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ISSUES CONCERNING THE SPEECH ACT OF REPROACH:
ACTANTIAL STRUCTURE AND TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES

Современный синтаксис исследует структуру предложений в целом, в основном обращая внимание на их сложную структуру. Синтаксическая структура предложения определяется грамматическими свойствами его лексем, прежде всего их избирательными чертами. В настоящей статье затрагиваются такие понятия, как *актанты*, и *актантная структура речевого акта* порицания/упрека в русском и английском языках с точки зрения их облигаторных и факультативных актантов, а также проблемы перевода русского термина *порицание* на английский и румынский языки.

Being an indispensable branch of grammar, syntax centres on researching the grammatical structure of sentences, clauses, and phrases, in what manner it occurs and how it works. Consequently, it studies: (a) how words combine and make coherent sentences, (b) in what way two or more sentences/clauses combine into a sentence, (c) as well as the rules concerning the ways people communicate with

each other. In other words, syntax is “the way that words and phrases are put together to form sentences in a language; the rules of grammar for this” [1, p. 12]; and as D. Adger claims it “is the cognitive capacity of human beings that allows us to connect linguistic meaning with linguistic form” [2]. The syntax of the sentence has presented and continues to present interest for researchers in this field. It is obviously determined by a number of objective linguistic factors, including the structure of a sentence and its complexity. This article is just an attempt to refer to the actantial structure of the speech act of reproach with examples taken from Russian and English. We consider the proposed theme to be of interest because we do not have sufficient studies on the structure of speech acts from the perspective of their obligatory and facultative actors. The variants of speech expression, specific to the speech act of reproach in different contexts, have not been investigated either. Obviously, the model of any speech act is not an immutable ‘construction’, allowing for some variations in the transmission of the same content: paradigmatic variations and semantic changes.

The speech act of reproach. Reproaches are critical judgements with a regulating function by means of the addresser’s influence on the addressee in a certain communicative situation. They are complex, emotive-evaluative speech acts that through the expression of a negative judgement, can cause the listener’s state of emotional discomfort. We should make clear from the very beginning that in our research we use the term *reproach* as the equivalent of the Russian term *порицание* [3, p. 458] with a closer connotation to *упрек*, because it is stylistically more neutral, and can be equally used in practically all genres, as opposed to the word *reprimand* that is more formal and bookish.

To our best knowledge *reproach* better conveys the intended meaning of this notion, it expresses a larger number of meanings and implications with a wider range of levels of disapproval: from very small to very strong. We have used the following methodology to exemplify this decision. In order to identify the closest meaning we have translated *порицание* into English and then considered their English definitions taken from Oxford explanatory or online dictionaries. As a control tool we have double-checked the back translations of the found terms into the Russian [4] and Romanian [5] languages, to make sure we have understood them properly. For instance, we have identified seventeen translation variants of the term *порицание* into English [6, p. 73–78]:

1) **admonition** = admonishment – (formal) a warning to sb about their behaviour (p. 17); предостережение, увещевание, замечание, указание (p. 23), наставление, предупреждение; dojană, mustrare, admonestare (p. 11);

2) **animadversion** – criticism, a critical remark; порицание, критика (p. 37); imputare, critică, dojană, mustrare, dezaprobare, reproș, condamname (p. 24);

3) **blame** – responsibility for doing sth badly or wrongly; saying that sb is responsible for sth; (p. 116); act of criticising; порицание, упрек (p. 78), вина, обвинение; blam;

4) **censure** – (formal) strong criticism (p.188); the act of blaming, criticizing, or condemning as wrong; reprehension; порицание, осуждение (p. 117); criticare, condamname, blam (p. 111);

5) **condemnation** – an expression of very strong disapproval (p. 254); act of condemning or pronouncing to be wrong; осуждение, приговор (p. 151), неодобрительное мнение, порицание; dezaprobare, blamare, blam, înfierare, motiv de condamname, vinovăție, vină (p. 147);

6) **criticism** – the act of expressing disapproval of sb/sth and opinions about their faults or bad qualities; a statement showing disapproval (p. 298); критика (p. 171); crică (p. 173);

7) **dispraise** – reflection, reflexion; осуждение, неодобрение, порицание; dezaprobare, blam, dispreț (p. 214);

8) **deprecation** – (formal) words or behaviour that show you do not approve of somebody/something; act of deprecating; осуждение, неодобрение, возражение, протест (p. 195); dezaprobare, critică, obiecție (p. 197);

9) **disapprobation** – (formal) disapproval of sb/sth that you think is morally wrong (p. 355); неодобрение, осуждение (p. 205), резкое неодобрение; dezaprobare, blam, mustrare (p. 208);

10) **disapproval** – feeling that you do not like an idea, an action or sb's behaviour because you think it is bad, not suitable or going to have a bad effect on sb. else (p. 355); неодобрение, осуждение (p. 205); dezaprobare, reprobare (p. 209);

11) **reflection / reflexion** – no entry for this meaning in Oxford dictionaries; порицание (p. 587); blam, mustrare, dezaprobare (p. 598);

12) **reprehension** – (formal) morally wrong and deserving criticism; (p. 1082); порицание, осуждение (p. 595); blam, mustrare (p. 604);

13) **reprimand** – to tell sb officially that you do not approve of them or their actions (p. 1083); выговор, замечание (p. 595); mustrare, dojană, ceartă, observație (p. 604);

14) **reprobation** (formal or humorous) – a person who behaves in a way that society thinks is immoral (p. 1083); порицание, осуждение (p. 595); dezaprobare (p. 604);

15) **reproach** – the expression of disapproval or disappointment [7, p. 1495]; упрёк, попрек, укор (p. 595); imputare, reproș (p. 604);

16) **reproof** – (formal) blame or disapproval (p. 1083); порицание, выговор, укор, упрек (p. 595); reproș, dojană, observație (p. 604);

17) **reproval** – sth that you do not approve of (p. 1083); порицание, выговор; mustrare, dojeană, ceartă, condamna e unei fapte (p. 604).

With such an extremely wide range of meanings, it is difficult to find the exact equivalent of *порицание* in another language, due to its position on the scale of measuring the intensity of the negative evaluation that depends on the type of “evil” and the “evil” done, and also because its semantic field is so wide. All things considered, we dare affirm that it conveys a negative reaction of disapproval to somebody's activity, the manifestation of disapproval and criticism of something wrong, be it performance or message. In our opinion the term *reproach* fits our research frame best.

A c t a n t. The specialized literature we have consulted shows that the concept of actant is fundamental to linguistic theory. However, it has not been sufficiently investigated yet and, consequently, discussions are often confusing, moreover, the used concepts and terms are often unclear, because, as I. Melčuk (2004) states: “the same concepts are designated by different terms, and the same term is used for different concepts” [8]. The term *actant*, which literally means ‘that accomplishes or undergoes the action’ [9, p. 505] was first introduced in the linguistic use in 1959 by the French researcher L. Tesnière [10, p. 102]. In his view it labels a syntactic function that can be subject or object. More than a few attempts have been

made by linguists to study the given concept. Such researchers as Allerton (1982), Apresyan (1974), Boguslavskii (1985), (1990), Bonami (1999), Fillmore (1968), Grimshaw (1990), Helbig (1992), Lazard (1994), Lehmann (1991), Mel'čuk (1974, 1984, 1988, 1999, 2004), Mosel (1991), Müller-Gotama (1994), Paduceva (1998, 2002), Plank (1990), Raxilina (2000), Sirota and Varzari (2017), Somers (1987), Wechsler (1995), Žolkovskiy, etc. have come up with more hypotheses and ideas on the given theme. Indisputably, the literature on actants is immense and often confusing. It is interesting to study and compare the definitions of the term under study. It is regarded as: “a noun phrase functioning as the agent of the main verb of a sentence” [11]; “a noun or noun phrase involved in the action expressed by a verb; (in literary theory) a person, creature or object playing any set of active roles in a narrative” [7, p. 16]; a concept “that designates the elements involved in the process, either persons or things, and which exists only via the semantic role played by the participant in the process, each role depending on the semantic-syntactic structure of verb” [12, p. 20]. We tend to mention that the number and the composition of actants in a sentence or communicative situation vary significantly depending on the objectives of the description and its degree of provided details.

Actants have been researched and described from different perspectives, for instance: according to their grammatical functions: semantic and syntactic; according to their chronological place in the sentence: the first, the second, the third; depending on their connection to the verb: obligatory and facultative. It is important to emphasize that the division of actants into obligatory and facultative depends on their constructive meaning in the sentence. Starting from this idea, we can state that an obligatory actant is indispensable part of the sentence structure having an important a constructive task. In the case of its omission, the sentence loses its meaning, or changes its denotatory ratio [13, p. 7–8]. At the same time, as I. Testeletz declares that there are a number of roles, usually included by linguists in the universal set of languages of the world [14, p. 190–213]. Consequently, we can outline several roles actants have got: **agent, patient, object, theme, experiment, source, location, destination**, etc. For example:

<i>Я</i>	<i>осуждаю</i>	<i>Вас, молодой человек,</i>	<i>за такое безобразное поведение</i>	<i>в общественном месте.</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>condemn</i>	<i>you, young man,</i>	<i>for this disgraceful behaviour</i>	<i>in a public place.</i>
Actant-1 AGENT Obligatory	predicate	Actant 2 PATIENT Obligatory	Actant 3 OBJECT Obligatory	Actant 4 LOCATION Facultative

Lazard (1998) claims “The place actants occupy in the clause constituent order is equally relevant, depending on the whether the language in question has a constituent order which is rightly agreed to, or, on the contrary, is fairly free. The main positional criteria for defining actants is their position in relation to the verb, as well as in relation to the beginning and the end of the sentence” [15, p. 71]. It is well-known that in English, an average sentence will have the format subject-verb-object. In Russian word order in a simple sentence has more choices. The subject-verb-object format works perfectly well in Russian, though other options are also possible without changing the meaning. To summarize: though

word order in English and Russian often differs, we can see from these examples that the number and the place of actants coincides. In terms of obligatory and facultative actants, the distinction of the actants in our examples can be analysed as follows: the Agent, the Patient and the Object are of paramount importance in conveying the meaning of the sentence – without them the message will not be clear. On the other hand, the Location is ranked as a facultative actant, as without it the sentence does not lose its intended message and it is perfectly clear what it is about. Let's consider other examples of reproaches.

1. *Abigail, I find it hard to believe that you, with your university background, could make your best friend cry.*

1. *Эйбигел, мне трудно поверить, что ты, с твоим университетским образованием, смогла заставить своего лучшего друга плакать.*

2. *What are you doing, Andy? How could you dare contradict everybody in such a manner?*

2. *Что ты делаешь, Энди? Как ты посмел таким образом всем противоречить?*

In the first example there are practically no lexemes that would express a reproach semantically. The main load is 'carried' by the lexeme *hard* 'трудно' which, in combination with *to believe* 'поверить', becomes an obligatory actant. As for the second example, the reproach is expressed by the verb combination *dare contradict* 'посмел противоречить' that are obligatory actants. The expression *in such a manner* 'таким образом' has got the role of a facultative actant.

Deciding on the English equivalent of the Russian term *порицание* turned out to be rather challenging, as it expresses a broad range of meanings. Though the term *reprimand* seems more suitable at first sight, in our view, *reproach*, can be regarded as an umbrella term that covers nearly all the meanings, as *reprimand* is more bookish and official. We assume that reproaches are specific speech acts with a complex intentional content regardless of the context, being a considered as a "fusion" of reproach, accusation, and reprimand, which integrate the expression of disapproval and the impact on the addressee's emotional state. It is evident that in the English language the intention of the speech act of reproach is generally "coded" at the cognitive level, while in Russian, the emotional component of this speech strategy can be considered its key element. We also tried to identify the actantial structure of the reproach under study, and so far, came to the conclusion that in terms of obligatory and facultative actants the structure coincides in both languages. By no means do we affirm that this is a stable state of things. We intend to further investigate this issue and possibly identify other actantial models.

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The article touches upon such notions as actants, the actantial structure of the speech act of reproach in Russian and English, in terms of their obligatory and facultative actants. It provides information about the translation challenges of the Russian term *прицание* into English and Romanian.