

Internal and External Intensification of the Strategies Used for Expressing Explicit Emotional Gratitude in Macedonian and English

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Abstract - This paper deals with the strategies used for expressing explicit emotional gratitude (SEEEG) in Macedonian (*fala* and *blagodaram*) and English (*thanks* and *thank you*). More precisely, it investigates the process of intensification of SEEEG with internal and external intensifiers which affect both the syntactic and pragmatic structures of these expressions, respectively. The intensification of SEEEG is analyzed in the context of expressing gratitude for favors in particular.

The study is based on a DCT questionnaire, which depicts various situations in which the respondents are prompted to express gratitude for favors. What distinguishes the selected situations one from another is the types of favor which vary according to three parameters: *size* (minor vs. major favor), *status* (potential vs. realized) and *initiator* (speaker-initiated vs. interlocutor-initiated favors).

The study reveals that, in both Macedonian and English, the structure of SEEEG, i.e. the number of internal and external intensifiers, is heavily dependent on the type of favor the speaker is thanking for. In the case of minor already realized favors which were initiated by the speaker, the process of intensification of SEEEG is very mild or non-existent; whereas, in the case of huge favors, irrespective of whether they are realized or potential, and whether they are speaker or interlocutor-initiated, the structure of SEEEG is manifestly modified and extended with different internal and external intensifiers.

Index terms: explicit emotional gratitude, external and internal intensifiers

I. INTRODUCTION

The speech act of expressing gratitude is a universal phenomenon which is of paramount importance in human interactions. Failing to express gratitude sometimes can permanently mar human relations, and, vice versa, expressing gratitude properly can assist significantly in maintaining relationships¹. People feel obliged to be polite and express gratitude in many different occasions. Gratitude is mandatorily expected when someone has done somebody a favor or a service, or, when one has received compliments or good wishes; when one has been invited to go somewhere or do something; or, simply, when one has been offered something. Even though there are many different ways of expressing gratitude (Aijmer, 1996), this paper is concerned only with

expressing explicit emotional gratitude² which in English is realized by means of the expressions: ‘thank you’ and ‘thanks’, which are also known as strategies for expressing explicit and emotional gratitude (SEEEG). According to dictionary definitions³ the main difference between these two expressions is the fact that the former is normally used in formal, whereas the latter in informal context.

Similarly, two separate strategies for expressing explicit emotional gratitude, ‘blagodaram’ and ‘fala’, exist in the Macedonian language. What distinguishes them is the fact that ‘blagodaram’ is considered the formal variant, whereas ‘fala’ - its informal counterpart.⁴

The studies on SEEEG in English have revealed that SEEEG are, in fact, much less frequently used on their own, i.e. without any additional elements. This means that very often they are treated as ‘stems’ which could be further modified, i.e. intensified, to make the speech act of thanking more effective. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) have identified two types of intensifiers: internal intensifiers (II) and external intensifiers (EI). The role of II, according to them, is normally allocated to word classes such as adverbs and emotional/interpersonal expressions (exclamations, vocative, terms of address) whose usage normally contributes to creating a slightly more complex syntactic structures of SEEEG. The category of EI is much more diverse and it comprises a wide variety of different types of expressions. More precisely, Eisenstein and Bodman (1986: 180), and Schauer and Adolphs (2006: 127) have conducted a more profound investigation of EI and discovered that, in most cases, EI are sentential intensifiers which, in fact, represent different types of speech acts such as: promising, complimenting, convincing, refusing, expressing surprise, saying goodbye, offering compensation, complimenting interlocutor, stating reason, confirming

² Apart from the explicit emotional gratitude, there are also: explicit unemotional gratitude (*‘I owe you a debt of gratitude’*); implicit emotional gratitude (*‘That’s kind/nice of you!’*) as well as implicit unemotional gratitude when the speaker is self-deprecating (*‘I am an ingrate/so careless’*).

³ *English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. (Third Edition), Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (www.dictionary.com). Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Fifth Edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

⁴ Big English-Macedonian Dictionary (Second Edition), printed in Macedonia, 2001.

Big Macedonian-English Dictionary (Third Edition), Skopje: Cobiss, 2006.

¹ Searle (1969: 67)

interlocutor’s commitment, stating intent to reciprocate, stating interlocutor’s non-existent obligation, etc. Logically, when the speech act of thanking is enhanced by another accompanying speech act, which is directed at intensifying the expression of gratitude, we are no longer dealing with the syntactic, but the pragmatic structure of SEEEG which becomes much more complex as it contains diverse speech acts.

Taking all these contentions into consideration, the purpose of this research is to look closer at the different types of internal and external intensifiers of SEEEG in Macedonian and English when SEEEG are used for expressing gratitude for favors which could be either already realized or potential; minor or major; and speaker or interlocutor-initiated. Thus, in fact, the study seeks to analyze the syntactic and pragmatic structures of SEEEG which could vary from very simple to very complex. In fact, the study aims at establishing a connection between the process of intensification of SEEEG and certain combinations of the above mentioned types of favors.

As both formal and informal SEEEG are part of the linguistic and cultural legacy of both Macedonian and English native speakers, this study conducts a parallel analysis of this universal linguistic phenomenon, with intent to detect certain similarities and differences in these two languages.

II. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the aims of the study, a DCT (Discourse Completion Task) questionnaire⁵ was designed and conducted. All the situations described in the questionnaire prompt thanking for favors and are very diligently select as to fit the mind frame of both Macedonian and English native speakers. There are 10 different situations (see Appendix) depicted in the questionnaire and all of them include a different combination of the following social parameters:

- 1) The size of the favor (small favor (SF) vs. huge favor (HF));
- 2) The initiator of the favor (interlocutor-initiated favor (IIF) vs. speaker-initiated favor (SIF)) and
- 3) The status of the favor (realized favor (RF) vs. potential favor (PF)).

Some of the situations included in the questionnaire depict formal whereas some informal contexts. In other words, the first set of the ‘incidents’ presented in the questionnaire, allegedly, take place in an office, in class at university etc.; whereas the second set include interactions which supposedly occur at home, in the local supermarket, in the street etc. In both types of situations respondents’ verbal reactions are expected to be in accordance with the formality of the context.

Table I: The situations in the DCT questionnaire

	situation	combinations of the social parameters
	S1 (dinner)	(SF)+(RF)+(SIF)

FAVOURS	S2 (supermarket)	(SF)+(RF)+(SIF)
	S3 (wallet)	(HF)+(RF)+(IIF)
	S4 (time)	(SF)+(RF)+(SIF)
	S5 (weekend house)	(HF)+(PF)+(IIF)
	S6 (computer)	(HF)+(RF)+(SIF)
	S7 (headache)	(HF)+(PF)+(SIF)
	S8 (seminar paper)	(HF)+(PF)+(IIF)
	S9 (promotion)	(HF)+(RF)+(IIF)
	S10 (police)	(HF)+(RF)+(IIF)

The questionnaire was distributed among and filled in by 40 Macedonian and 40 English native speakers. This implies that the analyzed corpus encompassed 400 Macedonian (40 respondents x 10 situations) and 400 English (40 respondents x 10 situations) expressions of gratitude. The equal number of respondents and expressions in both languages was to ensure obtaining optimally objective results which would eventually lead to drawing relevant conclusions.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The analysis of the results with regard to the usage of SEEEG led to several major inferences concerning the process of intensification of SEEEG in Macedonian and English. Thus, for instance, the first striking observation was that in both languages, SEEEG were much more frequently used with intensifiers than without them. Moreover, in some situations, in both Macedonian and English, there were many similarities in the way in which the internal and the external intensifiers were combined with the stems. Thus, for instance, both groups of respondents, used the smallest number of II and EI in the situations which included expressing gratitude for small realized favors initiated by the speaker (C4a (time) and C2 (supermarket)); and, understandably, the highest percentage of intensifiers was noted in the situations which depicted huge realized favors initiated by the speaker (S4 (computer)) as well as huge potential favors initiated by the interlocutor (S9 (promotion), S10 (police) and S8 (seminar paper)).

⁵ Traditionally, DCT questionnaires were used in doing research on the functions of certain pragmatic speech acts within strictly determined parameters, thus, for instance, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) employed it in their analysis of the speech act of requests.

II and EI of SEEEG in Macedonian

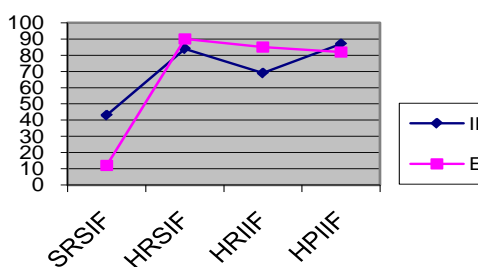


Chart 1

II and EI of SEEEG in English

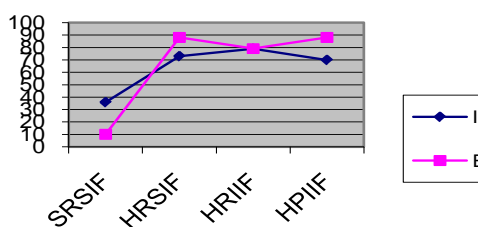


Chart 2

SRSIF – small realized speaker-initiated favor; HRSIF – huge realized speaker-initiated favor; HRIIF – huge realized interlocutor-initiated favor; HPIIF – huge potential interlocutor-initiated favor

In the following two sections we provide a more detailed presentation of the results concerning the internal and external intensifiers of SEEEG, respectively.

A. The Internal Intensifiers of SEEEG

The analysis of the results reveals that almost in all of the situations in the questionnaire which included expressing gratitude for favors with SEEEG, there were additional linguistic elements, i.e. internal intensifiers and this was the case in both Macedonian and English. The only exceptions to this in both analyzed languages were the situations in which SEEEG were used for small favors, as in these situations the respondents preferred using only their ‘stems’. In other words, being aware that in these situations it did not take interlocutors much time or effort to perform the favor on speakers’ behalf, speakers did not feel much indebted to interlocutors and rarely used II to modify their SEEEG.

On the other hand, the bigger the favor, i.e. the more time and effort it took interlocutors to realize the favor, the more obliged speakers felt towards interlocutors. Consequently, willing to show their appreciation they opted for increasing the level of politeness by intensifying SEEEG with additional

linguistic elements, i.e. internal intensifiers, thus, transforming the syntactic structure of SEEEG into a more complex one.

Once the II of SEEEG were detected and singled out, the next step of the analysis was to classify them into common categories. Hence, the following 3 main categories of II of SEEEG have emerged:

- 1) lexical II (nouns, pronouns, exclamations and adverbs);
- 2) phrasal II (prepositional phrases) and
- 3) sentential II (dependent and independent clauses).

Table II: The number of internal intensifiers of SEEEG

No. of II	lexical				phrasal prepositional phrases	sentential	
	многу so/very much	pronouns	exclamations	nouns (terms of address)		dependent clauses	independent clauses
Фала/ благ.	154	95	17	75	28	24	6
thanks/ thank you	129	/	15	88	32	2	3

The most frequently used II of SEEEG in both Macedonian and English SEEEG were the lexical intensifiers. In Macedonian, the respondents preferred using the adverb ‘многу’ (‘a lot’) (e.g. *Благодарам многу/Thank you very much*) and ‘ви’, the short pronominal form of the indirect object ‘вам ви’ (e.g. *Ви благодарам многу/ Thank you very much*) when they addressed a person superior in rank or age in order to signal marked politeness and respect and to add to the formality of their expression of gratitude. The other short pronominal form of the indirect object in Macedonian ‘ти’ (‘тебе ти’) (e.g. *Фала ти!/ Thank you!*), which is used in informal speech when the speaker addresses an interlocutor with an equal status, was much less present in the syntactic structure of SEEEG.

The English informants also preferred intensifying their SEEEG with adverbs. The most frequently used adverb in their expressions of gratitude was ‘so/very much’. Only rarely did they resort to using other adverbs such as: ‘a lot’; ‘indeed’, ‘a bunch’ etc. (e.g. ‘Thanks a lot/ a bunch!’).

In both Macedonian and English, the nouns, i.e. the terms of address were also quite frequently used to intensify the syntactic structure of SEEEG. Within this category, the terms of endearment whose purpose was obviously to increase the level of politeness were particularly noticeable (e.g. ‘*Фала душо/драгу/мили*’; ‘*Thanks honey/sweetie/babe...*’).

Although the number of phrasal II was not very big, yet they were also present in the structure of SEEEG especially when the speaker wanted to state the reason why he was expressing his gratitude towards the interlocutor (e.g. ‘*Фала на љубезноста*’; ‘*Thanks for your help*’).

Although very infrequently, yet both groups of respondents sometimes opted for intensifying their SEEEG with sentential (dependent and independent clauses) II. In fact, the sentential II were slightly more frequent in Macedonian (e.g. 'Ох, благодарам и извинете што не забележав дека е на таа полица' (independent clauses); 'Еее, Ви благодарам многу што ми помогнавте' (dependent clause), in comparison to English, where they were extremely rare ('Thank you and I am at a loss for words!').

In sum, despite the fact that the respondents, whose SEEEG were analyzed in this study are, in fact, representatives of two completely different cultures, the similarities detected with regard to their usage of II of SEEEG, decidedly, by far outnumbered the detected differences.

B. The External Intensifiers of SEEEG

The most frequently used EI were definitely the sentential intensifiers, although, occasionally, the respondents employed some lexical EI as well (e.g. 'Супер' /'Super'; 'Одлично'/'Excellent' (in Macedonian); and 'Great', 'OK' (in English)).

The intensification of the 'stems' of SEEEG with sentential EI, in fact, entails alterations in their pragmatic structure as the final outcome is the creation of long and elaborate speech events made up of several different speech acts, whose sole purpose, despite the differences in their pragmatic function, is to enhance the expression of gratitude itself. To put it differently, in this case, speakers wish to express a higher level of politeness towards their interlocutors, and, consequently, they resort to using EI of SEEES which results in creating evidently prolonged expressions of gratitude.

Table III: The Number of External Intensifiers of SEEEG

	Promise	Compliments	Offers / Suggestions	Surprise	Expressing appreciation for the deed of the	Saying goodbye	Advice	Apology	Lack of obligation
total no. of EI	68	10	12	20	63	5	5	8	9
136									
фала/ благ.									
thanks / thank you	34	6	13	32	82	7	4	6	4

The thorough inspection of the EI of SEEEG in the corpus, yielded results which are definitely in compliance with some of the previous findings regarding the different types of EI (Eisenstain & Bodman, 1986: 171). More precisely, this study confirms the contention that the speech acts represented by the sentential EI, are rather diverse and encompass: expressing surprise (e.g. 'Боже, не можам да поверувам. Фала Ви

многу'/'Ohhhh, my goodness. Thank you! Quite refreshing to see some good people out there these days'); making offers or suggestions ('Многу Ви благодарам. Дали би прифатиле да Ве почестам едно кафе или слично?'/ 'Thank you so much ... Here's \$10. Buy yourself something!'), making promises (e.g. 'Ви благодарам шефе! Ке продолжам со добрата работа! Thank you for having confidence in my abilities. I will not disappoint you!'), expressing compliments (e.g. 'Ептем фала! Срце си!'), expressing a lack of obligation (e.g. 'Thank you so much! You did not have to put yourself into such a trouble on my account!'), expressing apologies (e.g. 'Thank you so much! Sorry to bother you!') etc.

Nevertheless, the analysis of SEEEG in both languages also resulted in identifying one additional type of EI which has not been mentioned in the previous classifications of EI. The term that we believe accurately describes this EI is *expressing appreciation for the deed of the interlocutor* who did something very beneficial to the speaker (e.g. 'Ви благодарам многу! Ова е навистина убаво од Ваша страна!'/ 'Thank you very much! This is really very nice of you!'). As it is shown in Table 3, expressing appreciation for the deed of the interlocutor was, in fact, the most frequently used external intensifier of SEEEG in both languages.

With respect to the usage of EI of SEEEG in the different types of favors depicted in the situations in the questionnaire, the every first striking insight is that, in both Macedonian and English SEEEG, EI were not present at all in the situations which included thanking for small favors. Obviously, in those situations, the respondents did not deem it necessary to prolong the length of their SEEEG with EI. In contrast, their presence was strongly felt in the case of huge favors irrespective of whether they were already realized speaker-initiated favors (S(computer)) or potential favors initiated by the interlocutor (S5 (weekend house), S7 (headache), S8 (seminar paper), S9 (promotion), S10 (police)).

The reason for resorting to more intense usage of EI in these situations could be attributed to the extremely pronounced feeling of indebtedness on the part of the speakers towards their interlocutors. What is particularly interesting about EI of SEEEG in these situations is the fact that, more often than not, the structures of SEEEG are enriched not just with one EI, but with combinations of two, three and sometimes even more EI concurrently (e.g. 'Ова е нов предизвик и голема мативација за мене. Во иднина би се трудела уште повеќе да ги задоволам вашите очекувања. Ви благодарам многу!'/ 'This is a new challenge and a great motivation for me. In the future I would try even harder to meet your expectations. Thank you very much!').

The intensification of SEEEG with EI was also marked by certain similarities and differences in Macedonian and English. Thus, it was interesting to note that, although not to exactly the same extent, but both Macedonian and English respondents in some of the situations tended to apply the same EI of SEEEG. Thus, for instance, in S10 (police) the EI used by both groups of respondents was the speech act of promising (that they would never repeat the same mistake). Similarly, in S9 (promotion), both groups of respondents intensified their SEEEG with the speech act of promising (that they would meet their superior's expectations).

Contrarily, in S7 (headache), which included thanking for a huge potential favor instigated by the interlocutor, the Macedonian respondents resorted to using compliments as EI, whereas the English respondents expressed a lack of

obligation. Similar differences were spotted in S3 (purse) in which despite the fact that both groups of respondents used offers as EI of SEEEG, yet, the nature of their offers differed drastically. The offers of the Macedonian respondents referred to buying the interlocutor a drink, whereas, the offers of the English respondents included money as a reward. All these differences could, undoubtedly, be attributed to the inevitable cultural differences which mark both the speech and behavior of these two completely distinct groups of respondents.

IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, in those situations in which SEEEG were used to express gratitude for major favors, irrespective of whether the favors were potential or already realized, and irrespective of whether they were speaker/interlocutor-initiated, there was a very intensive usage of both II and EI, which resulted in creating manifestly longer and more complex expressions of gratitude.

When SEEEG were used as standardized, ritualized responses, i.e. in situations when the respondents were expected to express gratitude for minor favors, the intensification of SEEEG with II and EI was weaker, and, consequently, the length of SEEEG varied from rather short expressions of gratitude which included only the stems of SEEEG to expressions of a medium length, which apart from the stems also included an internal intensifier such as an adverb or a noun, for instance.

The explanation which can be provided for these findings is that both groups of the respondents naturally felt more obliged and more indebted to their interlocutor in the former case and that is why they tended to express a higher degree of politeness by prolonging and enhancing their expressions of gratitude with internal and external intensifier.

APPENDIX

The situations in the DCT questionnaire:

S1 (dinner)

You asked a member of your immediate family during supper to pass you the bowl with the salad because it was out of your reach and he/she was closer to it. He /she did that for you.

S2 (supermarket)

You are trying out a new supermarket in the area but couldn't find certain products in it. You ask one of the employees to help you. He/she directs you to the right shelf.

S3 (wallet)

As you are walking down the street unknown passer-by who was walking behind you informed you that your wallet had fallen out of your purse.

S4(time)

You are waiting for the bus at the bus stop. There is another person there waiting. You don't know each other but you need to find the exact time, so you ask him/her.

S5 (weekend house)

You and your family are going on holiday for two weeks. Your colleague from work has offered you to stay in his weekend house.

S6 (computer)

There was something wrong with the computer in your office. Since you didn't know how to fix it yourself, you asked one of your colleagues to help you out (even though you don't cooperate closely with this person since he works in another department for the same company and you don't see each other

often). After an hour of hard work he manages to fix your computer.

S7 (headache)

You are the general manager of a big corporation. You have got a very important meeting scheduled for the next day with a foreign delegacy which is interested to cooperate with you. You are preparing yourself for the meeting but you have a terrible headache. One of your employees who is also your close associate offers to finish the job instead of you even though it would take him 5 to 6 hours overtime work.

S8 (seminar paper)

You are writing a seminar paper but you have a major problem finding adequate literature. One of your professors (who has just started teaching you) accidentally overhears your discussion about this problem with your fellow students and offers to lend you some very useful literature. You feel very grateful since he is the last person you would expect to help you.

S9 (promotion)

Six months ago you started working for a new company. Today you have been asked to go to the manager's office and the manager informed you that you are being promoted to a better position and given a raise.

S10 (police)

The police stops you for speeding. This is your first offence so the police officer decides not to fine you and you get away with just a warning.

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