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## A STUDY OF GRATITUDE RESPONSES (BASED ON MODERN ENGLISH FICTIONAL DISCOURSE)

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*The given article focuses on a contrastive study of illocutionary aims and perlocutionary effect of Gratitude Speech Act in Modern English Fictional Discourse. The speech episodes for the investigation have been chosen from modern English novels and make up 1600 communicative exchanges in which characters express different types of gratitude. Determination of the pragmatic properties of Gratitude Speech Act has been enabled due to appliance of the contextual-interpretational method. Furthermore, the article includes descriptions of communicative situations with gratitude expressed in order to reveal the speakers' implicit and explicit intentions, their background knowledge, presuppositions and frames of expressing thanks. The author of the article offers the definition of Gratitude Speech Act, referred to as the feeling of appreciation based on positive evaluation of addressee's actions. Gratitude Speech Act combines the features of behabitives (by J. Austin), expressives (by J. Searle) and convivialities (by G. Leech). This allows to regard it as the illocutionarily syncretic speech act as it realizes several illocutions at the same time. Gratitude Speech Act illocutions can be major and minor which depends on extralinguistic conditions of communication. The present article also describes a row of illocutionary aims of Gratitude Speech Act. Moreover, the perlocutionary effect of gratitude is outlined. The author pays attention to felicity conditions of Gratitude Speech Act realization as well as to its impact upon the addressee. Taxonomy of gratitude responses is offered. According to the character of expression, speech acts-responses to gratitude can be verbal (86.8%), non-verbal (3.8%) and mixed (9.4%). According to the expressiveness degree, gratitude responses can be either of formal or of expressive-evaluative character. According to the functional-semantic criterion, we offer to single out the following speech acts-responses to gratitude: 1) acceptance of gratitude; 2) gratitude "rejection"; 3) gratitude devaluation; 4) non-acceptance of gratitude.*

**Key words:** behabitive, expressive, gratitude, illocutionary aim, perlocutionary effect, Speech Act Theory, speech act.

### **Ківенко Інна. Дослідження реплік-реакцій на мовленнєвий акт подяки (на матеріалі сучасного англомовного художнього дискурсу)**

*Ця стаття являє собою порівняльне дослідження іллокутивних та перлокутивних цілей мовленнєвого акту подяки у сучасному англомовному художньому дискурсі. Матеріалом дослідження слугують мовленнєві епізоди, вибрані шляхом суцільної вибірки із сучасних англомовних романів, чисельність яких становить 1600 одиниць. Встановлення прагматичних властивостей мовленнєвого акту подяки виявляється можливим завдяки контекстуально-інтерпретаційному методу. Насамперед у статті описано комунікативні ситуації висловлення подяки з метою розкриття імпліцитних та експліцитних намірів комунікантів, їхніх фонових знань, пресупозицій та рамок вираження подяки. Далі запропоновано визначення мовленнєвого акту подяки як почуття вдячності, що виникає на основі позитивної оцінки дій адресата до адресанта подяки. Подяка вбирає у себе властивості бехабітивів (за Дж. Остіном), експресивів (за Дж. Сьорлем) та конвівіалів (за Дж. Лічем), що дозволяє розглядати його як іллокутивно синкретичний мовленнєвий акт, який одночасно реалізує кілька іллокутивних цілей. Останні поділяються на головні та другорядні залежно від екстралінгвістичних умов комунікації. Чітко окреслена дефініція мовленнєвого акту подяки дозволяє встановити його перлокутивний ефект. У статті також звертається увага на умови успіху реалізації мовленнєвого акту подяки та його вплив на адресата. Запропонована таксономія реплік-реакцій на мовленнєвий акт подяки. Залежно від характеру вираження репліки-реакції на подяку можуть бути вербальними (86,8%), невербальними (3,8%) та змішаними (9,4%). За ступенем експресивності вони поділяються на формальні та оцінно-експресивні. З точки зору функціонально-семантичного критерію репліки-реакції на подяку диференціюються на: 1) прийняття подяки; 2) «відхилення» подяки; 3) девальвація подяки; 4) неприйняття подяки.*

**Ключові слова:** бехабітив, експресив, іллокутивна ціль, мовленнєвий акт, перлокутивний ефект, подяка, Теорія мовленнєвих актів.

**Introduction.** Gratitude speech act is considered to be one of the most commonly used speech acts in everyday interaction [1; 2]. We express gratitude through the words of *thanks*, *praise* or *appreciation* which we sometimes do not even notice pronouncing.

Recent studies show that gratitude is mainly regarded as the subject of numerous investigations in the field of positive psychology. Fostering gratitude in adolescents helps to reduce materialism and contributes to developing generosity and charity in them [3].

Gratitude as a life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in life decreases the risk for developing mental disorders and depression [4].

Moreover, gratitude interventions employed in clinical-care have consistently shown benefits not only to psychological well-being of patients, but to their physical health as well. Improvements in sleep, blood pressure, asthma control and eating behaviour obviously demonstrate the efficacy of gratitude interventions on health outcomes.

Thus, gratitude can be regarded as a speech act of great social significance. Nevertheless, apart from psychologists, gratitude draws much attention of linguists as well.

In the context of foreign language learning, it is essential to acquire linguistic and pragmatic competence to avoid misunderstanding and use the language effectively. From the fact that thanking is implemented by means of standardized routines, learners should know the semantic formulas needed in thanking situations, and they have to understand the appropriate time to use these formulas [5].

In works on pragmatics, gratitude is referred to different classes of speech acts. In J. Austin's taxonomy it belongs to the group of behabitatives [6]. J. Searle [7] defines gratitude as an expressive, or the performance of an action by a speaker on a past act done by a hearer for whom it is beneficial. In G. Leech's classification [8], gratitude functions as a convivial, so its illocutionary goal is to create a friendly and polite atmosphere. From the point of view of Politeness Theory, gratitude is classified as a face threatening act in which the speaker feels obliged to acknowledge a debt to the hearer [9].

The importance of gratitude is undeniable: used appropriately, gratitude expressions provide feelings of warmth and solidarity among

interlocutors [2]. Nevertheless, the responses to gratitude have received relatively little sustained attention among scientists. This fact defines the *relevance* of our research.

**Materials and methods.** The *object* of our investigation is Gratitude Speech Act. The *subject* of the study includes the integral research into the illocutionary aims and perlocutionary effect of Gratitude Speech Act in Modern English fictional discourse.

The major *purpose* of the paper is to study speech acts-responses to gratitude and classify them.

To achieve the purpose of the study the following *tasks* have been resolved:

- to analyse the notions “illocution” and “perlocution”;
- to establish the difference between illocution and perlocution;
- to outline the illocutionary aims of Gratitude Speech Act;
- to draw up the perlocutionary aims of Gratitude Speech Act;
- to identify the felicity conditions of Gratitude Speech Act realization;
- to offer the classification of speech acts-responses to gratitude.

To meet the tasks identified above, the material under analysis has been chosen from the texts of modern English novels. It comprises 1600 speech episodes representing pragmalinguistic situations in which fictional discourse characters express different types of gratitude.

To fulfil the tasks and to achieve the purpose of our investigation, taking into consideration the theoretical background of the research and the pragmatic aspect of speech episodes containing Gratitude Speech Act, the general scientific and special linguistic methods have been used. Among **general scientific methods**, the following ones have been applied: *the method of synthesis and analysis* that contributed to the holistic research of the fictional discourse, as well as the investigation of certain communicative exchanges which include Gratitude Speech Act; *the method of observation* that promoted revealing special features of the data studied; *the descriptive method* helped to identify variant and invariant characteristics of the material researched. Such **special linguistic methods** have been used: *the contextual and interpretational method* that was helpful for identifying the pragmatic properties

of Gratitude Speech Act, the communicants' implicit and explicit intentions, presuppositions, their background knowledge and frames of expressing gratitude; *the method of component analysis* promoted establishing language means for expressing gratitude.

**Discussion.** The central place in speech acts investigations belongs to illocution. It is the illocution which serves the basis for speech acts taxonomies suggested by J. Austin, J. Searle and their followers. According to J. Austin's definition, "illocution is an act done in saying something" performed simultaneously with locution, i.e. "an act of saying something" [6, p. 122]. Illocutionary act is the initial stage of any speech act as it is related to the speaker's communicative intention. Moreover, it joins the speaker's purposefulness with the propositional content of a speech act, thus, influencing the addressee in a certain way [8, p. 58–60]. In other words, it is due to the illocution that the speech act becomes an action.

The essence of the illocutionary act is reflected in a speech act as its illocutionary force or illocutionary function (or illocutionary or pragmatic meaning according to L. Bezugla). Here belongs a row of components such as awareness, purposefulness (i.e. the presence of the illocutionary aim), conventionality (adequacy of generally accepted rules of using lingual signs), way of achieving the aim, intensity of the illocutionary force, conditions of normal entering and coming out, sincerity criterion for the speaker and the hearer, efficiency and felicity conditions [7, p. 162–167; 10, p. 132].

Illocutions cannot be true or false as propositions; they can be either felicitous or infelicitous [6]. If the addressee hasn't perceived the speaker's illocutionary aim adequately, then the illocutionary act of the latter turns out to be infelicitous. For the illocutionary act to be the act of this or that kind, it has to meet the felicity conditions [7, p. 151]. These conditions describe conventions according to which utterances belong to some certain illocutionary kind.

As for "perlocution" or "perlocutionary act", this notion is regarded as the most problematic among all speech act notions, because the role of perlocution has always been described superficially. Perlocution is often metaphorically referred to as "the Achilles' heel" in Speech Act Theory [11; 12, p. 89]. At the beginning of the so called "pragmatic boom" in linguistics

researchers emphasized the inconsistent definition of the "perlocutionary act" made by J. Austin himself [13]. Unclearness of this notion evoked numerous disputes which have been lasting until now.

To interpret "perlocutionary act" adequately, Ukrainian scientist L. Bezugla offers to study a speech act from the viewpoint of the observer after it has already been performed [10, p. 122]. Interesting observations are made by Eyer who emphasizes the existence of "the Speech Act Theory *in actu* and the Speech Act Theory *post festum*". The first one comes as the answer to the question "What is the speaker doing now?" whereas the second one results from the question "What has the speaker done?" [14, p. 16]. In case of *in actu* the observer doesn't know if there will be any influence; in the situation of *post festum* he certainly knows the impact result. The case *post festum* is relevant for perlocutionary analysis. Analysing the already performed speech act, the linguist can clearly evaluate the situation which gives the chance to study all the aspects of a speech act.

The performed speech act can be either felicitous or infelicitous. In the first case the perlocutionary aim is achieved (i.e. the speaker influences the addressee in this or that way), and then the perlocutionary act occurs which the speaker performs realizing certain locution and illocution. In case of infelicitous realization of a speech act, the perlocutionary aim is not achieved. Then we deal with a perlocutionary attempt of the speaker, not with the perlocutionary act [10, p. 139]. Success or failure of the realized Gratitude Speech Act can be judged by the perlocutionary effect which is reflected in the addressee's responses.

Thus, perlocution (or perlocutionary act) is the intentional felicitous influence of the speaker on thoughts, feelings and deeds of the addressee with the help of locutionary and illocutionary acts. Nevertheless, perlocution is not equal to the responsive speech act of the addressee. According to L. Bezugla, perlocutionary act is a part of the speaker's speech act [10, p. 122].

Performing speech actions, the speaker sets some certain goal which is related to expressing his intention and influencing his partner on communication, the so-called perlocutionary aim. According to this aim and taking into consideration the discourse context, the illocutionary aim of the speaker is formed.

Further, we make an attempt to outline the differences between the illocutionary aim and the perlocutionary aim.

Unlike the perlocutionary aim, the **illocutionary aim**:

- is restricted by the speaker;
- answers the question “What am I doing on pronouncing this utterance?”
- has the explicit performative formula: “By pronouncing this, I inquire / ask for / warn / congratulate...”;
- consists in the speaker’s attempt to perform certain speech action.

As for the **perlocutionary aim**, it:

- is targeted at the addressee and / or the third person;
- answers the question “What do I want to achieve by pronouncing this?”;
- has the explicit formula “By inquiring you / asking you for / warning you / congratulating you..., I want to surprise / delight / persuade / deceive you ...”;
- consists in the speaker’s attempt to influence the addressee somehow, or to weaken the possible impact on the hearer / the third person [10, p. 138].

Together the illocutionary aim and the perlocutionary aim make up the speaker’s intention. Intention and discourse context are essential for choosing lingual means which realise the locution that in its turn helps the speaker realise his ideas/thoughts.

To identify the illocutionary aims and the perlocutionary aims of Gratitude Speech Act, it is necessary to define the status of Gratitude Speech Act in different taxonomies of illocutionary act.

The **behabitive** essence of Gratitude Speech Act, outlined by J. Austin, means that the illocutionary aim of Gratitude Speech Act implies the response to the addressee’s behaviour or actions and revelation of a man’s personality and his attitude to other people. In this case, Gratitude Speech Act is regarded as a positive reaction to a person’s deeds: the addresser expresses gratitude to the addressee for his actions that the addresser considers useful for himself.

The illocutionary aim of gratitude as an **expressive** (according to J. Searle) or **satisfactive** (according to J. Wunderlich) consists in expressing the addresser’s positive emotional state specified in the sincerity condition about the addressee’s kindness towards him.

Gratitude Speech Act as a **convivial** (according to G. Leech) reveals its phatic nature. Thus, it is targeted at realization of such perlocutionary aims as establishing social contact, supporting harmonious and conflict-free communication, maintaining social balance. So, gratitude serves as a speech formula of social etiquette. Absence of gratitude is perceived painfully during interpersonal communication as there occurs devaluation (or depreciation) of the addressee’s kindness and benevolence which may provoke conflict.

The behabitive, expressive and phatic essence of Gratitude Speech Act is determined by some certain communicative situation of expressing gratitude. Gratitude Speech Act is considered to be a **syncretic** speech act as it simultaneously realizes several **illocutionary aims**, among which major and minor illocutions are distinguished that can be either foregrounded or backgrounded in a particular communicative exchange. So, the **illocutionary aims** of Gratitude speech act are:

- to express the speaker’s feeling of being grateful for the addressee’s kindness towards him;
- to give positive evaluation of the addressee’s actions / deeds as a reward or inducement;
- to reveal the addresser’s positive emotions induced by the addressee’s actions;
- to acknowledge the service received and to admit oneself to be a debtor;
- to pay off a debt for the addressee’s kindness or for the service received verbally or by means of actions.

The major **perlocutionary aims** of Gratitude Speech Act are as follows:

- to make the addressee feel comfortable with the speaker and set him for the harmonious flow of communication;
- to evoke positive emotions and good attitude towards the addresser in the addressee;
- to persuade the addressee of returning him the debt for his kind deeds / behaviour towards the addresser.

As a result, we come to the conclusion that gratitude is a feeling of being grateful which appears on the basis of positive evaluation of the action performed by the addressee. The addresser of Gratitude Speech Act performs a row of illocutionary aims: he expresses his gratitude to the addressee for his deeds and positively evaluates them; he reveals his own



positive emotional state; the speaker admits himself to be a debtor and he intends to pay off his debt either verbally or by means of actions. *Determination of the major illocutionary aim depends on the extralinguistic context whereas the perlocutionary aims of the speaker are always constant*: they are targeted at setting the addressee for the harmonious flow of communication and persuading him of returning the debt, i.e. gratitude for what he has done.

Our next task is to describe the perlocutionary effect of Gratitude Speech Act and determine the speech acts that justify felicity / infelicity of Gratitude Speech Act realization.

As Gratitude Speech Act belongs to ritual speech acts, it is performed within the frames of certain conventional procedure. The major felicity condition of its realization is the knowledge of relevant cultural factors for this procedure. The communicatively significant information of any kind that is related to the circumstances of expressing gratitude, implies the communicants' expectation standards which define strategies of their conversational behaviour in each situation of speech interaction.

Another felicity condition of Gratitude Speech Act realization implies the addressee's benefactive actions and the addresser's assurance about it [15].

Following these two conditions makes Gratitude Speech Act felicitous. But defining felicity or infelicity of the already performed speech act is possible due to the perlocutionary effect which is reflected in the addressee's responses.

In our investigation we offer the following classification of speech acts-responses to gratitude which is based on the following criteria:

- according to the character of expression: verbal / non-verbal / mixed;
- according to the degree of expressiveness: formal / evaluative expressive;
- from the viewpoint of the functional and semantic criterion.

According to the character of expression speech acts-responses to gratitude can be verbal, non-verbal and mixed.

Verbal response, which signifies acceptance / non-acceptance of gratitude turns out to be the most widespread and makes up 86.8% of our experimental material. Verbal reaction to gratitude is observed in the following example:

*“Thanks,” she said, “for everything”.*

*“You’re welcome”* [16, p. 39].

Non-verbal reaction to gratitude occurs only in 3.8% of the material researched. As a rule, non-verbal response is expressed either by kinesic (smile, closed eyes, tears, so on) or tactile (hugs, shaking hands, etc.) means. The examples below illustrate this:

*– I got the Judy Bridgewater tape out from its little bag and gave it a good look-over. “Thanks for buying this for me”, I said.*

*Tommy smiled* [17, p. 177] (kinesics).

*– “Do you remember the way I was then?”, she asked, with a little grimace and looking, for the moment, just like her brother. <...> “Of course you do. You saved my life. I don’t think I’ll ever be able to repay you for all you did for me then.”*

*I squeezed her hand* [18, p. 49] (palpability).

In the first example the response to gratitude is expressed by the smile; in the second one it is squeezing hands.

Combination of verbal and non-verbal means serves as a sign of intensified perlocutionary effect in 9.4% of the experimental data. Such a mixture reveals sincere feelings that the addressee experiences towards the addresser of gratitude.

According to the degree of expressiveness, the speech acts-responses to gratitude can be formal and expressive-evaluative.

The *formal character* of speech acts-responses to gratitude is observed in situations when gratitude is expressed for minor services, help to unknown people, informing as well as in answer to compliment, praise, approval, etc. Such reactions preserve the positive flow of communication.

The speech acts-responses to gratitude of *expressive-evaluative character* are observed in situations when the addresser expresses gratitude for the actions he considers beneficial for himself. The addressee's positive reaction contributes much to supporting social balance between the communicants and continuing harmonious speech interaction. The expressive-evaluative character of speech acts-responses to gratitude is achieved due to different lingual means that we divide into two groups.

The first group includes the negative particle *not*, negative and indefinite pronouns *no / nothing / anything* that devalue services rendered by the addressee as he either enjoyed

doing something for the addresser or his services did not require much strength on his part.

The second group of lingual means that form speech acts-responses to gratitude of expressive-evaluative character comprises evaluative adjectives *good, great, happy, kind, brave, big, little* (its superlative degree *the least*), adverbs *most* and *at all*.

According to the functional and semantic criterion, the speech acts-responses to gratitude are divided into:

- 1) responses that accept gratitude;
- 2) responses that “reject” gratitude;
- 3) responses that devalue the stimulus of gratitude;
- 4) responses that do not accept gratitude.

The first group of responses that testify acceptance of gratitude makes up 60.4% of the experimental material. The most widely used speech clichés of gratitude acceptance are *You’re (most) welcome, All right, Sure, Okay, It’s OK*.

Speech acts-responses that testify acceptance of gratitude can contain the so-called “*mirror*” *gratitude* or *encouragement* that implies further cooperation. According to our observations, such kind of gratitude is realized by speech formulae with the word *pleasure*: *My pleasure / The pleasure was all mine / It’s a pleasure / It was my pleasure / Always a pleasure / Thank you*. The use of the word *pleasure* indicates that the addressee of gratitude enjoys doing something good for the addresser.

Acceptance of gratitude can also be revealed by showing the addressee’s readiness to render further assistance to the addresser of gratitude by the speech formula *Any time*.

The second group of responses to gratitude express its “rejection” and makes up 27.4% of the experimental material. It should be noted that this kind of reaction doesn’t imply infelicitous gratitude as the addressee doesn’t refuse accepting gratitude expressed to him. This is one of the tactics of negative politeness: the addressee tries to preserve his own face, minimizing his deeds, and the face of the addresser, by not recognizing him as his debtor. To “reject” gratitude such speech clichés are used: *No problem, Not at all, No big deal, It’s no trouble, This is nothing, Let’s say no more*.

If the addressee doesn’t “reject” gratitude, then he tends to minimize the significance of his actions, thus, allowing to single out another group of responses to gratitude on the basis of

functional-semantic criterion – responses that *devalue the stimulus of gratitude* (10.4%). Such gratitude responses are widely used by intimate interlocutors, e.g. spouses, fiancés, bosom friends, as they allow to decrease the addresser’s uncomfortable feeling of debt before the addressee. This group of gratitude responses also includes the so-called *mild reproach* to gratitude addresser.

The fourth group of gratitude responses makes up only 1.8% of the research material and includes phrases that imply non-acceptance of gratitude. In this case Gratitude Speech Act turns out to be infelicitous: the addresser doesn’t achieve his illocutionary aims, his speech act doesn’t have a favourable impact on his partner. As a rule, non-acceptance of gratitude is caused due to the negative attitude of one of the interlocutors to the other.

**Results.** Thorough analysis of the notions “illocution” and “perlocution”, differentiation of the illocutionary and perlocutionary aims of Gratitude Speech Act as well as establishment the felicity conditions of Gratitude Speech Act realization have allowed to fulfil the main purpose of our investigation – classify speech acts-responses to gratitude. Three criteria have been taken as the basis:

- the character of expression: verbal / non-verbal / mixed;
- the degree of expressiveness: formal / evaluative expressive;
- the functional and semantic criterion.

According to the first criterion gratitude responses can be verbal (86.8%), non-verbal (3.8%) and mixed (9.4%). Combination of verbal and non-verbal means enhances the perlocutionary effect of gratitude.

According to the degree of expressiveness, responses to gratitude can be of formal or expressive-evaluative character.

According to the functional-semantic criterion responses to gratitude are as follows:

- 1) acceptance of gratitude, including mirror thanks, or encouragement, and readiness for further cooperation (60.4%);
- 2) “rejection” of gratitude (27.4%);
- 3) devaluation of gratitude which implies minimizing the stimulus for gratitude and mild reproach (10.4%);
- 4) non-acceptance of gratitude due to the negative attitude of the addressee towards the addresser (1.8%).

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