvinit'sja. — ‘I should have apologized.’)
-- The combination of an internal verb and 2nd person with verb stress is more likely to mean suggestion, hence a future event, unless a counter-action is specified (Tebe by izvinit'sja — ‘you should apologize’)
-- The combination of an internal verb and 3rd person with verb stress is more likely to mean regret, hence a past event (Emy by podumat' — ‘he should have thought’).
-- The combination of an internal verb and 3rd person with Logical Subject stress, often supported by an interjection, is more likely to mean a wish, hence a future event (Vot emu by rasskazat' kak on rabotaet — ‘I wish he would tell us how he does it’).

On the other hand, for affirmative, imperfective aspect:

-- The internal verbs are most likely to combine with 3rd person and the verbs are typically reduplicated (Emu by žit' da žit’ — ‘He could have still lived a long time’); this refers either to future but obstructed potential or to a counterfactual, impossible wish.

Negative perfective is limited to fears of upcoming events and hence always refers to a future event (Ne zabolet' by — ‘I hope I don’t get sick’, Ne opozdat' by tebe — ‘I hope you are not late’).

The paper will present additional elements of the taxonomy.