FUNCTION WORDS IN INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS AND STRATEGIES

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Стаття присвячена аналізу комунікативних особливостей службових мовних одиниць сучасної англійської мови, які позбавлені номінативного значення, але є носіями імпліцитної семантики. Імпліцитна семантика є процедурною і експлікується шляхом співвіднесення експліцитної та імпліцитної інформацій на дискурсивному рівні. Зроблено висновок, що одиниці з імпліцитним значенням протиставлення можуть бути іллокутивними індикаторами реалізації непрямих мовленнєвих актів, а також є важливими компонентами непрямих комунікативних стратегій.

Ключові слова: службове слово, дискурсивний маркер, непрямий мовленнєвий акт, прагматична транспозиція, комунікативна стратегія, імпліцитна інформація.

The article focuses on the analysis of communicative peculiarities of English function words that are devoid of nominative power but possess implicit semantics. Their implicit semantics is procedural and is revealed by correlating explicit and implicit pieces of information at discourse level. The conclusion is made that units with the implicit meaning of contrast can serve as illocutionary indicators of indirect speech act. Also, they are important components of communicative strategies.

Key words: function word, discourse marker, indirect speech act, pragmatic transposition, communicative strategy, implicit information.

The role of function words, small non-nominative language units, in natural communication is very important as they turn out to be indispensable means of felicitous communication in speech interaction. When used in speech, several groups of function words become discourse markers serving as sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk and can work at different levels of discourse to connect utterances across different planes [5, p. 312; 6, p. 54-75]. Besides, these small items perform numerous additional interactive functions. So, the <u>aim</u> of this article is to investigate the role function words play in realizing the speaker's communicative intention and their participation in indirect speech acts. The aim of the article presupposes solving the following <u>tasks</u>: to reveal the meaning inherent in those function words that possess the implicit meaning of contrast; to establish the role function words play in pragmatic transposition of speech acts: to define indirect strategies and tactics realized with the help of function words. <u>The material</u> subjected for analysis presents dialogical fragments taken from Modern English and American fiction.

It is a well-known fact that the intensity and effectiveness of speech influence often depends on the speaker's successful use of different implicit components of communication [2, p. 19]. Sometimes such implicit components are expressed by non-nominative language items as their meaning becomes clear only at discourse level. Among them we find some function words used as discourse markers in speech.

Ukrainian linguist F. Batsevich who in his monograph devoted a chapter to discourse words ("discourse markers" in our terminology) mentions that it is necessary to admit that semantic and pragmatic peculiarities of discourse words as well as regularities of their systemic organization are so far not revealed completely [1, p. 107]. Generally speaking, it is not an easy task as the meaning they possess is by no means referential. We are going to demonstrate that the meaning of the units like *at last, already, after all, really* is not referential but <u>correlational</u>. Consider the following example:

"I gotta call the office," Kyle said. Check in, you know, tell them I'm sick and can't work today. Threy're <u>already</u> looking for me." [12, p. 416].

With the help of the unit *already* another piece of information is introduced: *they were <u>not</u> looking for me earlier*, which is not expressed formally but is understood by the hearer. The explicit and implicit pieces of information are anaphorically linked, so the implicit information becomes clear only by correlating two propositions – explicit and implicit. Consequently, *already* here implies that the state of things was different before by rendering the idea of change, in this case – temporal change. It becomes clear only when applying the operation of correlation to the unit in question. In addition, important pragmatic information is revealed implicitly: this change occurred too fast. However, this is an individual contextual pragmatic meaning of *already*.

Similarly, we applied the same correlation test to the group of function words (discourse markers in speech). We selected several groups of function words and tried to classify them in accordance with the implicit meanings they render at discourse level taking into account their correlative functions. The full list of these units and their functional classification are provided in our manual [7]. In this article, we are going to focus on seven units that render the idea of implicit contrast in the English dialogical discourse: *at last*, *already*, *still*, and *really* because all of them are characterized by a high pragmatic potential, which makes it possible for them to serve as illocutionary indicators of indirect speech acts.

The implicit meaning revealed by *at last* is "a change with reference to the past". The presence of *at last* suggests that the speaker treats this change as something long expected and (in most cases) desired. Therefore, the main interactive function of this unit lies in introducing some implicit information – temporal change. For this reason *at last* can be characterized by a high illocutionary potential, that is why in natural communication this function word is often used as an indicator of indirect speech acts. In illustration to this point consider the following dialogical fragment:

"Hi, hi," she said, kissing us all, sitting down and gesturing to the waiter for a glass. "How's it going? Bridge, how's it going with Mark? You must be really pleased to get a boyfriend <u>at last</u>".

"<u>At last</u>". Grrr. First jellyfish of the evening. [9, p. 44].

In the given dialogical fragment the utterance *You must be really pleased to get a boyfriend at last* correlates with the implicit proposition *You did not have a boyfriend for a long time*. The invariant semantic meaning of *at last* ("a temporal change with reference to the past") is expanded by the additional pragmatic component "a long expected change." The unit becomes an important means of rendering pragmatic information as it turns the utterance *You must be really pleased to get a boyfriend at last* into an indirect speech act of negative evaluation: the speaker hints that the hearer (a young lady with an inferiority complex!) did not have a boyfriend for a long time because she is not attractive.

Pragmatic potential of *at last* makes it an effective device in realizing politeness strategies:

After the game (which Harvard won easily), Laura rushed across the court to embrace Barney. And introduce Palmer. "Nice to meet you <u>at last</u>," said the handsome Harvard man. "Laura's always talked so fondly of you." [14, p. 75].

Here we can observe a compliment strategy at work. The implicit meaning of a long expected change makes *at last* a perfect device for complimenting the hearer to demonstrate that the speaker was looking forward to this meeting.

The next unit under analysis is *still*. The correlation implicit meaning of this unit is "retaining the state of things at the present moment with a future change". This implicit semantics makes it possible for *still* to serve as the marker of indirect speech acts transposition. For example:

"Anyway," Cindy continued, glancing toward the phone in her purse, "my settlement ensured I didn't have to worry about finding a job, which was good because I only had a high school education, having eloped when I was eighteen. <u>Still</u> with me?" "Hanging onto every word." [11, p. 47].

The question *Still with me?* becomes an indirect speech act: the interrogative is transposed into the directive *Listen to me!* The indirect speech act in its turn becomes a component of the hedged strategy of inducement, as the speaker is not at all sure that the hearer is fully involved in listening to her long story.

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In natural communication cases when *still* changes the illocutionary force of the utterance are quite numerous. Ukrainian scholar G. Pocheptsov mentions that the question *Are you still here?* can have an illocutionary force of the directive *Go away at once!* [3, p. 444]. In addition, this unit may become an influential component of various hedged strategies. Consider the following example:

"So, come on, then, Bridget! How's yer love-life!" quipped Geoffrey, giving me one of his special hugs, then going all pink and adjusting his slacks. "Fine." "So you <u>still</u> haven't got a chap. Durr! What are we going to do with you!" [8, p. 300].

Here *still* is a marker of the indirect strategy of negative evaluation: the speaker implies that the hearer did not have a boyfriend for a long time in the past and she is not dating anyone now, which is shameful for a girl of her age.

In the example to follow the speaker with the help of *still* stresses the importance of retaining the present state of things:

"Sam told me about your history with him. You never cared about me at all. You just wanted to get back at him." I am aware that I sound more scorned and bitter than I had intended, but it is too late.

David shakes his head. "You're wrong," he insists. "I'll admit that I was a bit more curious about you when I found out who you were married to. But then we got to know each other. I did care about you. I <u>still</u> do care about you. Very much. I never intended to cause you this kind of pain." He leans forward with a sad earnestness that gives me pause, but I refuse to give in to him [13, p. 288].

The utterance *I still do care about you* is the component of the convincing strategy, which becomes felicitous due to *still* that emphasizes the speaker's immutability of his feelings. However, in this case the speaker flouts the communicative Maxim of Quantity [4], because in order to achieve his goal he provides too much information: explicit utterances *I did care about you*, *Very much*, and implicit information rendered by *still* (*I cared about you in the past*) are identical. Violating the Maxim of Quantity gives rise to the hearer not to believe the speaker (*I refuse to give in to him*).

Of special interest for our research is the unit *already*, which when it is used in interrogative utterances often becomes an illocutionary indicator of indirect speech acts. It can be explained by the fact that, unlike *yet*, *already* is devoid of the interrogative function. Therefore, whenever *already* is used in questions, its function is always pragmatic. Let us compare two questions: *Are you leaving <u>already</u>?* and *Are you leaving <u>yet</u>?* In fact, only the second utterance is really interrogative; and the answer to the question can be either "yes" or "no". The first utterance is by no means a question: it is a directive speech act. Here the speaker does not expect any answer: his intention is to make the hearer stay.

To prove the point, we provide one more example where *already* in interrogative utterance changes the illocutionary force of a speech act:

"The strain is starting to get me, Barn." "<u>Already</u>? For God's sake, Castellano, it's barely been a week – and Biochem has yet to rear its hydra-headed formulae." [14, p. 110].

In this example the main function of *already* is to show the speaker's attitude to the recent change that took place. The speaker's reaction is definitely negative, which is confirmed by the context. The question is transposed to the indirect speech act of a negative evaluation.

It should be mentioned, however, that in general, illocutionary potential of *already* can work not only in interrogative utterances. Consider the following example:

"Have a yogurt" "I <u>already</u> had a yogurt" I take a deep breath. "All right. One cookie. Just one." [13, p. 50].

The speaker adds *already* to her utterance to turn down the offer and the utterance becomes an indirect speech act.

The use of the contrastive unit *really* in interaction is rather frequent: it is a multifunctional communicative device. Here we are going to analyze its use only in interrogative utterances as this particle often indicates pragmatic transposition of a speech act. For example:

"Are you <u>really</u> going to marry that schmuck? "I thought you liked Palmer," she protested. "Listen, I like Elvis but it doesn't mean you should marry him." [14, p. 304].

The speaker implies that the hearer should not marry Elvis. *Really* is the illocutionary indicator of a pragmatic transposition: the question becomes a directive: *Don't marry this guy!* The illocutionary force of the directive is confirmed by the further context.

In the examples to follow *really* is also the marker of pragmatic transposition:

"Well, you've just received an e-mail threatening your children. Do you <u>really</u> think this is the best time to go one-to-one with a convicted child killer?" [10, p. 110].

The speaker resorts to *really* to make the hearer give up her plan. The question gets an illocutionary force of a directive: *Give up this idea!*

In conclusion, we have to say that a study of function words, especially those that possess implicit meanings rendered at discourse level, can give a true picture of their various interactive functions. The inherent correlative meaning of contrast makes such units a perfect means of conveying important pragmatic information in dialogical discourse. The latter, in its turn, predetermines the use of these items as effective means of realizing the interlocutor's communicative intention: they participate in the pragmatic transposition of speech acts. Also, they are important components of indirect communicative strategies, especially those of hedging aimed at saving the speaker's face in the process of interaction.

Further research on the topic lies in investigating the role of non-nominating items in topics shift in natural communication.

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