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INTRA-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF REQUESTS IN MACEDONIAN

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Abstract

In this paper we analyse the speech act of requests in Macedonian. Speech acts are often used by Macedonian speakers to perform communicative functions in conversation. The main instrument that we used to gather data was a questionnaire with a non-probability sampling. The analysis of the results was done with a coding scheme based on the paper "Requests and Apologies: A Cross-Cultural study of Speech Act patterns (CCARP)" by Blum Kulka and Olshtain. The goals of the research are to examine the speech act of requesting in Macedonian, to explore the speech patterns, to define the strategies used in those patterns and explore the degree of their usage in different contexts.

Key words: *speech act, requests, speech patterns.*

The speech act of requests

The speech act of requesting is realized when the speaker verbalizes a wish that can be carried out by the hearer. It is a direct act with the purpose of making the hearer do something. The speaker believes that the hearer is able to perform the action. There are many factors that influence the speech act of requesting such as: age, gender, social distance, level of imposition, the degree of obligation etc. In order to minimize the factors that influence the speaker's request there are different strategies that can be employed.

According to the level of inference, all the strategies can be divided in three large groups which are the following: *explicit strategies*, *conventionally-indirect strategies* and *non-conventionally indirect hints*.

The explicit strategy is the most direct strategy and is usually realized by syntactic requests, such as imperatives or performatives. The conventionalized requests are polite realizations through conventional forms such as yes/no questions. The indirect hints are nonconventional and individual utterances, which act as requests in certain circumstances.

All of the strategies can be also divided into smaller groups that will be explored in detail later in the paper.

Another important characteristic of requests is that they are considered the most face threatening speech acts. Because it's an act that threatens the hearer's face, speakers tend to use various modification devices that can be also classified as part of the above mentioned strategies. However, the way of distinguishing all the types of strategies and devices is by dividing the request itself. Most of the requests can be divided into three parts: *address terms*, *head act*, *adjuncts*. Although some requests can lack the first or the last sequence, this differentiation helps us understand the form of each speech act and place it in the right group or subgroup.

Ех: Сара можеш ли да ме послужиш со твоите белешки, знаеш дека бев болен минатата недела.

Професоре, ќе ми дозволите ли да го продолжам рокот?

Request strategy types

The request perspective.

The speech act of requesting includes a reference that can depend on the speaker's perspective or point of view. There are four categories that we distinguish among:

Hearer oriented.

Ех: Би ве замолила доколку може Вие да го одржите тој говор.

Speaker oriented.

Ех: Ќе може ли да добијам запалка?

Hearer and speaker oriented.

Ех: Сакате ли да заминеме со вашиот автомобил и да си ги поделиме трошоците...

Impersonal request (use of people as neutral agents or passivation).

Ех: Еј Сара, не би било лошо тие пропуштени предавања да ги надополнам со твоите белешки.

Downgraders

- Understater (elements by means of which the speaker minimizes parts of the proposition).

Ех: Извинете професоре, бев многу болен и не успеав да завршам, ми треба уште малку време.

- Downtoners (elements by means of which the speaker minimizes the impact of his/her utterance is likely to have on the hearer, achieving

the modulation via devices signalling the possibility of non-compliance).

Ех: Дали би сакале ако не ви пречи и ако си одите дома да ме однесете и мене?

Upgraders

- Intensifiers (elements by means of which the speaker over-represents the reality denoted in the proposition).

Ех: Не знам како да ти објаснам, во фрка сум, немаш претстава мој драг пријателу, колку ќе ми значи ако ми излезеш во пресрет, итно ми требаат пази за да платам аванс...

Adjuncts to head act

- Checking on availability.
 - the speaker prefaces his/her main speech act with an utterance intended to check if the precondition necessary for compliance holds true.

Ех: Дали си заминувате дома? Дали може да ме префрлите и мене?

- Getting a precommitment.
 - the speaker precedes the act by utterance that can count as an attempt to obtain a precommitment.

Ех: Може ли да ве замолам нешто? Ако не пречам ве молам да ме превезете до дома.

- Grounder.
 - the speaker indicates the reasons for the requests.

Ех: За жал мојот автобус само што замина, па би ве замолила ако сакате да се вратам со вас, доколку не би ви пречело.

- Sweetener.
 - by expressing exaggerated appreciation of the hearer's ability to comply with the request, the speaker lowers the imposition involved.

Ех: Ве замолувам да ни укажете чест и задоволство со вашето присуство и одржувањето говор, ќе ни претставува големо задоволство на сите да ја

имаме можноста да ни кажете нешто повеќе за вашите ставови околу еколошката катастрофа.

- Disarmer.
- the speaker indicates his/her awareness of a potential offence, thereby attempting to anticipate possible refusal.

Ех: Уф, знам дека можеби е непогоден момент, но морав тебе да ти се обратам. Дали можеби имаш пари на заем?

The method used for data collection

Instrument

In order to define the strategies used in making requests and explore the degree of their usage in different contexts, we used a questionnaire. It consisted of six situations in which the setting and the interlocutors were described and the informants were asked to complete the discourse, and by that to elicit requests. The situations used were the following:

- postponing a project at university,
- asking a famous professional to give a speech,
- asking for a ride after a work meeting,
- requesting a favour from a stranger at a park,
- asking a friend for a favour,
- requesting money from an acquaintance.

The total number of informants was 24. They were professors at an Elementary school and at University aged 30-50. It was required of them to complete 6 discourses with an apology. How the procedure went and the analysis and the results are described in detail later in the paper.

Procedure

The analysis of the results was based on a coding scheme prepared in collaboration by the research team. The coding scheme consisted of categories and subcategories that were defined on the basis of general theoretical considerations as well as previous work by the members of the team. Furthermore the scheme was refined and modified to fit the data yielded in the target language. We used judgment samples and convenience samples i.e. non-probability sampling.

The results from the questionnaire

Situation 1: postponing a project at university.

In the first situation the interlocutors are a student and a professor; hence there is a social distance between them. This discourse was mostly hearer oriented and full of grounders and disarmers. It is important to note that this is the situation in which speakers used grounders the most. You can see the exact numbers from the analysis on the pie chart below.

Situation 2: asking a famous professional to give a speech.

This discourse was also mostly hearer oriented as you can see on the pie chart above. Speakers used down toners, grounders and pre-commitments. It is the situation in which speakers used sweeteners the most.

Situation 3: asking for a ride after a work meeting.

The strategy that was used the most in this situation was the checking on availability. Also the hearer oriented point of view and the speaker oriented point of view usage was very close.

Situation 4: requesting a favour from a stranger at a park.

In these situation the disarmers were used the most. So it seems that when the interlocutor is a stranger, a Macedonian speaker is most aware of a possible offence or refusal.

Situation 5: asking a friend for a favour.

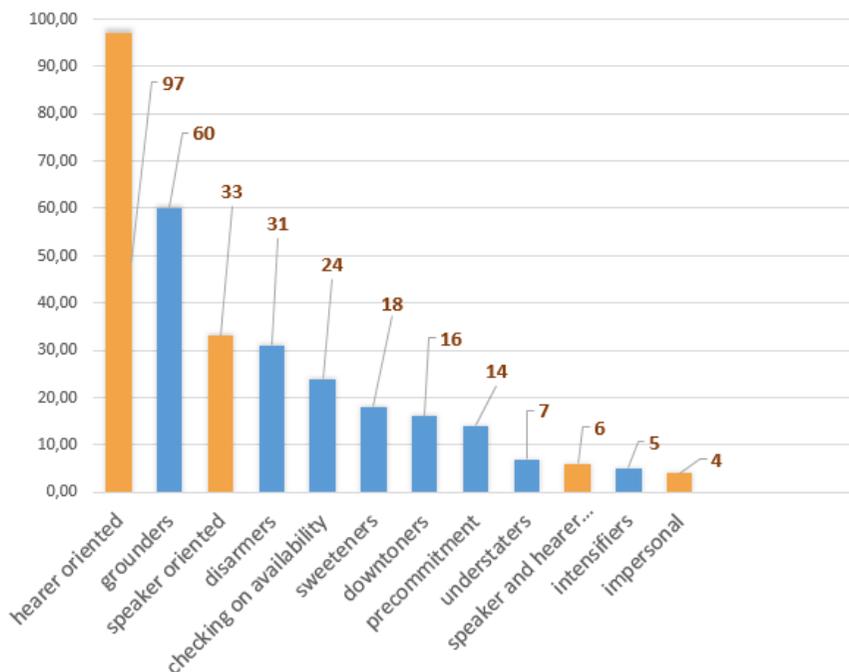
In this situation when our friend is our interlocutor, you can see that 21 of the informants from the total 24 used a hearer point of view. The requests were almost always direct and without much usage of the other strategies.

Situation 6: requesting money from an acquaintance.

In this situation the social distance between the interlocutors is very small. Here the hearer point of view was mostly used, and the grounders were the most present from the strategies.

Conclusion

On the chart below you can see the total results from the questionnaires with all of the situations. The types of perspective are coloured orange, while the other strategies are coloured blue.



The overall results show us that the speech act of requesting in Macedonian is mostly a direct hearer oriented question, and the impersonal perspective is rarely used.

What's interesting about Macedonian speakers is that they explain the reasons for their requests in any kind of situation regardless of the social differences between the speakers. Also disarmers were used almost always, but their usage depended on the social distance between the speakers. Sweeteners were very often present in the conversation with a famous person, but rarely appeared in the other situations.

References

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