

Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“
Международна научна конференция
на Факултета по славянски филологии – 2017
„Надмощие и приспособяване“

PRAGMATIC-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF SOME
WISHING ACTS IN ALBANIAN AND BULGARIAN

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Abstract. The ways we use language in everyday communication is linked with the aim of pragmatics: we mean something and express it by a linguistic element. On the other hand, pragmatics is linked with other linguistics levels such as semantics, syntax, etc. The relation of pragmatics with semantics is mutual; we cannot produce an utterance without knowing the meaning of each word or the meaning of a sentence. The aim of this paper is to study some wishing acts used for engagement and wedding by Albanian and Bulgarian native speakers. The wishes taken under study are part of a qualitative applied research which I have conducted in my PhD thesis.

Key words: speech acts, wishes, pragmatics, semantics

The present research is qualitative as it deals with culture and social interaction and how those are understood, it uses subjective data; extract meaning from the data. Also, the research is empirical, interpretivistic and descriptive as is characterized by neutrality which describe how the reality is. In order to compare and contrast Albanian and Bulgarian speech acts of wishing, 100 questionnaires are used. The target of respondents is selected randomly within the same target group (students).

The single word we hear (Lycan, 2008: 138) most often in the study and practice of pragmatics is “context,” meaning *context of utterance*. Pragmatics is specifically about the functioning of language in context. This marks a significant contrast, because syntax and semantics have generally aspired to be contextless. Syntax is about whether a sentence is grammatical or whether a string of words constitutes a grammatical sentence, period. Semantics has always focused on sentence meaning, the meaning of a sentence type in abstraction from any particular use to which the sentence might be put.

Linguistic expressions (Devit & Hanley, 2006: 1) have the function of communicating messages, conveying information about the world.

Each utterance, each sentence, each expression we produce is part of what we call language and especially is linked with the way we produce different statements, with the way how we use them, to whom we direct them and how we use these

speech act in communication. Every utterance in speaking has its own meaning. Utterer's meaning (Hempel, 1996: 22) is the broader notion. It is whatever a person who tries to communicate something to another person means, no matter whether the utterance takes the form of a gesture, a token, or words. Speaker meaning is what a person who tries to communicate something by uttering words means.

In all these cases we use language with a certain aim to perform an act in the process of communication, in the usage of language and it is linked with what we call pragmatics.

Pragmatic is (Yule, 1996: 3) is concerned with the study of meaning as a communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves.

Historically, (Bach, 2006: 158) the semantic-pragmatic distinction has been formulated in various ways. These formulations have fallen into three main types, depending on which other distinction the semantic-pragmatic distinction was thought most to correspond to: linguistic (conventional) meaning vs. use; truth-conditional vs. non-truth-conditional meaning; context independence vs. context dependence.

Pragmatics differs from semantic in the way how they study language. Pragmatics studies the utterance while semantic studies the sentence. Sentence meaning is abstract and de-contextualized while utterance meaning is concrete and context-dependent. The meaning of a utterance is based on a sentence meaning, it is the realization of the abstract meaning of a sentence in a real situation of communication, or simply in context.

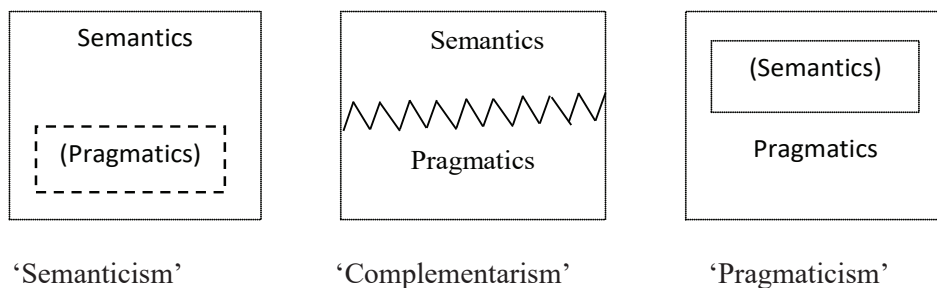
Pragmatics is the (Griffiths, 2006: 6) study of utterance meaning. Semantics is the study of sentence meaning and word meaning.

Semantic information (Bach, 2006: 160) is information encoded in what is uttered – these are stable linguistic features of the sentence – together with any extralinguistic information that provides (semantic) values to context-sensitive expressions in what is uttered. Pragmatic information is the (extralinguistic) information the hearer relies on to figure out what the speaker is communicating. It is generated by, or at least made relevant by, the act of uttering it.

The fundamental (Kearns, 1994: 52) semantic feature of a linguistic act is its structure, the proper object of semantic studies. Acts, not expressions, have meanings or are meaningful, but expressions are the bearers of syntactic features. An expression is a syntactic item. Expressions belong to syntactic categories, like the categories of nouns, verbs, noun phrases and adjectives. Word order is a syntactic feature. So are agreement features like gender, number and case. Although syntactic and semantic features do not even characterize the same objects, a linguistic act has both a semantic structure and a syntactic character. This character is constituted by the expressions used and their syntactic.

As it is mentioned, pragmatic and semantic are linked together concerning

the meaning of a statement which is used by the interlocutors in a certain case. Concerning the division and relationship of pragmatic and semantic we can mention Leech's diagrams (Leech, 1983: 6):



As Martin Davies stated, (Davies, 2006: 19) linguistic expressions are meaningful. Sentences, built from words and phrases, are used to communicate information about objects, properties, and events in the world. In philosophy of language, the study of linguistic meaning is central. The study of literal linguistic meaning is semantics. The study of the use of language to communicate messages – very often, messages that go far beyond the literal meanings of the expressions used is pragmatics. Semantics is concerned with the properties of expressions that help to determine the conditions under which an utterance would be literally true, rather than false. In contrast, pragmatics focuses on the conditions under which an utterance would be helpful, rather than misleading, or more generally appropriate, rather than inappropriate.

Pragmatic is (Yule, 1996: 4) the study of the relationship between linguistic forms and the users of those forms. Also, (Levinson, 1983: 1) pragmatics is the study of “the relation of signs into interpreters”.

So, pragmatics studies the relations between signs and their users where signs appear in the speakers' contexts, but also in linguistic contexts.

Language (Evans & Green, 2006: 10) itself can serve as a speech act that forever alters an aspect of our reality.

Stainton gives three main three main perspectives for language (Stainton, 1996: 16): languages as a system of symbols; language as something we know; language as something we use.

A speech act (Allan, 1997: 448) is created when speaker/writer S makes an utterance U to hearer/reader H in context C. The illocutionary force of U is what S *does* in U, for example, states or requests something, thanks someone, makes a promise, declares an umpiring decision, etc. Every speech act conveys at least one illocutionary force; most convey more than one. Also, part of speech act are even wishes used for engagement, wedding. The wishing acts for engagement are as follows:

The first group belongs to simple wishes which are created from the lexeme happy (Bulg. “Честито!”), which may be alone or combined with a noun. The noun usually is the event which is celebrated, engagement (Bulg. *годеж*), or as it is used

in this case holiday (Bulg. празник). Below are listed the examples: *Честито; Честит годеж; Честит празник.*

For engagement people wish the couple a happy family life (Bulg. семейно щастие), beautiful family life (Bulg. хубав семеен живот) such as: *Успешен съвместен живот; Честито! Много любов и разбирателство за напред; Да ви е честито и хубав семеен живот; Нека последва дълъг и съвместен живот заедно.* These wishes are constructed in different ways, from the conjunctive verb form, noun phrases etc.

There are some wishes where the endpoint is the wedding. It is only natural for the couple to receive wishes about their wedding. People wish issue like: next year to become a bride (Bulg. Догодина булка), wishes for a beautiful wedding (Bulg. Пожелания за прекрасна сватба), be successful in the wedding (Bulg. успеете в брака.) etc. Here are listed some examples: *Таз година люлка, догодина булка; Бъдете щастливи и успеете в брака.*

In the next group are some wishes where the word love is included. Here, it is wished for the couple to be in love (Bulg. влюбени), their love to be sweet (Bulg. Да ви е сладка любовта), to have happiness and love (Bulg. щастие и любов), harmony and love (Bulg. любов и хармония): *Любов и щастие; Много любов и хармония; Когато любовта цъфти в тях, никога да не се изхабява.*

On the wedding day the people in Bulgaria use different wishes using the wishing acts which refer to the bride and groom. Also another step in their life will be making children, so about this topic there are a lot of wishes such as: long and happy familiar life (Bulg. Дълъг и щастлив семеен живот), familiar happiness (Bulg. Семейно щастие) such as: *Честито и да ви върви; Семейно щастие; Честито! Дълъг и щастлив съвместен живот ви желая.*

In these wishing acts the people refer mostly to the future family happiness, to have a long and happy life as a couple and to bring children to life. In some wishing acts such as: “Дълъг и щастлив семеен живот и много деца!” people wish the couple to have many children. Also, they express the desire for a good family life by the epithet (семеен – cloudless in the meaning of a fair family life), in the wish “Безоблачен семеен живот!”.

In most of the cases the wish is structured only by two nouns such as: “Семейно щастие!”, in order to wish for a happy family. In some wishes the phrase I wish or we wish (singular or plural) (ви желая) stand even at the beginning of the wish or at the end of the wish. When the phrase (ви желая) stands at the beginning of the wish, the speaker gives a strong emotional force to the utterance.

The same wish which is used for engagement is used even for the wedding: “Честито! Да ви е сладка любовта!” and the answer of this wish is “Благодаря, да ти се връща!” (the same to you). A special wish is “Таз година булка, догодина люлка!” which expresses the desire for the bride to become a mother soon. The structure of this wish is interesting because there is no verb (as most of the wishes in Bulgarian) this year bride, the next year carrycot, expresses the human spirit.

After the official wedding, when the people are celebrating the wedding party in the restaurant the people use the adverb “Горчиво!” toward the couple in order to provoke the kiss of the couple.

Albanian people wish the couple on their engagement day using the wishing acts such as: *Të trashëgoheni! Me jetë të lumtur; Me trashëgim – të trashëgohen*¹ – *u trashëgofshin – të trashëgohen e të plaken* (May you have children and grow older together); *Në dasmë të djemve* (In the wedding of the others sons); *U trashëgofshin e u plakçin* (May you have children and grow older together); *Të trashëgohet çifti/vajza/djali* (May the couple/daughter/son have children); *Të trashëgohet për fare!* (May they have children forever); *Në kokë të beqarëve* (In the wedding of single); *Me këmbë të mbarë* (To bring good luck).

The main wishing act is “*Të trashëgoheni!*” which consists on the fact that the couple may leave heirs and may have children. The form of the verb is in passive and conjunctive.

In terms of semantic, wishes in Albanian consist on wishing the parent of the couple who is getting engaged. People wish the family of the couple to have the engagement of the other son or daughter who is single soon, except of the one who is getting engaged. People also wish the couple to be happy and to have a good relationship with both families. There are simple wishing acts such as: *Shumë urime* (Lots of congratulations); *Urime çiftit* (Congratulation to the couple); *Me jetë të lumtur* (A happy life).

These wishes refer to congratulate on the engagement and wishing a happy life. On two of the wishes is used the word congratulations (Alb. *Urime*). On the third sentence people wish to the couple to have a happy life together, as engagement is the first to spending a life as a couple.

Also it is used the wishing act sentence “*Qofshi bashkë gjatë gjithë jetës*” expressing the wish to be together for the whole life or “*Ç’tju dojë zemra*” which is a wish we have met before for other occasions, wishing the couple to have what they want (what their heart wants).

The wishing act used for wedding are directed to the bride: *Të trashëgohet, e ëmbël qoftë* which refers to the bride to be always sweet. Wedding meanings are nearly the same as the engagement wishes: *Në kokën tënde! Në shtëpinë tuaj!! Në kokë të beqarve! Edhe në shtëpinë tuaj.*

These wishing acts consist on noun phrases. The wish in these cases is directed toward the participants of the wedding. If someone is single, people wish him to find a bride, or wish to have a wedding in their house soon.

Mainly the wishing acts for weddings are used with the verb in conjunctive form such as: *Të trashëgoheni, jetë të lumtur; Të trashëgoheni me ndonjë djalë.*

¹ The verb *të trashëgohet* or the noun *me trashëgim* is the most useful expression in Albanian used to express wishes for engagement, wedding. It means to have children or to leave heirs.

With these wishes the people are wishing the couple for their marriage, wishing them to have a happy life, to have a baby soon. In this case the intention of the speaker who makes a wish starts with the fact of being happy for the present but also is followed by the happiness in the family and by bringing a child into life.

The desire for the couple who is getting married to be happy is expressed in the wishing act: “Qofshi të lumtur” with the verb be in optative mood (Alb. qofshi) and the wishing act “Jetë të lumtur e u plakshi së bashku” to have a happy life and to grow old together (Alb. plakshi – optative moode).

In terms of semantics, the wishes consist on wishing somebody to live and to pass a good time through life. In some other wishes is wished somebody not only for himself but for his whole family to be healthy and happy. The form of the verb in all these wishes is in optative as the usual verb form for expressing wishes; the wishes are made for the future but also is used the conjunctive form of verb.

Basically on pragmatic-semantic point of view we will have the pattern on wish making in the two languages: *S – utters a sentence – wish for somebody's wedding day – by expressing a good attitude toward the couple who is getting married*

For Albanians, the attitude of S is having children and a happy life. This intention of the speaker goes to the future of the couple, is wished something which is going to happen, that it may be real

For Bulgarian, the attitude of S is to have a long and lovely life together. This intention goes to the future and is something that it may be realized if the couple has a good relationship together in the upcoming years.

In both languages the attitude of S starts from the moment of uttering the wishing act and refers to the future life of the couple. When a wishing act is uttered in Albanian and in Bulgarian basically is being expressed the same concern, at the first sight the wishing act seems to be an appraisal of the current situation by wishing for having a good day stating the day for which is being wished and then continues with a good attitude of the SPEAKER toward the HEARER which is sometimes expressed by another wish concerning to luck, love, good health etc.

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