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THE MAIN COMMUNICATION ELEMENTS OF THE SPEECH ACT OF APPROVAL

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the results of a pragmatic analysis of approval in the process of communication from a contrastive English – Polish – Russian perspective. The speech act theory, mainly in the form proposed by Searle (1969, 1976: 1–23) and his followers, serves as the theoretical background in this study. Searle introduced the distinction between speech acts: direct – the speaker's intentions can be recognised out of context – and indirect – communicational context is necessary for proper interpretation of the speaker's intentions (1975b: 59–82). He also suggested illocutionary force as the basis of speech acts typology, distinguished the illocutionary force of an utterance from its propositional context and specified twelve significant variations in which illocutionary acts differ (1975a: 344–367). For the needs of the present study, the aforementioned theoretical basis is implemented by the theory of interpersonal communication, as presented by Lanigan, with special interest devoted to such theory constructs as intention, punctuation, convention, and legitimation (1977: 66–83).

The meaning of approval

The pragmatic interpretation of approval is based on its lexical meaning – 'the belief that something or someone is good or acceptable, a good opinion of

someone or something, permission to do something, acceptance of an idea, action, plan, etc. often may suggest considerable esteem or admiration' (Grove 2008). Polish and Russian equivalents appear to have similar meanings. *Aprobata*: 1) 'uznanie czegoś za dobre, słuszne, godne poparcia i zgoda na to' (Szymczak 1978); *aprobata* 2) 'czyichś działań, planów lub czyjegoś stanowiska w jakiejś sprawie, to ich pochwała i przychylna zgoda na nie' (Bańko 2006). *Одобрение*: 1) 'признание хорошим, правильным; положительный отзыв, похвала' (Кузнецов 2014); 2) 'отзыв, выражающий похвалу, признание успеха' (Шведова 1998); 3) 'похвала, одобрительный отзыв' (Ожегов and Шведова 1998). Comparison of the aforementioned meanings allows us to use the term *approval* to describe the same phenomenon in the three languages. Further pragmatic study will support this decision or help to define restrictions in the range of equivalence.

Pragmatic functions present a specific arrangement of meaning and allow to reveal the speaker's intentions attached to an utterance. A statement can fulfil more than one goal, thus it can include more than one pragmatic function (Awdiejew 1983: 53–56). The meaning of approval consists of two basic elements: 1) positive evaluation and 2) consent. They both construct the pragmatic frame (Awdiejew 1983: 53; Hannay and Caro 2008: 60–61) of this speech act (Czapiga 2015: 85–86), which is used to examine whether an utterance can be recognised by the hearer as approval. Further conditions should be met to acknowledge that the utterance is a successful speech act. The speaker and the hearer should master the language they use in the conversation at least on basic level, they also should have adequate communicational competence. The utterance itself should be articulated (or written) in a way that allows the hearer to separate and recognise individual speech acts (Oishi 2007: 55–78; Sbisà 2009: 234–235).

Communication elements of approving utterances

Being a reactive act, approval is attached to a certain sphere of communication. It appears as a response to a previously occurring action (usually a verbal action) and goes ahead into the future, as its object needs consent in order to be implemented (usually by the hearer or by both – the speaker and the hearer[1]). Compare:

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[1] The speaker and the hearer are interchangeable roles in a dialogue structure. The present study concentrates on a particular point of the dialogue, thus in the present paper, to avoid ambiguity, the roles are attached to the interlocutors at the specific moment of the conversation. *Speaker* denotes the person uttering approval and *hearer* denotes the person who receives approval.

[1a] *'I get the picture, Gunny. Good work.'* Tony checked his watch. *'We have a few hours before we need to load our equipment. Let's grab some chow.'*
'Sounds great, sir. There's a great restaurant nearby that ships in genuine USDA prime, Iowa corn-fed beef.'
'You convinced me.' (L. Roberts)[2]

[1b] – *Nie bądź taka sztywna – poparł syna Jacek. – Po śniadaniu możemy spróbować po kawałku keksu, żeby zobaczyć, jak wyszedł. Przecież nie możemy zawozić Annie niesprawdzonego towaru.*
– **Ty to masz głowę, tato** – *roześmiała się Marta.* (K. Dunin)
'Don't be so prim and proper' Jack supported his son. 'We can try the fruitcake after breakfast, to check if it turned out good. We can't take Anna untested stuff.
'You've got your feet on the ground, dad' *laughed Marta.*

[1c] – *Родители уже старые, а я молодой. У меня профессия, я всё себе зарабо-таю.*
– **Правильно**, – *одобрила Людка. – Поведение настоящего мужчины…* (Л. Тока-рева)
'My parents are already old, I'm young. I've got a job, I will earn everything for my-self.'
'That's right,' *approved Ludka. 'Behaviour of a grown man...'*

In all three communication situations approval is a reaction to a future activity described in the previous utterance. The suggestion to go to the particular restaurant for lunch [1a], the proposal of tasting the baked cake [1b] and the idea of starting life on his own [1c] are all verbalised before the object is approved and, afterwards, fulfilled. What is crucial here is the fact that without positive evaluation and the consent of the speaker the hearer will not implement his / her idea. If the officer does not like the restaurant or beef, or does not want to go there at this time, and thus he does not approve this idea, the subordinates will not go to this restaurant for lunch. The same is true in the next two situations: if the speaker decides that it is not a good idea to eat a part of the cake she has just baked for her mother, her father and brother will not try it. If the mother-in-law negatively evaluates her daughter and son-in-law gaining independence, they will probably wait some time more to take this step.

It is by no means only speech acts expressed prior to the one under analysis that may become the object of approval. According to the lexicographic definition it can be *something* or *someone* (see the definitions above). It seems reasonable to assume that approval of a person is expressed in the light of this person's actions (in other words *permission to do something*). Further analysis of the lexi-

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[2] The material for the present survey has been gathered from modern literature. The names of the authors of the texts presented as examples are placed in brackets after each passage. Full bibliographical data of the texts is presented in bibliography.

cographical meaning allows us to specify the results of action that can be the object of approval: idea, action, plan, point of view in a particular matter.

The pragmatic study reveals more features. The first we must mention is that the idea, action, plan etc. are optional: it is not obvious that the action will take place and the speaker has the decisive power. The object is usually beneficial for the hearer; the speaker, by uttering his / her approval, agrees to share or take the whole responsibility for the action. Sometimes the action needs the speaker's involvement.

This analysis brings us to the next step – the phenomenon of power. It occurs that the speaker has some kind of social or situational dominance over the hearer. The first communication situation [1a] is unambiguous; it is clear that the officer dominates his subordinates. He has the power to accept the proposal or to reject it. What is more, this competence is unquestioned and its violation will bring serious consequences to the doer. A clearly different kind of competence is revealed in the second dialogue [1b]. The father occupies a higher social position than his daughter, but in the given situation the roles are reversed. The daughter, being in charge of preparing a cake for her mother, gains the right to decide about it. The third situation, [1c], is an example of an informal dialogue. The speaker occupies a culturally higher social position; such factors as age, sex and family relations (older woman, mother-in-law) place her in a favourable position in the given culture. Thus, she can express her opinion freely and the positive evaluation gives the hearer moral support for his further actions.

We can see that the social distance between the interlocutors may maintain different values. In formal situations, it is on a high level, but in informal conversations the dialogue participants may be in almost the same social position, usually with some contextual advantage of the speaker over the hearer in the given communication situation.

[2a] – *Я буду,* – *сказал Петька и наконец сделал шаг вперед.*
   – ***Наш человек,*** *– одобрил лейтенант Одинцов. – А то жмешься, как неродной. Иди, загляни на кухню. Дневальные, кажется, еще не ушли.* (А. Геласимов)
   'I will,' said Petka and made a step forward.
   'Our man,' approved lieutenant Odincov. 'Or else you sulk like a stranger. Go to the kitchen. Soldiers on duty, seems, haven't gone yet.

[2b] – *Nietrudno odgadnąć ukryty sens w tym rozumowaniu, jeśli tutaj naprawdę jeszcze uprawia się kanibalizm – odpowiedział Smuga. – Najlepiej ofiarujmy im jedną z naszych świń.*
   – ***W ten sposób będzie wilk syty i owca cała...*** *– zaaprobował decyzję Wilmowski.* (A. Szklarski)
   'It's not difficult to guess the hidden sense in this reasoning, if they still cannibalise here,' said Smuga. 'We'd better offer them one of our pigs.'

*'This way **both the wolves will have eaten much and the sheep will have not been touched**...'* Wilmowski approved the decision.

[2c] *When Judy returned, she had a large shopping bag. She happily spilled the contents out across the coffee table. There was a matching top and pants jogging outfit, pinkish with white trim, and a box containing charcoal gray jogging shoes. She looked to Albie for approval. 'Everything okay?' she asked.*
*'**Perfect**.' He nodded.* (D. Mellis)

The first dialogue [2a] is an example of a formal situation. A soldier (probably a private soldier) volunteers to take part in a dangerous mission. The lieutenant approves this decision and this utterance is necessary for the soldier's participation in the operation. The social distance is considerable in this situation: the speaker has an undeniable right to decide about the hearer, and the dialogue takes place in formal circumstances (soldiers are standing muster). It is one of the most formal situations with a clearly demonstrated social distance between the interlocutors.

Slightly different conditions can be observed in the second dialogue [2b]. Although the speaker and the hearer play determined social roles (the first is the head of an expedition, the second is one of the participants), the situation remains formal (during the expedition), but they are good friends. This weakening of formality is manifested in the way approval is voiced – the speaker uses a proverb, which is a less accurate way of expressing consent and needs a thread of understanding between the interlocutors.

The last situation [2c] is informal – a woman (the hearer) plans to start jogging. She buys all the gear needed for this sport and presents it to her friend (the speaker). His approval gives her motivation for further action (jogging). They both represent the same level of social hierarchy and the circumstances of the dialogue are unofficial (a restaurant), but the speaker is more experienced in this sport, thus he gains some temporal advantage over the hearer, who happens to be a novice in this area.

Conclusions

Approval tends to be the speech act of authority; the social rank of the speaker is usually higher than the hearer's. Only in rare cases is the situation reversed, when the speaker gains advantage in the specific communication context and temporarily his or her status becomes higher than the hearer's. This may happen when the speaker (being subordinate) is more experienced in a particular field than the hearer, or when the social distance is minimised by a particular politeness rule (e.g. when the speaker must devote some time or effort in fulfilling the object of approval) etc.

The analysis conducted in the present study allows us to postulate several conclusions. The first is that approval is a reactive speech act: it is a part of dialogue structure and appears as a response to a previously uttered statement including the object of approval. The core of this speech act consists of, in its dual nature, positive evaluation of the object of approval and consent for the object or its results. This frame has a direct impact on the elements of a communication situation – the speaker, the hearer, and the object of approval.

The nature of this speech act demands some disproportion in the social competence – the speaker stands higher in the social hierarchy or at least the particular context gives him or her an advantage over the hearer. The speaker has the power to decide about the object of approval – without their consent it cannot be implemented. The study revealed that the most popular objects are: ideas, actions, plans, points of view in a particular matter, or the people who introduced the idea.

The comparison of wider material in English, Polish, and Russian allows us to state that approval is an intercultural phenomenon, at least across the three cultures. Most of the differences concern the emotional load of utterances, being highest in the Russian material and lowest in the English one, but the three elements – the speaker, the hearer and the object – come under the same pragmatic rules in the aforementioned languages.

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Summary

The paper presents an analysis of certain communication elements of the utterances with the meaning of approval in Polish, Russian, and English. Most attention is paid to the speaker, the hearer, the relations between them, and the object of approval. It occurs that in informal situations there are almost no differences between the utterances under investigation, whereas in formal dialogues the choice of means of expression is usually based on the politeness rules, specific for a given culture.

Key words: approval, speech acts, dialogue elements, communication

PODSTAWOWE ELEMENTY MODELU KOMUNIKACJI W WYPOWIEDZIACH APROBATYWNYCH

Streszczenie

Niniejsza publikacja dotyczy analizy podstawowych elementów modelu komunikacji w wypowiedziach aprobatywnych w języku polskim, rosyjskim i angielskim. Szczególna uwaga została poświęcona nadawcy, odbiorcy i relacjom ich łączących oraz przedmiotowi aprobaty. Okazuje się, że w stylu nieformalnym analizowane zjawiska nie wykazują znaczących różnic w opisywanych językach, natomiast w stylu oficjalnym na dobór środków wpływa specyfika etykiety grzecznościowej charakterystycznej dla każdego języka.

Słowa kluczowe: aprobata, akty mowy, elementy modelu komunikacji