Prosodic features of gratitude speech act (Based on the English film discourse)

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Abstract. The article presents an attempt to describe the prosodic features of the gratitude speech act. To fulfil this task, the gratitude speech act is classified on the basis of the criterion of sincerity. The article analyzes the dictionary definitions of the notion “sincerity” and elicits its meaning. According to the criterion of sincerity, gratitude has been differentiated as sincere gratitude, phatic gratitude and false gratitude. The latter type of gratitude speech act has been subdivided into two subtypes: insincere gratitude and ironic / sarcastic gratitude. The article also dwells on the illocutionary aims and communicative functions of every type of gratitude speech act depending on the criterion of sincerity. Another aspect highlighted by the given article is the prosodic arrangement of each type of gratitude speech act singled out on the basis of the criterion of sincerity. The research has been carried out on the basis of 110 utterances of gratitude taken from the modern English films.

The criterion of sincerity determines the particular illocutionary aims of the gratitude speech act in every particular situation. Applying the criterion of sincerity to our data has been helpful to distinguish tree types of gratitude speech act: sincere, phatic and false gratitude. Phatic gratitude is the part of the social ritual, which performs the function of harmonious communication between communicants and serves as a marker of polite behavior. Sincere gratitude is a true positive emotional feeling expressed by the addresser for the received favour. False gratitude is observed in cases when the addresser does not feel gratitude or in cases of ironic / sarcastic gratitude. The forms of false gratitude remain the same as the ones of phatic or sincere gratitude, but the extralinguistic situation reveal its true pragmatic meaning. Each type of gratitude speech act is characterized by particular prosodic means. It has been determined in the course of the auditory analysis. The auditory analysis has been carried out in two steps. At first, five native auditors differentiated the gratitude utterances according to the following groups: phatic gratitude; sincere gratitude; false gratitude. The auditors easily coped with this task as all the gratitude utterances were given in context. During the second step of the auditory analysis the auditors had to determine the prosodic characteristics of each type of gratitude utterances. They had to determine the type of terminal tone (falling, rising, falling-rising, rising-falling, level), type of scale (gradually descending, sliding, scandent, stepping, gradually ascending, level average, level high and level low), the range of terminal tone (narrow, average, wide), the tone level (average, low, high), pronouncing speed (slow, average, quick). The auditors intoned separate fragments of phrases and received the curvature of the melodic component of the intonational structure of the analyzed syntagmas. As a result, the auditory analysis has allowed us to conclude that each type of the gratitude speech act has its own acoustic image. Nevertheless, the type of gratitude speech act depends on the extralinguistic situation.

Keywords: speech act, sincerity, sincere gratitude, phatic gratitude, false gratitude, intonation, prosody.

Introduction. Gratitude plays a significant role in maintaining polite relationships between the speakers and provides harmony in communication. Gratitude speech act serves as a mean to demonstrate mutual respect and attention to surrounding people.

As a rule, linguists investigate gratitude speech act as a unit of speech etiquette which is aimed at realizing certain communicative functions (J. Ostin, J. Leech, D. Wunderlich, T, Ballmore, N. D. Arutunova, N. V. Voziyanova, V. E. Goldin, V. Z. Demiyanov, B. S. Zhumagulova, V. I. Karasik, T. V. Larina, A. A. Romanov, etc.), they describe the contexts of gratitude speech act functioning (Zh. A. Tyagunova, E. B. Adamakova, S. V. Skvorodina, O. E. Salnikova), study it as a speech tactic (P. Brown, St. Levinson), analyze the structures of speech episodes which include gratitude speech act (S. V. Skvorodina, N. A. Trofinova, L. V. Tsurikova). Nevertheless, there is no practice of complex description of intonational arrangement of gratitude utterances which determines the topicality of our research.

Analysis of recent investigations and publications. Analysis of native and foreign linguistic literature shows that there are not enough works devoted to the study of prosodic features of gratitude speech act. Generally, intonation of gratitude is investigated fragmentally as for example in the work of K. Aijmer “Conversational Routines in English: Convention and Creativity”. The scientist states that gratitude is one of the most stereotypic speech acts; consequently, intonation of this speech act must be stereotypic as well. Stereotypic intonation is actualized in situations when it is necessary to express gratitude to a waiter, a bus driver, a telephone operator for rendering services of mundane character or when answering to the question about health or to other courtesies. Then gratitude is considered to be phatic and it is pronounced with rising or falling-rising tone. In situations of expressing true gratitude, its intonation is usually falling [2].

However, we do not agree with the statement that the intonational pattern of gratitude utterances can be limited with two terminal tones. In our opinion, the intonational arrangement of gratitude speech act includes a wider range of means, which help to distinguish formal, sincere and false gratitude.

Setting goals. The object of our investigation includes gratitude utterances chosen by continuous sampling method from modern English films. The subject of our investigation includes prosodic means used by actors when expressing gratitude in modern English films.

The goal of our work is to differentiate the prosodic parameters of gratitude utterances with various degree of sincerity. To achieve this goal the following tasks have been set: 1) to classify gratitude utterances from the point of view of the sincerity criterion; 2) to describe the method of auditory analysis of prosodic features of gratitude utterances of different types; 3) to describe the results of auditory analysis and the prosodic features of gratitude utterances of different types.

The material used for investigation includes modern English films from which 110 gratitude utterances have been chosen.

Results and their discussions. To classify gratitude utterances from the point of view of the sincerity
criterion, it is necessary to analyze the dictionary definitions of this notion which do not differ much. Sincerity implies “showing real feelings; true, honest” [5]; “open-hearted, open-minded, unhypocritical” [4]; “when someone is sincere and really means what they are saying” [6]; “the quality or state of being sincere; honesty, genuineness, good faith, etc.” [7].

So, according to the dictionary definitions, sincerity means genuineness, truthfulness and candidness of the expressed utterance. J. Searle wrote the genuineness of expressives: in his opinion, the major illocutionary aim of any expressive speech act (including gratitude) is to express the psychological state of a speaker who doesn’t adjust reality to words or words to reality, but expresses a genuine judgement [3]. Following the criterion of sincerity when expressing gratitude speech act is the major factor in its functioning in communication.

We believe that applying the criterion of sincerity to each particular speech situation is very important as the degree of sincerity determines the illocutionary aim of the gratitude speech act.

Functioning as a unit of speech etiquette, gratitude speech act reveals its phatic nature which is to realize such illocutionary aims as establishing the contact, maintaining harmonious and non-conflict communication, preserving social equilibrium. We call it a phatic gratitude speech act. Phatic gratitude is expressed automatically in social rituals. The criterion of sincerity is not relevant in situations of phatic gratitude, as the addressee expresses it automatically. He doesn’t experience a true feeling of appreciation because the preceding action-stimulus is insignificant for him. Phatic gratitude speech act is regarded as a neutral speech act from the point of view of the criterion of sincerity. Phatic gratitude speech act makes up 57.3% of all gratitude utterances.

Functioning as a behabitive (according to J. Ostin), expressive (according to J. Searle) or satisfactory (according to D. Wunderlich), gratitude speech act serves to express positive reaction of the speaker to the addressee’s actions or behavior. In this case, the addressee expresses true gratitude to the addressee for what he considers to be beneficial for him. We call it a sincere gratitude speech act. The criterion of sincerity is relevant in situations of sincere gratitude. The preceding action-stimulus is highly appreciated by the addressee because it has required a lot of addressee’s time or efforts. Sincere gratitude speech acts are usually characterized by emotional and expressive character. They make up 34.5% of all gratitude utterances.

8.2% of all gratitude utterances include false gratitude which appears due to contradiction between gratitude utterance itself and mental conclusion of the addressee. In other words, in reality the speaker doesn’t feel gratitude but disappointment, irritation, outrage. But in order to avoid conflict and to keep his “face” as well as harmonious atmosphere in communication, the addressee doesn’t reveal his real feelings, but expresses gratitude to the addressee.

We divide false gratitude into two types: insincere gratitude and ironic / sarcastic gratitude. To distinguish these two types of gratitude in film discourse is possible only by taking into account the extralinguistic situation, explicit speech means in personage’s words, or sounding inner personage’s speech.

So, according to the criterion of sincerity, we single out the following types of gratitude speech act:

- phatic gratitude (neutral);
- sincere gratitude (true);
- false gratitude (insincere and ironic /sarcastic).

The hypothesis of our investigation is the presumption that utterances, expressing phatic, sincere and false gratitude, are explicated by different prosodic means in film discourse.

To describe the prosodic features of phatic, sincere and false gratitude, we used auditory analysis which was carried out in two steps.

At first, five native auditors (professors of English phonetics) were asked to differentiate the gratitude utterances according to the following groups: 1) phatic gratitude; 2) sincere gratitude; 3) false gratitude.

To do this task the gratitude utterances were given in context. The results after processing the answers showed that the auditors had differentiated phatic, sincere and false gratitude with high reliability.

During the second step of the auditory analysis the auditors had to determine the prosodic characteristics of different types of gratitude utterances. They had to intone separate fragments of phrases to receive the curvature of the melodic component of the intonational structure of the analyzed syntagmas.

During the auditory analysis, the following perceptual discrete gradations on each sign were used: 1) type of terminal tone: falling, rising, falling-rising, rising-falling, level; 2) type of scale (when expressing argumentative gratitude): gradually descending, sliding, scandent, stepping, gradually ascending, level average, level high and level low; 3) range of terminal tone: narrow, average, wide, 4) tone level: average, low, high, 5) pronunciation speed: slow, average, quick.

According to the results of the auditory analysis, sincere gratitude, expressed by a woman, is realized by the falling tone in short one-stressed syntagmas like Thank you or Thanks as well as by the falling tone in combination with gradually descending or level scale when expressing argumentative gratitude. The range of terminal tone is usually narrow or average. The tone level is narrow, as a rule.

Meanings, transmitted by the low falling tone, depend on the character of the lexical content of an utterance. Gratitude pronounced with the low falling tone on the low tone level creates the atmosphere of intimacy. The low falling tone in combination with descending scale expressed some restraint and confidence of the addressee of gratitude. Due to combination of the low falling tone with level scale, the utterance acquires positive and bright modal connotation [1, p. 38].

As an example, let’s analyze the film episode in which a woman expresses sincere gratitude to a young man for his gentle attitude to her:

- Thanks.
- For what?
- Lots of things… For sharing a sunset with me… | For being the only guy who | treated me like a person… | and
not some sort of | party favor. | For being any kind of romantic... | even a hopeless one.
- You’re welcome [The mask, 01.11.52].

The new speech exchange between young people begins with the initiating move of sincere gratitude that is pronounced with the falling tone. The next move belongs to the young man and expresses his misunderstanding. His move is followed by the argumentation to the previously expressed gratitude. From the viewpoint of intonation, the utterance is characterized by the falling tone in combination with the low level scale which make gratitude sound lively. Low tone level and narrow range of the expressed gratitude make it sincere. The speech exchange between young people is finished by the utterance that signals the acceptance of the expressed utterance. Between the syntagmas, we can observe the falling tone as well. The phrase Lots of things which precedes the further enumeration of gratitude stimuli, is pronounced with the falling-rising tone (fall on Lots and rise on things). Then, every syntagma is characterized by the falling tone which creates the single rhythmic picture.

But not in all cases sincere gratitude is pronounced on the low tone level. When the addressee of gratitude experiences a row of emotions such as worry, anxiety or relief, the tone level can be either average or even high which is presented in the following film episode: a small boy has been left at home alone on Christmas. His family notices his absence only when they arrive at the other city. The boy’s mother tries to get home in every possible way, but it is difficult to buy a ticket on Christmas Eve. So, when finally a group of touring musicians agrees to take to her home together with her little boy:
- If you have to get to Chicago, we’ll gladly drive you.

It’s on our way to Milwaukee.
- You’d give me a ride?
- Sure, why not? You’ve got to get home to see your kid.
- A ride to Chicago?
- Sure, it’s Christmas time.
- Thank you! Oh, thank you! [Home Alone 1, 00.57.40]

The sincere gratitude is pronounced with the falling tone. At first, it sounds with a narrow range on the high tone level, and then – with the average tone level which makes the utterance quite lively. The successive repetition of Thank you! Thank you! makes the gratitude expressive.

As for the pronouncing speed, the auditors noticed the average and quick speed. The use of quick speed is explained by the addressee’s desire to express the gratitude as quickly as possible until he has the addressee’s attention.

According to the results of the auditory analysis, the sincere gratitude, expressed by men, is characterized by the falling tone of narrow range in one-stressed syntagmas. Tone level is low, as a rule. Pronouncing speed is average. Let’s illustrate the mentioned prosodic characteristics of such type of gratitude by the following film episode: Christian gives thanks to his girlfriend’s father who praises Christian’s speech before the graduates of the university:
- I really enjoyed your speech.

- Thank you, sir [Fifty Shades of Grey, 01.16.49].

The phatic gratitude, expressed by women, is mainly characterized by the falling terminal tone of narrow range and low tone level. The prosodic characteristics of the phatic gratitude are similar to those of the sincere gratitude. Therefore, we need to take into account the extralinguistic situation to differentiate sincere and phatic gratitude.

The neutral character and restraint of the phatic gratitude is expressed by the combination of the falling tone with narrow range and low tone level. As an example, let’s analyze the following film episode: Becky is given a paycheck for her work, for what a woman expresses her gratitude:
- Paycheck.
- Thank you [Confession of a Shopaholic, 00.38.37].

The neutral phatic gratitude is also characterized by the combinations of the falling tone with average range and average tone level as well as wide range and high tone level that make this type of gratitude sound more lively and emotional.

Another tone used for expressing phatic gratitude is the falling-rising tone. This tone is often called implicative. Utterances characterized by the falling-rising tone transmit the meanings which cannot be fully expressed by the lexical content. Implication, realized by the falling-rising tone, has a wide range of meanings [1, p. 51]. In case of gratitude this tone helps the addressee to be ultimately polite with the addressee which is presented in the following film episode: the host of the party expresses gratitude to one her dearest guests:
- John.
- Hey there.

- Thanks for coming.
- Thanks. It’s always nice seeing you [The Devil Wears Prada, II, 00.05.56].

In the given example the phatic gratitude is pronounced with the falling-rising tone of narrow range, which is realized by the fall on Thanks and by the rise on coming, and on the low tone level. Such prosodic characteristics emphasize the friendly attitude of the addresser of gratitude to the addressee. The prosodic characteristics of the phatic gratitude are similar to those of the sincere gratitude. Therefore, we need to take into account the extralinguistic situation to differentiate sincere and phatic gratitude.

The phatic gratitude, expressed by men, is mainly characterized by the falling or level tone of narrow range in one-stressed syntagmas. Combination of the falling tone with the stepping or high level scale allows the speaker to express not only gratitude but also positive attitude to the addressee. The level tone of the narrow range adds some solemnity and formality to the phatic gratitude. For example, in the 80-s Tom, Bridget’s friend, recorded one CD which made him popular, but very soon Tom left show-business. Nevertheless, people still recognize and compliment him, and, of course, Tom expresses gratitude to them:
- Great song.

- Thank you. Thank you so much [Bridget Jones’s diary, 00.11.01].
Tom’s gratitude is expressive due to the successive repetition of the gratitude phrases. He pronounces his gratitude with the falling tone of narrow range on the average tone level in the first case, and with the level tone with high level scale of narrow range in the second case.

The auditors also noticed that the phatic gratitude can be realized by the falling-rising tone which has already been mentioned before or by the low rising tone the function of which is to show the addressee the friendly attitude of the addressee [1, p. 42]. The pronouncing speed of phatic gratitude, expressed by men, is average.

Insincere gratitude can be expressed by different terminal tones and scales in every particular case. The following film episode serves a bright example of insincere gratitude, expressed by a woman: at the party Miranda meets a guest whom she hates. This woman was supposed to come to the event after Miranda has left. But she is here, and Miranda has to deal with her. True feelings of Miranda towards this woman are revealed by Miranda’s assistants. Miranda meets the guest with “positive face” and thanks her for visiting this very important party:

- We’re so happy that you were able to come to our little gathering.
- Of course. I plan my whole year around this.
- Well, we’re so grateful that you do [The Devil Wears Prada, II, 00.06.35].

The given gratitude utterance is pronounced on the high tone level with wide range and is characterized by the high falling terminal tone (the fall is on the nucleus do). Intentional slowing down of the pronouncing speed of the first stressed syllable in the syntagma so gives Miranda time to choose the necessary words to save her image, i.e. express gratitude.

In other film episodes, insincere gratitude can be realized by the falling-rising tone of high narrow range or by the low level scale and high rising tone of narrow range.

Insincere gratitude, expressed by men, is characterized by the mid-level scale in combination with the falling terminal tone. The range is narrow, the tone level is middle, as a rule. The pronouncing speed is average.

Ironic gratitude, expressed by women, is characterized by the falling-rising tone what can be observed in the following film episode: Bridge: wants to leave job, but her boss tries to persuade her to stay. He says that he has overlooked her professional qualities and skills. His confession is untimely, because Bridge has already made her decision:

- Well, I just think you should know that, um, there are lots of prospects here for a talented person <...> Lots of prospects for a person who, you know, perhaps for personal reasons has been slightly overlooked professionally.

- Thank you, Daniel. That is very good to know [Bridge Jones’s Diary, 00.48.09].

In this example, the falling-rising tone is realized by the fall on the nucleus Thank and by the rise on the name Daniel and creates the ironical effect. The expressiveness of the utterance is forced by the following phrase which is pronounced with the falling tone and the sliding scale of the middle narrow range. Such combination is characteristic of irony as well [1, p. 38].

The ironic gratitude, expressed by men, is characterized by the falling-rising tone of narrow or wide range in combination with the gradually descending scale and low tone level. The following film episode serves as the example of ironic gratitude, expressed by a man: at the crime scene, Sherlock Holmes examines the body. He can’t stand when somebody tells him their conclusions. Suddenly, when one of the medical experts starts sharing his guesses with Sherlock. The latter interrupts the speaker with an ironic gratitude and closes the door before this man:

- Yes, thank you for your input [Sherlock Holmes – A Study in Pink, 00.25.38].

As a rule, the ironic gratitude is pronounced with average speed with a little slowing down on the nucleus which is realized by the falling-rising tone.

**Conclusions.** The auditory analysis of prosodic feature of gratitude speech act has allowed to define the following: on the perceived acoustic signs each type of gratitude speech act distinguished on the basis of the criterion of sincerity differs in types of a melodic contour, tone level, tone range, temporal characteristics and, thus, has its own acoustic image.

Nevertheless, it is very important to take into consideration every particular situation to differentiate the types of gratitude speech act.

The perspective of our investigation is to carry out the electro-acoustic analysis to confirm the perceptive observations concerning the intonational arrangement of gratitude utterances, received in the course of the auditory analysis.

**LITERATURE**


**REFERENCES**

Просодические особенности речевого акта благодарности (на материале англоязычных художественных фильмов)
В. М. Смаглий, И. А. Кивенко

Аннотация. Данная статья представляет собой попытку описать просодические особенности речевого акта благодарности. Для этого речевой акт благодарности классифицируется на основе критерия искренности. В статье анализируются словарные дефиниции понятия «искренность» для получения его понятия. На основе критерия искренности выделяются следующие виды речевого акта благодарности: искренняя благодарность, фатическая благодарность, ложная благодарность. Ложная благодарность в свою очередь разделяется на два подвида: неискренняя благодарность и ироническая / саркастическая благодарность. Критерий искренности определяет иллокутивную цель речевого акта благодарности в каждой конкретной ситуации. Искренняя благодарность представляет собой выражение истинного положительного чувства признательности адресата адресанта за услуги, которые он считает полезными для себя. Фатическая благодарность является частью социального ритуала, главная цель которого заключается в поддержании гармоничной коммуникации, и служит маркером вежливого поведения. Ложная благодарность возникает в случаях противоречия между чувствами и словами адресанта, а также в случаях иронической / саркастической благодарности. Речевые формы выражения ложной благодарности такие же, как при выражении искренней или фатической благодарности, и только экстралингвистическая ситуация помогает обнаружить истинное значение выраженной благодарности. Ещё один аспект, раскрываемый в статье, — просодическое оформление каждого вида благодарности, выделенного на основе критерия искренности. Просодические особенности разных видов речевого акта благодарности были определены в ходе аудиторского анализа. Аудиторский анализ проходил в два этапа. Сначала пять отечественных аудиторов разделили высказывания благодарности на три группы: искренняя, фатическая, ложная благодарность. Они легко справились с этим заданием, т.к. все высказывания благодарности были даны в контексте. Во время второго этапа аудиторского анализа аудиторы должны были определить просодические характеристики каждого вида речевого акта благодарности. Они должны были отметить вид терминального тона, тип шкалы, диапазон терминального тона, тональный уровень, темп произнесения высказываний благодарности. Аудиторы проинтонировали отдельные фрагменты фраз благодарности и получили кривую мелодического компонента интонационной структуры анализируемых синтагм. В результате, аудиторский анализ позволил заключить, что каждый вид речевого акта благодарности, выделенный на основе критерия искренности, имеет свой собственный акустический имидж. Однако, сам вид благодарности зависит исключительно от экстралингвистической ситуации.

Ключевые слова: речевой акт, искренность, искренняя благодарность, фатическая благодарность, ложная благодарность, интонация, просодия.