

Conference Paper

Determination and Classification of the Speech Act of Proposal in the Russian Language

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Abstract

This article provides a study of the definition and classification of the speech act of proposal in the Russian language. Speech acts, understood as the minimum unit of speech activity, is an elementary link of communication and the most important part of linguistic pragmatics. Scholars have already studied many different speech acts, such as speech act (SA) requests, complaints, and refusals. However, little attention is paid to the study of the Russian speech act of proposal. This belongs to the directive speech acts in relation to their realization, the cultural background against which they are realized and their perception, for example, by Chinese speakers. The results of the paper suggest that proposals in Russian have to be studied in their cultural environment as a way to improve the teaching and learning and translation studies of this language in China and avoid misunderstandings in the ongoing relations between the two countries, thus leading to help to achieve the goals of successful communicative contacts.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the theory of speech act is the most studied field whose relevance on the study of speech units is due to the increased interest in speech communication as is an important part of linguistic pragmatics. Foreign and Chinese scholars have already investigated many different speech acts, such as requests, complaints and refusals. However, little attention has been paid to the study of the speech act of proposal, which belongs to the directive speech acts (DSA). Proposals are common phenomena both in linguistics and in real communication. Thus, the study of the speech act of proposal, like the study of other types of speech acts, is of great importance. This paper focuses on the study of proposals from a Chinese the perspective on the teaching of Russian in China.

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2. Discussion

So far, there has not been a systematic and comprehensive study on the SA proposal in Russian by Chinese scholars who are to pay much attention to these directive speech acts to which the SA proposal belongs to because of their very different linguo-pragmatic realizations in these two languages. In general, the speech act of proposal is briefly mentioned as one of many DSAs. As for Russian scholars, they more often study a speech act from the point of view of speech ethics. Shatunovsky in his work elaborates about the classification of the SA proposal [1]. This difference in approach should be of concern for linguists and language teachers in particular for the current growth of economic, political, and social ties between China and Russia, two different cultures with two different communication styles, are likely to smooth likely misunderstandings as well as improve communication at all levels of contacts between the two nations.

There are various classifications of speech acts. This article is mainly based on the classification of J. Searle, because this version of the classification is characterized by clear distinctive parameters and features of speech acts. According to J. Searle, the main types of illocutionary acts are the following five: representative, directives, commissions, expressions and declarations [2]. Based on the difference in the illocutionary purpose, Searle proposed his own classification of the directive to which a SA proposal belongs to. N.I. Formanovskaya also believes that the speech act of proposal belongs to the directive speech acts. According to Formanovskaya, the motivation that the DSA contains, on one hand, reflects the speaker's will, on the other hand, it is a motivation for the addressee to complete an act [3]. Speech acts of proposal belong to what Schegloff and Sacks [4] called *adjacency pairs*. That is, proposals are followed by a response (acceptance or question for clarification). The acceptance is the preferred form – what we call *felicity* in Pragmatics. The clarification may trigger other clarifications or acceptance/rejection. If what follows is a rejection, an explanation is expected to follow. However, the study of proposals as a DAS from the point of view of adjacency pairs gives little information on the complexity of the interaction in terms of its syntactic and pragmatic-cultural issues involved in the utterance and its understanding. This point of view derives from a conception that speech acts are “multifunctional actions in communication” [5].

According to the priority of the addressee's position, *облигаторность* (obligatoriness) and *бенефакторность* (that is, in interests of the speaker or addressee) of the action required to complete, E.I. Belyaeva also identified three types of directives: prescriptive directive speech acts (*прескриптивные директивные речевые акты*), requestive (*реквестивные*) and suggestive (*суггестивные*) [6]. Different types of DSA are used in

different pragmatic contexts and have completely different features. SA proposals are one of the most suggestive speech acts that are characterized by the speaker's priority position, without obligatoriness and in interests of the addressee. When carrying out a speech act of proposal, the speaker stimulates the addressee: 1) to perform an action alone; 2) to perform the action with the speaker; 3) to perform the action alone, but the speaker offers his help [2]. Therefore, a SA proposal is characterized by: 1) non-categorical motivation to perform an action; 2) non-obligatory execution of an action for the addressee; 3) the irrelevance of the social status; 4) being beneficial only to addressee, or both the addressee and speaker.

There are some important parameters in the definition of speech acts of proposal: the speaker, the motivation, the addressee, in interests of whom. According to these parameters, some classifications of speech acts of proposal have been developed. These parameters are essential because a proposal means "not just in the realm of implied meaning ... that interpretation may seem wide open for it is not simply a matter of linguistic decoding; it involves the exercise of seemingly inferential abilities, and to this extent quite general concerns about interpretation impinge upon the identification of what a speaker is *saying* as well as what he is implying" [5]. That is, from what the speaker says, the addressee draws conclusions on motivations and underlying beliefs [7].

The first classification is based on the degree of motivation. As stated above, the speech act of proposal belongs to the directives. More precisely, the proposal refers to speech acts of weak motivation. In addition to the proposal, speech acts of weak motivation also include the speech act of request and speech act of suggestion. At the same time, there are speech acts of strong, categorical motivation, such as speech acts of orders, commands, instructions, and others. The motivation component in all kinds of proposals is weakened: the more freedom, the less motivation. The SA proposal, as an act of weak motivation, is divided into three types.

1. Ordinary speech acts of proposal.

Ordinary speech acts of proposal are usually expressed by the performative verb "предложить" or "предлагать". For example, Я предлагаю вам занять мое место.

2. Resolute (imperative) speech acts of proposal.

Such speech acts are expressed by the imperative mood of verbs or by words, like "обязательно, непременно, во что бы то ни стало, должен, надо, нужно, необходимо, следует...". For example, Обязательно посмотри этот фильм! Приходи на эту полезную лекцию непременно!

3. Irresolute speech acts of proposal.

Irresolute speech acts of proposal are often carried out by the subjunctive mood or interrogative sentences. For example, Вам бы надо изменить начало второй главы.

The second classification is related to the theory of indirect speech acts. As stated above, according to the theory of indirect speech acts, any speech acts can be divided into direct and indirect. Therefore, SA proposal in Russian is also divided into direct and indirect. The direct speech act of proposal refers to the production and pronouncement of such a statement, in which its illocutionary force is directly expressed. The indirect SA proposal implies the implicit expression of such an intention. This means that the illocutionary act of proposal is carried out indirectly, by implementing another act.

The reasons for the use of indirect speech acts of proposal are as follows: First, the speech act belongs to the directive speech acts, which contains the motivation to the action of the addressee. Therefore, the speaker seeks to reduce the categorical statements. The use of indirect SAs ensures smooth completion of an action. Secondly, indirect SA increases the politeness of communication, since it provides the addressee with a greater degree of freedom of response. This also meets the requirement of the principle of politeness.

Based on the research, this classification can be stated as follows.

1. Direct speech act of proposal. In general, there are some structures.

(1). Forms with "предложение, предложить, предлагать".

Я (хотел бы) предлагаю (вам, тебе) + инфинитив или что, чтобы...

For example, Я предлагаю, чтобы вы провели этот урок.

(2). Imperative mood of verbs. For example, Сделай...! Купи...! On this form, [8] notes that "In the Russian linguo-cultural tradition, directives are normally expressed in a straightforward manner, by means of an imperative. Imperative utterances are the most natural in such situations. Using a form which semantically implies some options in a situation which, functionally, doesn't (sic) offer any options, is regarded as inappropriate" [9], which reinforces how key cultural aspects underly DSAs [10].

(3). Давай(те) + future tense of first person plural, or imperfect infinitive. For example, Давайте вместе выполним это задание!

(4). Forms with words, as должен, надо, нужно, необходимо, следует...For example, Вы должны часто заниматься спортом, чтобы не заболеть.

2. Indirect speech act of proposal. It includes the following means of expression.

(1). Вы не можете...? Вы не могли бы...? Можете ли вы...? For example, Вы не можете сотрудничать с нашей фирмой?

(2). Я хочу (мне хочется, я хотел бы, мне хотелось бы), чтобы мы (с вами)..., For example, Я хочу, чтобы мы с вами сходили в больницу сегодня.

(3). Хорошо бы вам...Неплохо бы вам...Вам бы надо...Хорошо было бы..., For example, Хорошо бы вам принимать это решение.

A final but very important definition takes into account the main factors affecting the classification of the speech act of proposal: the speaker, the addressee, joint action or non-joint action, in favor of whom. In his definition Shatunovsky in his work divided the SA proposal into 4 types [1].

1. The speech act of proposal, performed in the following situation: P is a joint action of S (speaking) and A (addressee); P in the interests of S, and possibly A.

2. The speech act of proposal, performed in the following situation: P is the action of S (the speaker); P, perhaps in the interests of A, but not in the interests of S.

3. The speech act of proposal, performed in the following situation: P is an action of A (addressee); S created or can create an opportunity (provided or can provide conditions) for A to complete P; without the participation of S, A cannot complete P.

4. The speech act of proposal, completed in the following situation: this is the invention of a new idea, a new P, supposedly good for A and S, and it is put forward for addressee to consider, so that it can get further implementation. For example, Томас Эдисон впервые предложил использовать для общения по телефону «Hello».

Based on the above, the teaching of Russian proposals to Chinese students has to undoubtedly bring to light intercultural differences. For instance, one of the practices which characterize communication in the Asian language is the imperative to mark politeness –which is not clearly marked in some forms of proposals in Russian—as well as modesty [11] as well those markers of *guānxi* or network of relations Goddard [12] that interface between language and culture are just some of the underpinnings associated with traditional Chinese philosophy and cultural beliefs.

3. Conclusion

In addition to promoting the formation of pragmatic competence, the speech act of proposal represents one of the most basic unit of communication and as such they have been an object of study in Linguistics, but not by Russian language interpreters and teachers in the Chinese context. This paper has paid attention to the pragmatic aspects of proposals in Russian that, will hopefully, improve their understanding in the process of teaching this language in China. The study of the definition and classification

of speech acts of proposal in Russian has theoretical significance and practical relevance because of the inter-cultural bearing in the growing dialog between the two nations.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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