

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACT PATTERNS

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**Abstract:** *The paper aims at investigating specific methodological practices for analysing and examining speech act structures in a comparative study (English and Bulgarian). It further focuses on the methodological nomenclature and the related research questions; the exact type of speech act and the respective performative verb characterizing the illocutionary utterance. In that respect the verb 'accept' and its relevant grammatical structures in English and Bulgarian were chosen to illustrate the different aspects in the proposed methodological model. The database is taken from BNC (British National Corpus) of spoken language and ten TV broadcasts of a popular Sunday programme ('The Day Starts with Georgi Lyubenov').*

**Keywords:** *acknowledgements, methodology, pragmatic meaning, speech acts, valency patterns*

### Introduction

Comparative analysis as a matter of thorough research and in-depth investigation asks for a specific purpose and adequate approach. The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate particular analytical techniques by using the given analysis which could become a solid basis for students in obtaining and mastering specific linguistic competences, speech acts expertise in particular. The analysis is based on the profound set of linguistic exponents and their interrelations and though the research is of typological-characteristic nature the present survey proceeds from the assumption that the researcher is trying to find answers to questions that come from practice, for example, inaccuracies in learners' verbal production or inadequate pragmatic uses of a particular illocutionary speech act.

One of the ways to find answers to such questions is that the researcher should create a huge database of material divided into two main corpora, in English and Bulgarian respectively. In this article, the examining bodies are BA and MA students in English studies from the University of Shumen, Bulgaria, whose sufficient set of vocabulary knowledge, grammar competence, and pragmatic skills could guarantee the feasibility of the extracted material under the guidance of the researcher him/herself. It is considered that such an exploratory research of collecting and processing linguistic data will prove useful for advanced students in English in obtaining deeper knowledge in the sphere of corpus linguistics so that valid assumptions can be made. In that respect, the object of the research are the different valency/syntactic patterns of the performative verb 'accept' in English and Bulgarian and their respective semantic and pragmatic uses.

## Previous research in the field

In recent years there has been a profuse set of research works regarding the issue of cross-cultural speech act realization and illocutionary force interpretations examined in different language surroundings (Murphy, Neu 1996: 191-216; Economidou-Kogatsidis 2013: 21-38; Spyridoula 2014: 35-62). However, the number of articles exploring the similarities and differences of a particular speech act and its respective performative verb/s in English and Bulgarian with regard to its grammatical patterns, semantic nuances, and situational contexts, is quite limited. There are single cases of comparative studies on compliments (Yakimova 2012: 63-77) and apologies (Slavyanova 2012) as well as more general surveys (Vlahova 2000; Dimitrova 2009: 61-68), however, the speech act of acceptance presented by the performative verb 'accept' has not been explored so far with regard to the criteria of analysis required in this paper.

There are several basic classifications of speech acts in pragmatics (Austin 1962; Strawson 1964: 439-460; Searle 1969; Hymes 1972: 269-293; Bach, Harnish 1979: 203-231) which extensively overlap and over time have evolved and developed and shed extra light on certain aspects such as distinguishing 'speech act' and 'successful speech act', the meaning of a performative utterance in favour of the truth conditional semantics and its meaning with regard to felicity conditions in pragmatics. Generally, the communicative speech acts have been separated in five basic groups (Searle 1969):

**Assertives.** Statements which commit the speaker to something that has already happened or is taking place at the time; statements which provide information mainly about past or present events describing a state of affairs in the world: *It is raining outside.*

**Directives.** They are regarded as attempts on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to do something or change the addressee's obligations in order to perform an action such as warnings, commands: *Don't touch this.*

**Commissives.** These communicative acts are viewed as verbal commitments made by one person (the speaker) to another (the hearer) to do a specific activity in the future such as promising, offering, accepting: *I promise I'll come on time.*

**Expressives.** They express how the speaker feels in a given context or situation focusing on the psychological state/emotional aspect of the utterance, in compliments, apologies, thanks: *I really appreciate your kindness.*

**Declaratives.** They aim to change the state of affairs (as in confirming a treaty, declaring war/that something is true, etc.): *I confirm one's suspicion.*

According to the above given classification, the verb 'accept' should be examined as a commissive speech act, though with a view to Bach and Harnish's scale (1979) in which the speech acts are grouped in 4 basic sets

(constatives, directives, commissives and acknowledgements), the verb 'accept' can be also regarded as a speech act of acknowledgement. These aspects are further investigated in the paper.

### Research Questions

The data were extracted from BNC of spoken language in which all syntactic combinations of the verb 'accept' in its first person singular form, present simple tense could be identified and collected and data taken from ten consecutive emissions/broadcasts of a popular Bulgarian infotainment TV format in which the interlocutors consist of people who have great expertise in whatever topic is being dwelt on in the show and perform various types of illocutionary utterances. In that respect the paper aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) What syntactic patterns of the verb 'accept' were found in the BNC by Bulgarian learners of English;
- 2) What syntactic patterns of the Bulgarian equivalent of the verb 'accept' were extracted from the TV programme emissions;
- 3) To what extent the grammatical patterns in both corpora conform to similar grammatical forms;
- 4) How the grammatical form of the utterance interacts with the success or non-success of communicative act performance with regard to contextual factors.

### Methods

A database of all 'accept' speech acts was compiled based on manual reading of the monologue and dialogue interactions and transcripts taken from bnc of spoken language. The bulgarian corpus of data was collected by downloading the discussion/debate sessions from <http://video.Bnt.Bg>.

Turning to the linguistic material analysis the basic entry of the verb 'accept' and its respective syntactic patterns are discussed on the basis of the Valency patternbank model (Herbst 2004: 7) which centralizes on the valency/complement endings of the English verbs. The quantitative analysis of data refers only to the basic performative structures. According to the Valency theory the verb is a central lexical unit which has the property of valency carrier in that it can open one or more valency slots which can be realized by a complement. The complements can be of different grammatical form and function: a complement noun phrase ([NP]), a complement gerundial phrase ([V-ing]), a complement clausal phrase ([CI]), a complement infinitive phrase ([to-INF]), etc. An extended valency pattern examination of all grammatically valid 'accept' valency patterns in English and Bulgarian and respective quantitative statistical modelling are presented in the research. Each separate valency pattern is indicated with the letter **P** (**P<sub>1</sub>**, **P<sub>2</sub>** ...).

Students were provided with the basic valency pattern framework (Herbst 2004: 7) which they had to apply to the examined performative verb and its equivalent in Bulgarian language. They were also asked to excerpt structures in which the performative verb 'accept' is manifested with a modal verb of present and future time reference (*will, must, have to, should*). After the utterances were grouped into types of valency patterns, the occurrences of the communicative acts were calculated and presented in percentages. This quantitative representation was made in order to examine the fourth research question, that is, the implication of contextual factors in the use of an exact speech act in different cultural environments.

### Data Analysis

The analysis follows three steps of investigation which refer to the English verb and its Bulgarian equivalent respectively (*priemam, priznavam*). First, the verbs are discussed with a view to their grammatical form; second – propositional content; third – contextual meaning and pragmatic use.

- The verb **ACCEPT** (in English language)

The verb 'accept' in English language functions is a full verb and can be a central constituent of the Verb phrase, respectively of the clause and as such it can be considered as transitive and intransitive.

In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 9<sup>th</sup> Edition (2015) six basic syntactic patterns of the verb 'accept' were registered:

- P<sub>1</sub>**                    **accept + [no object]** (intransitive)  
 ex.                    *Urgent measures should be considered and I accept.*
- P<sub>2</sub>**                    **accept + [NP<sub>something</sub>]** (transitive)  
 ex.                    *I accept your offer.*
- P<sub>3</sub>**                    **accept + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + from + [NP<sub>someone</sub>]** (transitive)  
 ex.                    *I accept the present from your boss.*
- P<sub>4</sub>**                    **accept + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + for + [NP<sub>something</sub>]** (transitive)  
 ex.                    *I will only accept this for no less than €1000.*
- P<sub>5</sub>**                    **accept + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + as + [NP<sub>something</sub>]** (transitive)  
 ex.                    *I accept his presentation as an official report.*
- P<sub>6</sub>**                    **accept + that + [CL]** (transitive)  
 ex.                    *I accept that she had to make more of an effort.*

In BNC of spoken language 6 utterances were identified following P<sub>2</sub> and P<sub>6</sub> formats in which a modal verb is added to the central lexical unit (the verb 'accept'):

**P2a modal verb**<sub>will/have to/should</sub> + **accept** + **that** + [**NP**<sub>something</sub>]  
(transitive)

ex. HVH S pub debate: *I will accept the offer, sir, out of great interest.*

**P6a modal verb**<sub>must</sub> + **accept** + **that** + [**CL**]  
(transitive)

ex. JoB S meeting: *I must accept that the overall increase will propose a new trend ...*

The first pattern (P1) is not coupled by a complement or a valency indicator which directly makes it intransitive whereas all other syntactic patterns (P2-P6) are succeeded by one or two complements making the verb transitive.

With respect to its **propositional** content the entry reveals several semantic meanings:

1. The act of taking or receiving (something offered) with approval or favour: *accept a present/proposal.*
2. The act of agreeing or consenting to: *accept an apology*
3. Responding affirmatively to: *accept an invitation.*
4. Admitting responsibility or blame for something, duties: *accept responsibility for what has happened.*
5. Accommodating/reconciling oneself to: *accept the situation*
6. Regarding something as true or sound, give credit to, put confidence in, be convinced of, have faith in, recognize, acknowledge: *accept a legal appeal/explanation.*
7. Making somebody feel welcome: *accept someone in the community*

All the above cited meanings refer to different propositional (sentence) content and they can be summarized into two main groups regarding their illocutionary force:

A: acts expressing commissive pragmatic meaning, and

B: acts expressing acknowledgements.

A clear distinction between the above-mentioned types of pragmatic meaning is hard to make since the type of illocutionary act and the type of attitude that is expected to be observed on the part of the speaker in some cases can be contextually constrained. There are four main constituents that feature any illocutionary utterance, namely: a speaker, a hearer, the speaker's attitude /the intended meaning/ and the given context (Bach, Harnish 1979). All these characteristics also called situational roles, are always present in any communicative act. The question here is since any performative utterance aims to provoke a kind of

reaction on the part of the hearer, in what way the intended meaning manifested by the speaker should be interpreted correctly so that the speech act can be considered effective (genuine) or successful. And here comes the crux of the matter: whether the hearer will be able to interpret correctly the inferred meaning under the given situational factors. The speaker might be willing to express his/her wishes explicitly and may have considered that what s/he intended was clear enough to be properly understood but in fact, the risk of attributing to the hearer the same beliefs and knowledge as one's own is rather high. In that respect, native speakers of English must not be taught how to use language in text and how to use language in context, though inter-cultural misunderstandings can occur due to an erroneous interpretation of the speaker's communicative intentions as well as their abilities and preferences by the hearer (Bach 1994: 463–87). All these alternative factors should be viewed when distinguishing commissives from acknowledgements so that foreign language learners be familiar with the specific nuances.

The commissive aspect of the verb 'accept' refers mainly to the propositional meaning of the verb that, in a relevant sense, is to answer favourably to an invitation/request revealing the attitude that one (the speaker) is willing to commit oneself to a preferred course of action as in the example: *Would you agree to answer positively to join the CEO annual Christmas party? – I will accept the invitation.* In the given example the interlocutor uttering the communicative act (the underlined sentence) commits him/herself to consenting to the action they have accepted. Obviously a set of conditions characteristic to pragmatics (the so called felicity conditions) gain prominence, namely the *propositional act, preparatory condition, sincerity condition and essential condition*. The interlocutor performing the communicative act accepts the proposition (the propositional act) and commits him/herself to do it while at the same time presupposing (this is the preparatory condition) that under some background circumstances the hearer or another person has requested the proposition in a conversation beforehand. The *sincerity and essential conditions* regard the psychological state of the speaker and the inferred intentions of the speaker to agree/disagree with the other party. The communicative act can be considered effective/successful when all these four conditions are present. It should be made clear that the propositional content is easy to identify on sentence level and can be described as true or false which directly associates it with the truth-value semantics while the other three conditions can be observed beyond the confines of the sentence but in a broader context (a combination of two or more utterances) which is related to pragmatics and makes the examined speech act viewed as felicitous or infelicitous. Examples of commissive illocutionary force:

ex. JIT S courtroom: ... *I accept the sums which he spoke of as her potential earnings.* (1<sup>st</sup> semantic meaning)

ex. KGM S meeting ... *I accept that they've been consistently in favour of a total merger.* (5<sup>th</sup> semantic meaning)

As the verb ‘accept’ reveals seven semantic meanings only one semantic meaning does not refer to a commissive illocutionary force criterion, that is the sixth semantic content which aims at recognizing the rights, validity of something/ someone by admitting them real or true.

According to Bach and Harnish (1979) the verb ‘accept’ also refers to the speech act of acknowledgement, expressing different propositional content. This type of communicative acts matches extensively to Searle’s ‘expressive’ communicative acts in that they may express a specific attitude regarding the hearer who has been affected by some event that is being acknowledged according to social expectations. Acknowledgements have more in common with psychological conditions which may arise to given states of affairs and provoke certain feelings. In all cases of the speech act of acknowledgement, the communicative act itself along with the intended attitude being expressed presupposes a specific contextual setting or conversational contour (the speech situation; the speech event /a combination of utterances surrounding the central communicative act/; the interlocutors’ social status and social distance). The following examples from BNC illustrate the acknowledging aspect of the performative verb ‘accept’:

ex. J41 S meeting: ... *I accept the fact that they have the overview for emergency planning.*

ex. FD6 S courtroom: ... *but I accept your Honour’s ruling and the thinking that lies behind it.*

It is not an easy task to split the two pragmatic meanings as at times they may intertwine and simultaneously imply expressive and commissive attitude. Since illocutionary force infers the intentions of the speaker to provoke a certain reaction on behalf of the hearer both types of attitude may bear the nuances of a specific emotion which respectively implies expressiveness.

The British corpus comprises 381 ‘accept’ utterances, 59 of which are used in spoken discourse in which the verb ‘accept’ and ‘accept’ structures occur as commissive communicative acts and acknowledgement in first person singular, present simple tense. The data were counted and classified with respect to the frequency of occurrences of ‘accept’.

The overall number of ‘accept’ utterances and their percent value is illustrated in the table:

British corpus	Number of utterances	Percent
<b>P1</b> <i>accept + [no object]</i>	1	1.69%
<b>P2</b> <i>accept + [NP<sub>something</sub>]</i>	21	35.59%
<b>P2a</b> <i>modal verb + accept + that + [NP<sub>something</sub>]</i>	6	10.17%

<b>P3</b> <i>accept</i> + [ <i>NP</i> <sub>something</sub> ] + <i>from</i> + [ <i>NP</i> <sub>someone</sub> ]	0	0.00%
<b>P4</b> <i>accept</i> + [ <i>NP</i> <sub>something</sub> ] + <i>for</i> + [ <i>NP</i> <sub>something</sub> ]	0	0.00%
<b>P5</b> <i>accept</i> + [ <i>NP</i> <sub>something</sub> ] + <i>as</i> + [ <i>NP</i> <sub>something</sub> ]	1	1.69%
<b>P6</b> <i>accept</i> + <i>that</i> + [ <i>CL</i> ]	27	45.76%
<b>P6a</b> <i>modal verb</i> + <i>accept</i> + <i>that</i> + [ <i>CL</i> ]	3	5.08%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>~100%</b>

In the British corpus two syntactic patterns rank first in the scale of frequency: P2 and P6. **P2** *accept* + [*NPsomething*] valency model becomes explicit in 21 utterances which is approximately 35.59% of the total number of occurrences offering one nominal complement. The nominal complement itself indicated in the corpus is not a nominal clause which in linguistics is regarded as a subordinate clause that can function as a noun phrase. It is illustrated either by a one-word NP denoting an entity or a combination of a noun and a modifier/determiner. This can be illustrated in the following examples:

ex. J46 S\_meeting: ... *I accept the difficulties but ... cannot excuse the rude manners...*

ex. J42 S\_meeting: Speaker 1 ... *I would appeal for political asylum.*  
Speaker 2 ... *I accept that completely.*

In J42 example the NP is presented by the demonstrative pronoun *that* in a combination with an intensifier (*extremely*). In the given case *that* stands as a substitute either to an act, thing, situation or experience which has been previously mentioned whereas the role of the intensifier is not to change the propositional content which linguistically is not possible, but to enhance the emotional contour adding an expressive meaning to the utterance. There could be a case for saying that with regard to illocutionary force it is fairly problematic to distinguish which pragmatic meaning prevails, the commissive aspect or the act of acknowledgement. If speaker 2's inferred intention is to express approval to the respective actions S1 considers to take, then the utterance may be regarded as a commissive act, though it is also quite possible that speaker 2 may simply want to recognize S1's words as logically valid and credible. Common to both aspects is the role of the intensifier which undoubtedly would strengthen either the act of approval or the act of credibility implying a more sincere and personal approach to the utterance; it can be further considered as a maximiser or an amplifier denoting the upper extreme in a scale (Longman Group 1985). In the first P2 example (J46) the commissive aspect becomes more distinct as the propositional content reveals

the fifth semantic meaning in that the speaker accommodates him/herself to the circumstances.

Regarding **P6** valency pattern, in 27 out of 59 utterances (45.76%) the performative verb is followed by a *that*-clause (**accept** + *that* + [CL]) or a clausal complement which in contrast to P2 provides a clear explanation what the speaker agrees with or approves of. The intended illocutionary force can only be recognized if the act of acceptance is part of a combination of utterances. For example:

ex. **A6F S** debate: ... *I may assert you how harsh the anxieties of one could be ... I accept that such feelings are a sign of weakness...*

The example comprises two communicative acts: an act of assertion and an act of acceptance. The first utterance refers directly to the group of assertives, while the second, to the group of acknowledgements (recognizing the statement as true).

The next valency pattern which ranks third in the scale of preference is **P2a modal verb** + **accept** + *that* + [NP<sub>something</sub>], which becomes explicit with three modal verbs, namely, *will*, *have to* and *should* in six 'accept' utterances. They are interesting cases as on the one hand we have the certainty of the performative 'accept', but on the other hand its genuineness is lessened by the use of the modal. The speaker *will* or *will not* accept, s/he intends to do it, but in fact is not doing it. By using the modal verb *will* the speaker will infer that the communicative act of accepting something is less probable to happen. Its epistemic nature reflects the degree of likelihood or certainty which as a result may affect the propositional content as being true or not true. Considering the *have to* pattern, the *have to*-expression is not a modal verb but bears certain aspects of modality. It does not belong to the same syntactic class of words like *shall*, *will*, *should*, but can express epistemic or deontic nuances in that it could add to the propositional content the aspect of impersonal or outside obligation, which can be interpreted as not being a speaker's opinion in that it lessens the commissive force. Turning to the *should* pattern, it is more of a deontic nature regarding the possibility to act in terms of duty and personal freedom. In contrast to the *have to*-expression the speaker may feel him/herself personally engaged in accepting the other speaker's proposition indicating a kind of personally involved obligation and correctness. On the other hand, in **P6a pattern modal verb**<sub>must</sub> + **accept** + *that* + [CL] the modal verb *must* connotes the state of internal present obligation which is imposed on the speaker by himself; *must* is also a deontic modal, related to duty or obligation due to ethical reasons, i.e. it is non-epistemic (logical) and is discourse-oriented.

Taking **P1** (**accept** + [no object]) and **P5** **accept** + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + **as** + [NP<sub>something</sub>] patterns next, they are revealed only in two examples in BNC which make them syntactically and pragmatically uncommon in spoken English.

There are no representative cases of **P3** **accept** + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + **from** + [NP<sub>someone</sub>] and **P4** **accept** + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + **for** + [NP<sub>something</sub>] valency structures in British corpus of spoken English.

Another point of interest in the British corpus analysis are 6 utterances which follow P2 and P6 syntactic patterns in which the verbal head complex consists of emphatic *do* and the performative verb. The emphatic *do* illustrating the emphatic mood brings additional implication to the pragmatic meaning. As it is typically stressed it may reveal a stronger level of determination on the part of the speaker to truly accept the act, though, on the other hand it can imply an outside intervention which might have forced the speaker to accept the situation. Having this into account, it is difficult to say if the speech act will be felicitous or infelicitous in that the sincerity condition may not be regarded.

- The verb ACCEPT and its translated version in Bulgarian language

In Bulgarian language there are two translated versions of the English verb 'accept': (1) *priemam* and (2) *priznavam* **implying a commissive meaning**. The first verb covers extensively the semantic meaning of accepting an offer/a proposal, approving an act which to a certain degree may correspond to commissive pragmatic interpretation whereas the second verb refers mostly to acknowledging or recognizing a specified factual or legal situation as valid and probable which, conversely, may categorize it as bearing the aspects of acknowledgements. What is more, the verb *priznavam* bears also the semantic content of confessing to having done something, admitting/acknowledging one's guilt. The propositional meaning of *priemam* is similar to the meaning of *priznavam* but the implicatures derived from their pragmatic meanings are different. When one says (*Az*) *priemam* (*I accept*) the propositional meaning of the phrase is to connote the state of recognizing a process without attempting to change it or protest against it whereas in the case of (*Az*) *priznavam* the phrase connotes the state of personal feeling of guilt and should ask for a redress in order to balance the social harmony. It is also the case that *priemam* sounds more distant and formal while *priznavam* is considered more neutral in that it is more empathetic and emotional and may infer higher level of sincerity. The English verb 'accept' combines both pragmatic attitudes and the hearer is left to his/her own judgement in recognizing the genuineness of the communicative act.

With regard to their grammatical forms both verbs are transitive and imperfective. In contrast to the Bulgarian equivalents, the English verb 'accept' cannot reveal perfective or imperfective forms as the aspect of perfectiveness is ambiguous and unstable in English language. Therefore, 'accept' as a stative verb does not use the progressive or imperfective forms. On the other hand, *priemam/priznavam* in Bulgarian as imperfective verbs do not present the verbal action as a complex and completed act (Molhova, Stamenov, Stoevsky 1991) within certain boundaries of beginning and end but describe the action in its internal structure which could reveal continuous, habitual and iterative aspects.

Going further into the discussion, 48 utterances were identified by the students with regard to both entries. The two verbs in Bulgarian follow almost the same valency patterns as the English verb **accept**:

- P1** [VP<sub>priemam/priznavam</sub>] + [no object]  
**P2** [VP<sub>priemam/priznavam</sub>] + [NP<sub>something</sub>]  
**P3** [VP<sub>priemam/priznavam</sub>] + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + **from** + [NP<sub>someone</sub>]  
**P4** [VP<sub>priemam/priznavam</sub>] + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + **for** + [NP<sub>something</sub>]  
**P5** [VP<sub>priemam/priznavam</sub>] + [NP<sub>something</sub>] + **as** + [NP<sub>something</sub>]  
**P6** [VP<sub>priemam/priznavam</sub>] + **that** + [CL]

The table below shows the frequency distribution of the respective patterns:

Bulgarian corpus	Number of occurrences/ percent		Number of occurrences/percent	
	PRIEMAM		PRIZNAVAM	
<b>P1</b> VP + [no object]	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
<b>P2</b> VP + [NP <sub>something</sub> ]	16	33.33%	0	0.00%
<b>P3</b> VP+ [NP <sub>something</sub> ] + <i>from</i> + [NP <sub>someone</sub> ]	1	2.08%	0	0.00%
<b>P4</b> VP + [NP <sub>something</sub> ] + <i>for</i> + [NP <sub>something</sub> ]	12	25.00%	0	0.00%
<b>P5</b> VP + [NP <sub>something</sub> ] + <i>as</i> + [NP <sub>something</sub> ]	5	10.41%	0	0.00%
<b>P6</b> VP + <i>that</i> + [CL]	3	6.25%	11	22.92%
<b>Total (48)</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>77.08%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22.92%</b>

With reference to the verb *priemam* the leading position takes P2 syntactic pattern. In 16 out of 48 cases *priemam* appears in P2 valency pattern which adds a nominal complement clause denoting either an action or an entity though not a person. The performative verb is followed by a noun phrase which answers the wh-question *what* (what actually the speaker accepts). Interestingly, in the Bulgarian corpus in all 16 utterances the speaker either accepts an offer or a proposal/invitation/fact whereas in the British database in 9 out of 21 cases the speaker accepts responsibility. For example:

ex. *Mozhe da pristapim napravo kam obsazhdane. Priemam predlozhenieto na prof. Kamenov...* (in Eng.: *We can proceed directly to discussion. I accept prof. Kamenov's suggestion*).

ex. H9C S courtroom: ... *it was a case of misunderstanding though I accept any punishments that you give me.*

ex. C8F S classroom: ... *The incident was my fault and I accept full responsibility ...*

The very act of acknowledging responsibility can induce empathy on the part of the other speaker and make the communicative act pragmatically successful with regard to the level of sincerity. In contrast, in Bulgarian utterances of P<sub>2</sub> syntactic pattern it seems that the speaker utters a clichéd phrase which is used as a routinized structure when accepting an offer. Additionally, the risk of the communicative act of not being considered sincere is very low as the factor 'guilt' is not present in the acts when one accepts simply an offer or a proposal. In both corpora the P<sub>2</sub> utterances will be considered successful as the pragmatic contour differs.

The next pattern which counts second in order of frequency is P<sub>4</sub> at one quarter of all utterances. It was observed that in 5 out of 12 P<sub>4</sub> cases the speaker acknowledges responsibility for something which needs to be specified:

ex. *Priemam otgovornostta za problemite s vodniya rezhim.* (in Eng.: *I accept the responsibility for water restriction use*).

Indeed, English native speakers prefer to use P<sub>2</sub> when accepting responsibility while Bulgarians tend to use P<sub>4</sub> giving an explanation or an account for the responsibility. From one side the English natives simply say *I accept responsibility*, while in the case of Bulgarian natives it is *I accept the responsibility for ...* In both cases the aim is to provoke respective attitude so that the sentence can be considered sincere. If the sentence is believed in we can jump to the conclusion that the sentence is matched to the proposition it expresses, i.e. to the information content in fact. The difference between both utterances (English and Bulgarian) may seem to be that Bulgarians prefer to reassure their statement in order to receive a one-hundred-percent positive feedback from the other party. Though responsibility is present in the English and Bulgarian utterances in the English version it sounds as if the speaker seeks to diminish or minimize it trying to protect his/her own self-image (Kasper 2001: 33-60).

With regard to P<sub>5</sub>, P<sub>6</sub> and P<sub>3</sub> with respective numbers of 5, 3 and 1 utterances the propositional content along with the pragmatic aspect do not differ substantially compared to the other patterns, though no cases of accepting responsibility have been indicated. P<sub>1</sub> does not become explicit in the representative spoken corpus which can imply the idea that the pattern is not popular in Bulgarian language as well as in English spoken discourse.

Turning to the verb *priznavam*, 11 cases of P<sub>6</sub> were excerpted from the corpus which significantly cover the propositional attitude of taking responsibility though another aspect is being added which lacks in *priemam* utterances, namely, the speaker admits that they either have performed an act of transgression or wrongdoing and feel guilty about it or have said or stated something they feel bad about. In three of the acts the modal verb *tryabva* is present, which in English becomes explicit in three different modal verbs (*must, have to, should*). In fact, the semantics of the modal verb *tryabva* comprises aspects of inside and outside obligation, necessity, advice which are separately distributed between the three

modal representatives in English and differ according to the level of obligation (high, neutral and low).

### Results/Key Findings

Based on findings and observations, the overall analysis indicates that:

1. All illocutionary utterances in both corpora expressed in the structure of *accept (priemam, priznavam)* speech acts refer to the sincerity condition in the communicative act and serve a social function in that by accepting to commit a certain action the interlocutor is doing what is socially acceptable and expected.
2. The majority of *accept (priemam)* commissive utterances in both corpora take the form of plain performatives which could be considered beneficial to the hearer as the speaker assumes of an obligation to accept and commit further actions to the proposition made by the other party beforehand.
3. In the Bulgarian corpus the semantic content of recognizing/acknowledging one's legal right/situation or one's guilt is presented by the verb *priznavam*.
4. In both corpora the speakers indicate a level of responsibility being taken into account though the severity of personal engagement varies in both cultures.
5. With reference to modal verbs, deontic modality becomes preferable in the English and Bulgarian corpora, though certain disparities can only be manifested in English language.

### Conclusion and implications

Contributions of the present paper can be seen in the fact that:

- students in English studies can be provided with a solid base in investigating linguistic entries when working with different corpora.
- Valency theory patternbank models (Herbst et al. 2004) can be used as an authoritative tool when dealing with corpus linguistics issues for research into the nature of complementation.
- in pedagogy teachers can help learners acquire not only linguistic knowledge of the way the speech act is realized but also dwell on the pragmatic variables that influence the successful performance of the act.
- teachers can enable learners to perform successful communicative acts in order to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings.

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