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PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF STREET PROTEST DISCOURSE (EXEMPLIFIED WITH PROTESTS IN BELARUS IN 2020)

ABSTRACT: The author analyzes the pragmatic properties of protest discourse, taking into account poster slogans used during mass anti-government protests in Belarus in 2020. The theoretical basis of the research is the concept of discourse, based on four categories: intention, representation, performance and context. The author distinguishes among three types of contexts: cognitive, social and event-related (functional). In accordance with the global function of the protest discourse, three types of constitutive language activities are distinguished: modal-evaluative, modal-disapproving and speech acts of ultimatum. The author analyzes these types of speech acts in detail and provides numerous linguistic examples.

KEYWORDS: discourse, street protest, pragmatics, speech act, evaluation, poster text, slogan, Belarus

Introduction

The mass protests caused by the presidential election fraud in Belarus in August 2020 have become the subject of a number of scientific publications, e.g.: Bykov | Gradyushko 2020; Zelenko 2020; Romanova 2020; Cinkevich 2020; Dinerstein 2020; Gaufman 2020; Kazharski 2021; Kryzhanoŭski 2021; Petz 2020; Rohava | Burkhardt 2020; Yeliseyeŭ 2020, etc. They mainly concern the socio-political and cultural-historical aspects, but they also consider the protests from the point of view of discourse analysis, in particular, taking into account the symbolic and verbal resources involved (Kiklewicz | Pocietchina 2021; Kiklewicz | Mazurkiewicz-Sułkowska | Pocietchina 2021). The subject of this article is a new aspect of street protest discourses, i.e. their pragmatic characteristics, primarily the types of speech acts.

The first part of the paper discusses the theoretical background of the study, namely the role of the pragmatic factor in the implementation of protest discourses. The second part presents an analysis of the empirical material. The object of the study are slogans in posters and in the form of outdoor graphic images used during

demonstrations, processions, flash mobs, happenings, and performances. All the sources have been retrieved from the Internet. The total number of the analyzed slogans (in Russian, Belarusian and English) is 600 units.

1. Pragmatic characteristics of discourse

In this paper, we understand discourse as a speech event containing an ordered sequence of speech acts (Kiklewicz 2018, 9). The existing models of discourse parametrization differ in the content and degree of detailing individual aspects. Many models are directly or indirectly related to the concept proposed in the 1970s and 1980s by M. A. K. Halliday within the framework of systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1973; 2002). In accordance with this approach, four aspects of linguistic activity are distinguished: language system, text, culture and social interaction (see Fig. 1). These aspects are also taken into account in discourse analysis, although they are interpreted differently in various concepts. Thus, R. Wodak (2008, 195) affirms that a comprehensive discourse analysis should take into account four dimensions: 1) the thematic content of texts; 2) discursive strategies (including methods of argumentation); 3) linguistic means; 4) context. Since discourse is a complex form of the linguistic performance realized under certain conditions, the circumstances and the scene of action also become the subject of parametrization. In this regard, such aspects as: action, participants, performance indicators, time, place, tools and materials, clothing and appearance, as well as eligibility conditions are distinguished (van Leeuwen | Wodak 1999, 94). Most of these parameters were previously identified and systematized by D. Hymes (2003, 40).

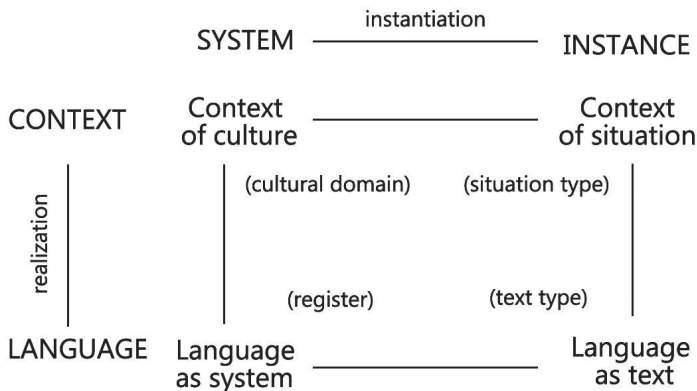


Fig. 1. Four aspects of linguistic activity in systemic-functional grammar (Hassan 2004, 20)

One of the most complete discourse parametrization models has been developed by German researchers (Warnke | Spitzmüller 2008). This is the DIMEAN concept (German: *Diskurslinguistische Mehr-Ebenen-Analyse*). It distinguishes three levels of discourse analysis: intratextual, executive (analysis of discursive actions) and extratextual, herewith each level providing for more particular procedures. Pragmatic problems belong to the intratextual level and include speech acts, presuppositions and implications, which are considered within the framework of a propositionally oriented analysis (German: *propositionsorientierte Analyse*). The German authors note that pragmatic characteristics are poorly studied in discursive-linguistic publications¹.

Discourse, understood as an ordered sequence of speech acts, corresponds to the concept of a macro act. T. A. van Dijk (1992, 215) defines this category as “the global speech act performed by the utterance of a whole discourse, and executed by a sequence of possibly different speech acts”. A macro speech act has a common pragmatic function (or functions). There are rules that explain exactly how a sequence of speech acts is related to its global representation.

In accordance with the above understanding of discourse, three main categories can be distinguished in its structure: mental representation, linguistic (sign) representation, and performance. The mental representation means a fragment of the conceptual experience of the speech subject, which constitutes the area of reasoning and the plan of the content of communications. The linguistic representation means the exteriorization of the content plan in the appropriate linguistic (phonetic, lexical, grammatical) forms, additionally marked for the stylistic aspect. The performance is the implementation of speech acts, taking into account scenes, channels and attributes.

Discourse is necessarily realized in a context, and three types of contexts can be distinguished. The cognitive context encompasses the totality of general knowledge, including collective symbols, precedent phenomena, historical memory, public agenda, system of values, which are more or less directly related to the topic of discourse. The social context is an appropriate communicative program (including social interactions, social relations, social groups, social norms, etc.) within which the discourse is realized. The functional (event) context involves accompanying events, including parallel discourses. Three organic categories of discourse: mental representation, language representation and performance, on the one hand, and context as an external factor, on the other hand, interact with each other: the context affects the conceptualization of reality, the forms of verbalization of meanings and types of sign activity, but the context itself is subject to the influence of the organic factors of discourse (some fragments of discourse become the context for other fragments).

¹ The prohibitive and corrective speech acts in discourses related to the topic of speech culture (German: *sprachpuristischer Diskurs*) are discussed in Moschonas (2008) and Moschonas | Spitzmüller (2009). See also German publications: Brünner | Graefen 1994; Ehlich 1996; Griebhaber 2001; Redder 2008.

2. Pragmatic elements of street protest discourse

The protest discourse is interpreted as a complex and functionally integral sequence of communicative actions of a disapproving and ultimatum nature, expressed in verbal and non-verbal forms, thereby these forms are direct (written or oral appeals, rallies, marches, demonstrations) or indirect (mass media, urban space, natural or artificial attributes). From the point of view of the pragmatic function, the protest discourse is syncretic: it combines elements of informative and directive types. Firstly, a protest consists in a negative assessment of the decisions and actions of a superior (an owner, a manager, a sovereign), as well as the expression of disagreement with them. Thus, the representative (namely, interpretative) speech acts of two types are realized in the structure of the protest discourse: modal-evaluative and modal-disapproving. Secondly, the protest also includes actions of an ultimatum nature, i.e. demands to cancel a superior's decisions and to restore justice.

The starting point for a protest is the superior's actions which violate the public order (the social consensus) and restrict the rights of a certain part of society. This takes place in situations in which a minority seizes power by using violent instruments, as well as in situations in which the rights of a minority are excessively restricted. Thus, from a pragmatic point of view, a protest belongs to the so-called relatives:

Relatives serve as a manifestation of the speaker's positive, negative or indefinite attitude towards the subject of discussion. They are always reactive: they are either reactions to some event, or reactions to someone's speech behavior (Bednarska 2020, 130).

From a social point of view, a protest is based on the general premise of a democratic society according to which power is in the hands of the majority, and the difference between the rights and powers of the majority and the minority is not too large (Mäder 2004, 79ff.). If this order is violated, the citizens express their dissatisfaction and demand the restoration of the status quo.

In terms of their social expediency, protests are ambivalent: on the one hand, protesters are driven by the hope that their demands will be at least partially met. On the other hand, in political reality, including in democratic countries (for example, in Poland), there is a certain resistance of the authorities to protest movements. If protesters understand this, in their actions, along with disapproving and ultimatum elements, expressive and auto-stimulating elements appear (especially plays with signs).

Three types of speech acts: modal-evaluative, modal-disapproving and ultimative have a constitutive status within the protest discourse. At the same time, other types of speech acts are also realized during protests: statements, predictions,

requests, threats, expression of desires and strong emotions, appeals to demonstrators, aesthetic and emotive stimulations, etc. In the following paragraphs I will consider only constitutive speech acts.

As we know, the types of speech acts are determined by form and content. There are typical grammatical forms of speech acts, which are traditionally divided into three categories: affirmative, imperative and interrogative (sometimes exclamatory sentences are also distinguished). In the collected corpus, they are distributed as follows: affirmative acts – 73%, imperative acts – 24%, interrogative acts – 3%. As we can see, the linguistic activity of the protesters is realized mainly in the ascertaining form.

At the same time, it should be noted that the pragmatic intention of the speaker (the person holding the poster with an inscription) is rarely expressed directly, for example, by using a performative verb, and the grammatical structure of the utterance does not always correspond to its pragmatic function. The majority of slogans, on the contrary, have an indirect or syncretic character: behind the stating form, in fact, there is another content, whose recognition is possible thanks to the context, in particular, thanks to the accompanying visual image. Let us exemplify it with the slogan:

- (1) Подари им сердце.
'Give them a heart.'

that was placed on a poster along with an image of a member of the riot squad. Naturally, this imperative (in its form) sentence is not an appeal, a request, or an order – it most likely implements a representative and condemning speech act, i.e. it is equivalent to the following message:

- (2) Омоновцы – жестокие мучители, у них нет сердца.
'Riot policemen are cruel tormentors, they have no heart.'

The categories of speech acts which will be discussed below have been distinguished taking into account the functional criterion.

2.1. Modal-evaluative speech acts

Speech acts of this type consist in the expression of assessments, i.e. an interpretation of an object, event or state of affairs from the point of view of a certain value category (taking into account the relevant rating scale). The most general assessments are “good”, “normal”, “bad”; these are the so-called general assessment values. The assessments, however, also concern particular aspects of the described phenomena: ethical, practical, physical, social, aesthetic, etc. (Kiklewicz 2004, 186).

In principle, evaluative statements belong to the category of interpretative assertives, therefore, their content has three main components:

- 1) I'm informing you that ...
- 2) I think it is good | bad | beautiful | useless, etc. that
- 3) S (description of some object, event, state of affairs)

In speech practice, including protest discourses, the first component is almost always presented in a zero form: the fact of the message follows from the locutionary status of the message, i.e. from the presupposition that it physically exists (represented in a poster, on a wall, etc.). The second component in a direct lexical form also appears extremely rarely, and adjectives or adverbs are used as forms of expression of axiological information, for example, in the following slogans:

- (3) Всё настолько плохо, что вышли даже чернокожие.
[плакат в руках девушки с темным цветом кожи]
'It's so bad that even black people have come out.
[a poster held by a girl with dark skin]'
- (4) Всё так плохо, что вышли даже интроверты.
'Everything is so bad that even introverts have come out.'
- (5) Плохой дядя, уходи!
[плакат в руках ребенка]
'Bad uncle, go away!'
- (6) [a poster in a child's hands]'
- (7) Кровавый геноцид страшнее, чем COVID!!!
'Bloody genocide is worse than COVID!!!'

In the overwhelming majority of cases, assessment is expressed indirectly, i.e. it is contained in the content of one of the lexical elements (usually a noun or a verb), which is located in the third, descriptive part. Most often, such assessments are negative, as the below examples show:

- (8) В застенках мучаются люди.
'People are suffering in the dungeons.'
- (9) Розы гибнут на морозе, юность гибнет в лагерях.
'Roses perish in the cold, youth perishes in camps.'
- (10) Из черной резины сделана власть.
'Power is made of black rubber.'
- (11) Окрестина = Освенцим.
'Akrestina = Auschwitz.'
- (12) Милиция с уродом.
'The police cooperate with a freak.'

In all these and similar cases, the utterance has no illocutionary or intensional indicator, but the relevant content is easily found by using paraphrases, for example:

- (13) > It is bad that people suffer in the dungeons.
- (14) > It is bad that youth perishes in the camps.
- (15) > It is bad that the police cooperate with the freak, etc.

Many verbal lexemes also carry negative information, for example:

- (16) Мой голос украли.
'My vote has been stolen.'
- (17) Скорблю по рублю.
'I grieve for the ruble.'
- (18) 25 лет – ума нет.
'25 years old – no mind.'
- (19) Б'ю жанчын
за грошы і чын.
'I am in the business of beating women for money and rank.'
- (20) Нам мешають свободно дышаць.
'We are prevented from breathing freely.'

The objects of negative assessment are the rigged presidential elections, the repressive actions of the riot police, the general (political, social and economic) situation in the country, and, above all, the personality of Lukashenka himself. Some posters contain insults directed at him:

- (21) Порхай, как бабочка – жаль, что ты таракан.
'Flutter like a butterfly – it is a pity you are a cockroach.'
- (22) Стоп, таракан.
'Stop, cockroach.'
- (23) Не февраль сейчас, не январь.
С днем рождения, тварь!
'Not February now, not January.
Happy birthday, stinker!'
- (24) Я – пяточок, ты – свинья.
[плакат в руках человек с маской поросенка]
'I am a Piglet, you are a pig.
[a poster held by a man with a mask of a little pig]'
- (25) Крыса – ты, а мы – народ.
[рисунок Лукашенко в виде крысы]
'You are the rat, and we are the people.
[a picture showing Lukashenka in the form of a rat]'

The negative assessment of the president is also manifested in the forms used to name him (see Fig. 2). The protesters actively use pejorative nouns *Лука* ‘Luka’, *дед* ‘grandfather’, familiar appeals *Саша* ‘Sasha’, *Саш* ‘Sash’, *Саня* ‘Sanya’, for example:

- (26) Лука слетел с катушек.
‘Luka has gone off the rails.’
- (27) Лука, ты – урод. Хватит грабить свой народ.
‘Luka, you are a freak. Stop robbing your people.’
- (28) Дед тронулся, господа присяжные заседатели.
‘Grandfather has gone mad, gentlemen of the jury.’
- (29) Скинемся деду на билет до Гааги.
‘Let’s chip in for a ticket to The Hague for the grandfather.’
- (30) Дед, ты опять забыл выпить таблетки.
‘Grandfather, you have forgotten to take your pills again.’
- (31) Лука – социально опасный садист.
‘Luka is a socially dangerous sadist.’
- (32) Саня хватит валять Вовку!!!
‘Sanya stop playing Vovka!!!’
- (33) Саша, между нами всё кончено.
‘Sasha, it’s over between us.’
- (34) Саш, вставай, мы всё посчитали².
‘Sash, get up, we have counted everything.’



Fig. 2. Pejorative naming of the president

² Here, a negative assessment is also expressed by the words *урод* ‘freak’, *садист* ‘sadist’, *социально опасный* ‘socially dangerous’.

Irony also serves as a negative assessment of the president. This is the nature of the slogan:

- (35) Лукашенко, скажи 300.
'Lukashenka, say 300.'

The idea behind is slogan is to draw attention to Lukashenka's characteristic way of articulating soft consonants, which he pronounces as hard consonants, following the model of the Belarusian language. The author of the poster points out that Lukashenka pronounces this numeral incorrectly (like 'trysta'), and this (as a manifestation of low culture) causes a critical attitude towards him.

During street protests, such slogans are also actively used, which implements modal-evaluative speech acts with a positive content. They express the protesters' beliefs about those positive values that are opposed to the ideology of power. The most frequently mentioned value concepts are 'freedom', 'truth', 'peace', 'Belarus', 'love', 'equality', 'justice', 'people'. Here are some examples:

- (36) TUT.BY. Честная пресса в темном царстве.
'TUT.BY. Honest press in the dark realm.'
- (37) Жыве Беларусь!
'Let Belarus live!'
- (38) Мы за мир.
'We are for peace.'
- (39) Мы – беларусы, мірныя людзі.
'We are Belarusians, peaceful people.'
- (40) Будзь чалавекам.
'Be human!'
- (41) За нашу и за вашу свободу!
'For our and for your freedom!'
- (42) Беларусь, яна мая.
'Belarus, she is mine.'
- (43) Любовь спасет мир.
'Love will save the world.'
- (44) Мір, каханне, свабода.
'Peace, love, freedom.'

On the one hand, a characteristic of modal-evaluative speech acts is that, as already mentioned, they are usually implemented for account of information contained in the descriptive part of the utterance. Evaluation is incorporated into the pragmatic function of these (syncretic in nature) acts. On the other hand, evaluative statements function as a special kind of implicature, generating additional meanings. Thus, negative statements are functionally equivalent to a call for the denial of the

mentioned subject, its elimination, marginalization, etc., while positive statements, on the contrary, mean a call for acceptance, support, promotion of relevant values in public consciousness and social practice.

2.2. Modal-disapproving speech acts

Protest discourses necessarily include speech acts of disapproval, i.e. expressing disagreement with the actions of the superior-antagonist (Bednarska 2020, 133). The main motivation for the Belarusian protests in 2020 was the disagreement of a significant part of the society with the official results of the presidential elections, during which many falsifications were made. When peaceful demonstrators were subjected to brutal repression – beatings and mass arrests, they protested in large numbers against such reactions by the authorities.

There are sign and non-sign forms of disagreement manifestation. Firstly, disagreement can be expressed in the form of disobedience to the authorities, i.e. as a violation of the cooperation principle. In this case, a protest means the annulment of the communicative contact and quitting interaction. In Belarusian reality, this form of protest was reflected in the strikes of large enterprises' workers, although it must be admitted that they were not massive and did not last long.

Secondly, disagreement is realized by the observance of the cooperation principle, i.e. in the form of a manifestation of messages addressed to the antagonist, which, according to the protesters' plan, should be heard by the authorities and cause an appropriate reaction. Cooperation, despite the opposition of the parties, is here a necessary condition for the expediency and success of protest actions: they are based on the premise that the restoration of a consensus is, at least to some extent, possible; otherwise, the protest loses its all significance.

The speech act of disagreement is quite rarely realized in a direct, compositional form; the word *нет* 'no' acts as a pragmatic operator, e.g.:

- (45) Нет геноциду белорусского народа.
'No to the genocide of the Belarusian people.'
- (46) Нет диктатору.
'No to the dictator.'
- (47) Саша, НЕТ значит НЕТ.
'Sasha, NO means NO.'
- (48) Нет доверия властям.
'There is no trust in the authorities.'
- (49) Лукашизму нет!
'No Lukashism!'
- (50) Самозванцу нет!
'No pretender!'

Disagreement is also indicated by the presence of a negative particle *не* ‘not’, negative prepositions *против* ‘against’, *без* ‘without’, as well as lexemes with negative meaning components:

- (51) Я не хочу пугать моих детей дядей-милиционером.
‘I don’t want to scare my children with an uncle who is a policeman.’
- (52) Саша, ты запятую не там поставил: 8,01%.
‘Sasha, you’ve put the point in the wrong place: 8.01%.’
- (53) Надо пересчитывать голоса, не ребра.
‘We must count the votes, not the ribs.’
- (54) Ён нам не бацька.
‘He is not our father.’
- (55) 9 августа я не голосовала за насилие.
‘On August 9, I did not vote for violence.’
- (56) Нам не нужна такая стабильность.
‘We don’t need that kind of stability.’
- (57) Не верю Лукашенко, БТ и РТ.
‘I do not believe Lukashenka, Belarusian Television and Russian Television.’
- (58) Не хочу в твой Uber Black.
‘I don’t want to be in your Uber Black.’
- (59) Беларусаў трэба цалаваць, не катаваць.
‘Belarusians should be kissed, not tortured.’
- (60) Дубинкой правду не убить.
‘A baton cannot kill the truth.’
- (61) Пенсионеры против всякого беззакония, насилия и лжи.
‘Pensioners are against any lawlessness, violence and lies.’
- (62) Вместе против фашизма.
‘Together against fascism.’
- (63) Женщины за жизнь без страха.
‘Women for life without fear.’

In many other cases, disagreement is realized through implicatures: from the semantic content of a statement, for example, about the results of the presidential elections, it is easy to conclude that the speaker does not agree with their official result. For example, the slogan:

- (64) Даже блондинке понятно, что у Саши 3%.
‘Even a blonde understands that Sasha has 3%.’

states the fact, obvious from the point of view of its author, that Lukashenka does not enjoy the support of the majority of voters, thereby implying that the official elections results are not true.

Some questions should also be referred to indirect disapproving speech acts:

- (65) У ~~войны~~ конституции не женское лицо?
 ‘Does ~~the war~~ the constitution not have a feminine face?’
 [the author does not agree with Lukashenka’s statement that the constitution of the Republic of Belarus is not designed for a female president]
- (66) Если у тебя 80%, почему ты так боишься?
 ‘If you have 80%, why are you so afraid?’
 [the author does not agree with the percentage of votes that Lukashenka received according to official data]
- (67) Как петь без голоса?
 ‘How to sing without a voice?’
 [the author does not agree with the violation of the vote count procedure]

The object of disagreement, as in the case of negative assessment, is the official election results, corruption, human rights violations, state ideology, and people’s poverty. In this regard, special attention should be paid to eristic speech acts, which are negative reactions to the Lukashenka’s and other officials’ statements. Here are some examples that are somewhat ironic:

- (68) Я без кукловода.
 ‘I am without a puppeteer.’
 [reminiscent of Lukashenka’s statement about foreign “puppeteers” who organize demonstrations]
- (69) Кукла – вот.
 ‘It’s a puppet.’
 [next to Lukashenka’s portrait]
- (70) Я – овца, но я работаю.
 ‘I am a sheep, but I work.’
- (71) [in an interview, Lukashenka called the protesters sheep]
- (72) Я – не овца.
 ‘I am not a sheep.’
- (73) [a poster held by a girl dressed in a sheep costume]
- (74) Я – не крыса.
 ‘I am not a rat.’
 [Lukashenko said that the protesters: “ran away like rats”]
- (75) Заплатите мне за митинг кто-нибудь. 4344 8434 4023 1082
 ‘Someone pay me for the rally. 4344 8434 4023 1082’
 [Lukashenko said that people get paid for their participation in the protests by sponsors from the UK, Poland, Lithuania and the Czech Republic]
- (76) Чехословацкий шпиён.
 ‘a Czechoslovak spy.’
 [a poster held by a young guy]

(77) Проплаченная чешская проститутка.

‘a paid Czech prostitute.’

[Lukashenko said that the protests are mostly drug addicts, prostitutes and the unemployed]

(78) Как похорошел Минск при наркоманах и проститутках.

‘How prettier Minsk is with drug addicts and prostitutes.’

As in the case of assessments, understanding the disapproval intention requires taking into account the environment, i.e. the event context. In other words, speech acts of this type, as a rule, have an indexical, deictic character, which can be exemplified with the “0 per mille” protest action (see Fig. 3). It was organized because an emergency services doctor Artyom Sorokin was detained and placed in a KGB (Committee for State Security) detention center for refuting the official information of the authorities that an activist Roman Bondarenko, killed by the police, was intoxicated during a fight at The Square of Changes. In a protest against the criminal prosecution of their colleague, physicians (who were later supported by other social groups, in particular students) stood against the wall, raising their hands with posters saying “0 per mille”³.



Fig 3. The “0 per mille” protest action

³ <https://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2020/11/24/7274670> (accessed 10.12.2020).

2.3. The speech acts of demand

The requirement refers to determining (or, in other words, directive) speech acts. Unlike a request, a demand is realized in a situation in which the speaker assumes the addressee's unwillingness or disinterest in performing the action. Unlike an order, a demand does not necessarily imply the authority or a higher social position of the speaker as an argument that should persuade the addressee to perform the action – the demand can appear in the interaction of partners with equal statuses, as well as in a situation where the speaker's status is lower.

Naturally, the protesters do not limit themselves to negative assessments or expressions of disagreement with authorities' actions; a significant place in such discourses is occupied by ultimatum speech acts. The demands of the protesters addressed to the authorities concern several of the most important aspects:

1) revision of the official election results:

- (79) Перевыборы!
'Re-election!'
- (80) Пересчет голосов!
'Recount!'
- (81) Верни наши голоса!
'Get our votes back!'
- (82) ЦИК, исправьте баги.
'СЕС, fix the bugs.'
- (83) Верните мой голос.
'Give me my vote back.'
- (84) Лукашенко и Ярмашину в СИЗО!
'Lukashenka and Yarmoshyna to the remand centre!'

2) resignation of president Lukashenko:

- (85) Лука, сыходзь!
'Luka, get off!'
- (86) Пайшоў прэч, пацук!
'Go away, rat!'
- (87) Стоп, вусаты! Маладым давай дарогу!
'Stop, the man with a big moustache! Give way to the young!'
- (88) Уступи лыжню!
'Give up the track!'
- (89) Хватит насилия. Хватит угроз.
Пора тебе, Саня, валить ў калхоз.
'Enough violence. Enough threats.
It's time, Sanya, to go to a collective farm.'
- (90) Саша, будешь уходить, забери свой мусор.
'Sasha, when you leave, take your rubbish.'

3) cessation of violence and punishment of those responsible for mass beatings of people:

- (91) Трибунал для преступников в погонах.
'The tribunal for criminals in uniforms.'
- (92) Стоп насилию!
'Stop violence!'
- (93) Долой репрессии!
'Down with repression!'
- (94) Прекратите насилие.
'Stop the violence.'
- (95) Остановите насилие.
'Stop the violence.'
- (96) Нет – насилию. Нет – действующей власти.
'No to violence. No to the current government.'
- (97) Спыніце гвалт!
'Stop the violence!'
- (98) Людоєда и прихлебателей к суду!
'Cannibal and hangers-on to court!'
- (99) Перастаньце людцаў біць, дайце нам спакойна жыць!
'Stop beating people, let us live normally.'
- (100) Каратели, руки прочь от пенсионеров!
'Punishers, keep your hands off pensioners!'
- (101) Хопіць ябацька краіну!
'No more the fucking country!'

4) release of political prisoners:

- (102) Освободите политзаключенных.
'Release the political prisoners.'
- (103) Освободите задержанных на акциях протеста.
'Release those detained at the protests.'
- (104) Вызвалі людзей!
'Release the people!'
- (105) Свабоду палітвязням!
'Freedom for political prisoners!'

5) democracy and observance of human rights:

- (106) Лучшую жизнь детям и внукам!
'Better life for children and grandchildren!'
- (107) От Хабаровска до Минска ПЕРЕМЕН.
'From Khabarovsk to Minsk CHANGES.'
- (108) Мы за перемены.
'We are for change.'

6) Russia's non-intervention:

- (109) Вова, не чапай, бо лясне!
'Vova, don't touch it, otherwise it will hit you.'
- (110) Вова, прекрати звонить бывшим.
'Vova, stop calling has-beens.'
- (111) Путин, убери ложку
от белорусской картошки.
'Putin, put away the spoon
from Belarusian potatoes.'

A significant part of the requirements is not expressed in a categorical form; such slogans, rather, resemble unobtrusive requests or advice. For example, the below slogan held by a child:

- (112) Плохой дядя, уходи!
'Bad uncle, go away!'

does not mean, of course, the demand that the child expresses; it is quite obvious that the communicative intention belongs to an adult (a parent). On the other hand, both the performer of the speech act (the child) and its content are such that the non-aggressive character of the pragmatic attitude behind it is quite obvious. The following are other examples of the same kind (especially in situations involving women and pensioners):

- (113) Газом меня травил, гранатами забросал – опомнись, сынок!
'He poisoned me with gas, threw grenades at me – come to your senses, son!'
[a poster held by a pensioner]
- (114) Пусть летают самолеты, а не пули.
'Let planes fly, not bullets.'
[a requirement is in the form of a wish]
- (115) Саша, я не хочу уезжать – давай ты!
'Sasha, I don't want to leave – come on!'
[a poster held by a young girl]
- (116) Саша, извини, но нам надо расстаться.
'Sasha, I'm sorry, but we need to leave.'
[a poster held by a young girl]
- (117) Может, уже свалишь?
'Can you leave yet?'
- (118) Сашка, хавайся ў бульбу.
'Sasha, hide yourself in potatoes.'
- (119) Розы любят воду, пацаны – свободу.
'Roses love water, boys love freedom.'
[a poster held by a young girl]

- (120) Уступи женщине место.
 ‘Give way to a woman.’
 [meaning that the elections were won by Svetlana Tsikhanoŭskaya]
- (121) Что бы тебе подарить, чтобы ты ушел?
 ‘What shall we give you to have you leave?’
 [a poster held by a young girl]
- (122) Занимайтесь любовью, а не насилием.
 ‘Make love, not violence.’
 [a poster held by a young girl]
- (123) Если любишь, отпусти.
 ‘If you love, let go.’
 [a poster held by a young girl]

Such slogans show the uncertainty of the protesters and their willingness to compromise. This can be explained by the general attitude towards their peaceful nature. On the other hand, there is no doubt that many of these slogans contain a satisfactory intention, although it is difficult to determine to what extent they are directive, practical, and to what extent they are targeted at a language game and satisfaction. Nevertheless, one should recognize the presence of a satisfactory element in the composition of such (syncretic in their nature) speech acts. This kind of carnivalization of the protest discourse can be explained in two ways: 1) by the enthusiasm caused by the mass solidarity of the protesters; 2) a compensatory function, i.e. sublimation of positive emotions in conditions when the protesters realize that the authorities will not make concessions⁴.

Conclusion

The article examined three types of speech acts implemented within the Belarusian protest discourses of 2020: modal-evaluative, modal-disapproving and demanding (ultimative). These speech acts, which most correspond to the global function of protest discourse and are interpreted as constitutive, account for a half of all the slogans in the collected material. The other half are additional speech acts: threatening, declarative (expressions of opinions or attitudes), expository, integrative, and, above all, stimulative, i.e. designed to arouse joy, satisfaction, and laughter among the protesters.

⁴ Literaturę notes the therapeutic function of humor and laughter (Hurley | Dennet | Afams 2017, 480). However, one cannot agree with A. S. Fedosik’s (1984, 14) opinion that humor in folklore is “an important tool in workers’ struggle with social oppression.” On the contrary, humor indicates that the fight against social injustice does not produce results, and therefore satisfactory speech acts perform an auto-suggestive (or autotherapeutic) function and compensate for the lack of satisfaction due to the failure of protest actions.

A characteristic pragmatic feature of protest discourses is the indirect nature of most speech acts. Only in rare cases does a marker of the illocutionary function appear in the structure of slogans (for example, the word *нет* ‘no’). This can be explained, firstly, by the poster authors’ desire for economy, conciseness and special expressiveness, achievable thanks to a compact language form. Secondly, almost all slogans are indexical in nature; their content is related to the context of their use. The situational context in this case is so obvious to all the participants in the discourse that any gaps in the linguistic structure of the texts are easily compensated for by the knowledge of the scene and setting of speech events.

Thirdly, insufficient compositionality of statements can be considered as a violation of the postulates of quantity and mode (in H. P. Grice’s well-known cooperative principle). In a situation of protest discourse, it functions as a kind of implicature, namely, the expression of a hostile attitude towards the antagonist and a refusal to cooperate.

Finally, fourthly, the indirect nature of speech acts indicates the informal nature of the communicative situation. If, for example, in the text of a diplomatic demarche, lexical markers of relative speech acts are practically mandatory (... *is perceived as a non-friendly act, as it creates the impression that ...*), then the verbal behavior of participants in street protest discourses corresponds to the norms of informal, everyday communication.

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