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FADDIES OF MODERN RUSSIAN SPEECH ETIQUETTE, OR ABOUT ONE TYPICAL DISSONANCE IN THE EXCHANGE OF REMARKS IN A CONVERSATION

ПРИЧУДЫ СОВРЕМЕННОГО РУССКОГО РЕЧЕВОГО ЭТИКЕТА, ИЛИ ОБ ОДНОМ ТИПИЧНОМ ДИССОНАНСЕ В ОБМЕНЕ РЕПЛИКАМИ В РАЗГОВОРЕ

Abstract:

The article discusses the colloquial formula *I Vam ne khvorat!* – widely used among native speakers of Russian, little known to foreigners and possessing mixed pragmatics: greetings, farewells, toast proposals, and well-wishing. Usually this formula "works" in Russian-language communication according to the "boomerang rule" (*Bud' zdorov!* – *I vam ne khvorat!*), but sometimes the same expression is used and perceived in the act of communication with "exactly the opposite". In such situations, this formula becomes a response to rudeness (*Idi na kh*y!* – *I vam ne khvorat!*), and sometimes it is perceived as offensive (*Idite, bud'te zdorovy!* – *I vam ne khvorat!* – *A vy yeshcho i kham vpridachu, kak ya poglyazhu*). The study was carried out on the material of contexts from the National Corpus of the Russian Language (oral, main and newspaper subcorpora), as well as from the Internet. An analysis of the usage and perception features (primarily by native speakers of other languages, for which a special linguistic survey was conducted among Chinese respondents) of this formula seems important both for modeling the communicative behavior of the Russian-speaking society and for preparing foreigners for communication in this society.

Keywords: everyday speech; etiquette formula; discursive formula; remark-stimulus; remark-reaction; communicative behavior; colloquialistics; corpus approach; pragmatics; dialogue

Аннотация:

В статье рассматривается разговорная формула *И Вам не хворать!* – широко употребительная в среде носителей русского языка, мало знакомая иностранцам и обладающая смешанной прагматикой – это и приветствие, и прощание, и тост, и пожелание. Обычно эта формула «работает» в русскоязычной коммуникации по «правилу бумеранга» («как аукнется, так и откликнется») (*Bud' zdorov! – I vam ne khvorat'*), и тогда она может рассматриваться как дискурсивная формула (ответная реплика в диалоге). Но иногда это же выражение используется и воспринимается в акте коммуникации с «точностью до наоборот» (можно сказать, что не всегда *откликнется* так, как *аукнется*). В таких ситуациях данная формула становится ответной репликой на грубость (*Idi na kh*y! – I vam ne khvorat'!*), да и сама порой воспринимается как оскорбительное (*Idite, bud'te zdorovy! – I vam ne khvorat'! – A vy yeshcho i kham vpridachu, kak ya poglyazhu*). Исследование выполнено на материале контекстов из Национального корпуса русского языка (устный, основной и газетный подкорпусы), а также из сети Интернет. Анализ употреблений и особенностей восприятия (прежде всего носителями других языков, для чего был проведен специальный лингвистический опрос в китайской аудитории) этой формулы представляется важным как для моделирования коммуникативного поведения русскоязычного социума, так и для подготовки иностранцев к общению в этом социуме.

Ключевые слова: устная повседневная речь; этикетная формула; дискурсивная формула; реплика-стимул; реплика-реакция; коммуникативное поведение; коллоквиалистика; корпусный подход; прагматика; диалог

Introduction

Modeling the communicative behavior of the Russian language is a topic of interest in current linguistic research. The research questions addressed herein are important for multidimensional studies on communication in different communities. The empirical data collected through a conversational, discursive, and cognitive–communicative analysis of everyday communication can help to fill the gaps in the current knowledge of communication and language. The key role and practical significance of research in this area are determined by the relevance of an adequate description of human speech behavior in the real world, specifically a description that is produced because of the knowledge derived from fundamental research in various fields (e.g., linguistics, anthropology, linguodidactics, psychology, and sociology). In addition, the findings of such research are of high practical relevance in various applied fields; these fields include the development of artificial intelligence systems and dialogue systems through the application of the language used in various aspects of life in modern Russian society (e.g., everyday communication, speech technologies, linguistic and judicial inspection, speech monitoring, and educational tasks).

Problem definition

Full-fledged modeling of a person’s communicative behavior can only be achieved by conducting a multidimensional analysis of their everyday speech; this is a method that is applied in modern colloquialistics (derived from the Latin word *colloqui*, meaning ‘talk’),

which is the name given to the theory of colloquial speech [1]. In the framework of colloquialistics, a complete inventory of functional units of oral speech must be built, and the features of their functioning must be analyzed and defined.

A significant aspect of these functional units is the variety of idiomatic expressions differing in status, features, and even names (cf., “It is well known that there are numerous repeated idiomatic expressions in the speech of all languages. Phenomena of this kind, which could be defined as ‘idioms’, ‘idiomatic combinations’, ‘speech formulas’, ‘speech stamps’, ‘cliches’, find a certain place in any description of the language” [2, p. 121]; “An important part of communication is to establish contact: greetings, farewells, congratulations, condolences, various verbal ‘strokes’ and ‘pricks’ <...>. In linguistics, it is common to single out a certain function of the language – contact-establishing, or phatic. This function is provided mainly by a set of standard speech formulas (cliches)” [3, p. 35]). Such formulas are more common in oral speech than in literary and written language, and all of them warrant further investigation; a study argued that “such formulas constitute an important layer of the spoken language, and therefore must be collected and fully analyzed” [4, p. 259] – this was done in the present study. The object of analysis in the present study was the colloquial formula *I Vam (tebe) ne khvorat!* (*And you do not get sick!*), which is difficult to define, as evidenced by the available research on this formula [5, 6].

Conversational formulas in language and speech

Two classes of colloquial formulas are particularly applicable for the unit being examined in the present study. The first class of formulas is discursive formulas (DFs), which are regarded as idiomatic, easily reproduced isolated constructions that serve as “response remarks in a dialogue and, unlike traditional constructions, do not contain variables within themselves” [7, p. 143]. DFs represent isolated remarks in a dialogue that have a fixed form and are syntactically equal to a sentence. They are similar to constructions that “contain multiple words and are always extremely idiomatic” [4, p. 259]; they are “dialog patterns remembered and reproduced by the speaker” [4, p. 259]. Fillmore [8] considered DFs as a class of construction typology (within the framework of “construction grammar” [CxG]). Examples of DFs include *Yeshch’o by!* (Meaning ‘of course’), *Vot yeshch’o!* (Expressing strong disagreement), and *Kak zhe tak?!* (Expressing surprise or confusion).

The second class of idiomatic units is etiquette formulas (EFs), which are elements of speech etiquette that serve as a set of “rules that regulate speech behavior, a system of nationally specific, stereotyped, and idiomatic communication formulas that are accepted and prescribed by society as a means of establishing contact between interlocutors and to maintain or interrupt contact in the context of the chosen tone” [9, p. 9]. Speech etiquette is closely related to the theory of politeness [10], which brings the study of speech to the level of intercultural communication. Etiquette and politeness are equally important in this respect, and the representative genres include greetings, farewells, well-wishing, toasts, and replies-reactions.

In the present study, the examined unit combines the features of the aforementioned two classes, and thus, it is a formula of mixed pragmatics, meaning that the DF and EF are two sides of the unit [5, p. 27].

Corpus data analysis

The corpus analysis was based on materials obtained from the Russian National Corpus (spoken, main, and newspaper subcorpora) [11]. The formula *I Vam (tebe) ne*

khvorat'! represents a remark in a dialogue; it is often used as a response (as evidenced by the initial particle *i*, which expresses the concept of sameness with a previous remark [5, p. 27]) and usually follows the boomerang rule: *kakov vopros – takov otvet* (*what is the question – such is the answer*) and *kak auknets'a, tak i otkliknets'a* (*as you shout, so shall you hear the echo*); the relevant examples are as follows (remark-stimulus is underlined in all contexts):

- 1) [Chernenko (S. Makovetskiy), man, 45, 1958] *Zdraviya zhelayu/ tovarishch kapitan* [Yanychar (A. Krasko), man, 46, 1957] *Ugu. I Vam ne khvorat'* [A. Pokrovskiy, V. Zalotukha, V. Khotinenko. 72 meters, film (2003)] (greeting);
- 2) [Aleksandr Aleksandrovich (B. Bibikov), man, 63, 1900] *Nu/ Burlakova Fros'a/ bud' zdorova* [Fros'a (Ye. Savinova), female, 37, 1926] *Spasibo. I vam ne khvorat'* [Ye. Tashkov. Prikhodite zavtra..., film (1963)] (farewell);
- 3) – *Udachi! – pozhelal Avgust, ne otvetiv na izvineniya. – I tebe ne khvorat'* [Ye. Safronova. Tak prokhorodit slava zemnaya // «Bel'skiye prostory», 2018] (wish);
- 4) – *Ne poyman – ne vor, – pozhal plechami Medvedev i pripodnyal bokal. – Tvoye zdorov'ye! – I tebe ne khvorat'... – Oksana prigubila* [D. Karalis. Roman s geroiney // «Zvezda», 2001] (toast);
- 5) *Mne pokazalos', chto N. i ne khochet real'nogo stolknoveniya, a kak raz predpochitayet dvusmyslennost' i umelo yeye sozdayet: deskat', ty, Nayman, vidish' moye negodovaniye – i vid' na dobroye zdorov'ye; a ty, Belyayev, odobreniye – i tebe ne khvorat'* [A. Nayman. Slavnyy konets besslavnykh pokoleniy (1994)] (response/reaction).

The aforementioned examples clearly demonstrate that context provides a hint regarding the genre of this formula in its specific use. This context-derived hint is occasionally expressed not only as an appropriate remark-stimulus [see examples (1)-(5)] but also as a form of duplication with the help of the formulas derived from other traditional greeting- or farewell-related contexts; the relevant examples are as follows (corresponding remarks are underlined):

- 6) [V_ERAKAM, nick] *Zdravstvuyte, po povodu iskusstvennogo kamn'a dl'a stoleshnits, obrabatyvayets'a kak derevo, tol'ko, k sozhaleniyu, tekhnologiyu nado izuchat' na praktike, inache rezul'tat ne akhti...* [STOROSH, nick] *Privet Vam i ne khvorat' vsem. Stoleshnitsy, da nado imet' uzhe praktiku: kontur formy, pryamaya (obratnaya) zalivka, napolniteli, pigmenty, polimery (tipa poliefirka), gel'kout, obrabotka i dr.* [kollektivnyy. Forum: Artificial decorative stone (2009-2011)] (the formula in question comes second in the chain of greetings);
- 7) [STOROSH, nick] *Slivalas' – nado by konduktor dl'a obrabotki kamney po vsem konturam. Razmery ochen' raznyye, dazhe v 1m2. Dobroy nochi i ne khvorat'. Zavtra razberems'a, yesli ne podoydet... budem* [kollektivnyy. Forum: Artificial decorative stone (2009-2011)] (the second formula in the chain of farewells);
- 8) [VALEK-SEDOY, nick] *Da khot' na etom primere. Bud' Zdrav, Boyaren i vsekh Blag...* [STOROSH, nick] *Privet Vam i ne khvorat' nam.* «Stariki» *svoi – eto svyatoye. Sami, soglasno zakonam zhizni, dvizhemsya v tu step'* [kollektivnyy. Forum: Artificial decorative stone (2009-2011)] (the second formula in the chain of farewells);
- 9) *Krasnaya rubakha gor'ko vzdychayet, perekladyvaya med'aki iz kartuza v karman, i govorit s usmeshkoy neveselogo torzhestva: – Nu vot... denezhki byli vashi, a teper' nashi... Do svidaniya, gospoda! Day Bog vam zdorov'ya, a nam ne khvorat'!.. Ad'yu! Ukhod'at artisty. Tayet tolpa, rastekayets'a po balkonu* [F.D. Kryukov. Bez

ogn'a // «Russkoye Bogatstvo», 1912] (the third formula in a chain of four farewells).

In examples (6)-(9), the structural variability of the formula is clearly exemplified by the loss of the component *Vam* (you) (7) and its replacement by *Vsem* (all) (6) and even by *Nam* (we) (8), (9). In examples (8) and (9), this substitution may be dictated by the irony that the speaker expresses through his words or some form of a word game.

The context in the following example (10) is also peculiar in respect to structural variability:

- 10) [PILIGRIM777, nick] *Zaydi v lichku* [STOROSH, nick] *Privet Vam. I ne khvorat' nikomu. «Zabugor» po rabote, nekotroye otsutstviye. Vse pochitayu i vecherom budu* [kollektivnyy. Forum: Artificial decorative stone (2009-2011)].

In example (10), the examined formula is used in several expressions of farewell, and it serves as a reaction to the unusual remark-stimulus *zaydi v lichku* (go to private texting). Researchers refer to this expression as a specific context of farewell: “expressing requests, advice, and suggestions at the same time” [12, p. 321]. The development of a farewell context comprises the five phases as follows: (1) nonverbal farewell signals (e.g., handshake, nodding, and the raising of one’s hat), which are occasionally verbalized as *pomashi d’ade do svidan’ya* (wave goodbye to uncle) or *sdelay pape ruchkoy* (wave your hand to dad); (2) codified farewell contexts, such as *do svidan’ya* (goodbye) and *poka* (see you); (3) the colloquial EFs *davay/te* (all right then), *ladno/ladnen’ko* (okay), and *vs’o* (that’s it); (4) “nonobvious” farewell contexts, such as *zakhodite* (come by sometime), *zvoni* (give me a call), and *pereday privet* (say hello for somebody); (5) and signals of the end of a conversation, such as *nu ya poshol* (well, off I go), *tseluyu* (kiss you), *bol’she Vas ne zaderzhivayu* (I’m not detaining you anymore), and *u menya tut vtoraya liniya* (I have another call here) [13]. Example (10) demonstrates a conflict between grammar and pragmatics that occurs at phase 4 and reaches its climax at phase 5 [13]. Researchers considered the context of phase 4 as stylistically inferior syntactic constructions, which are not assigned to speakers of a specific generation or social group. It is an indicator of the “familiar and friendly relations of the interlocutors” [14, p. 65]. Regarding the speech act (SA) theory, the context of phase 4 is an example of the indirect SA of farewell.

Another contextual clue that indicates the genre of the examined formula may be the filling of a valence of the verb “хворать” (be ill; underlined in the context):

- 11) *Poydu vyp'yu stopochku nefi tselebnoy t'umenskoy, da i vam ne khvorat' s «Uralkaliyem»!* [Script writer: A. Belyakov. «Nu zdravstvuyte, priyekhali!» // RBK Deyli, 2013.09.06].

The extension of *ne khvorat'* with the use of *s chem* accurately indicates the nature of the formula (wish), although in this example the seme ‘farewell’ is also present.

Analysis of Internet material

The various genres of the formula *I Vam ne khvorat'!* can also be derived from retrospective statements and discussions of Internet users [15, 16, 17, 18]; the relevant examples are as follows (the spelling and punctuation of the original texts are preserved):

- Reply to a **greeting**; informal form of **greeting**; normal response to the word “zdravstvuy” (hello) (be healthy);
- Usually this is a response to **parting**; people say so at **parting**;
- A **wish** for a person not to get sick/take care of himself and his health, something like “Take care!” in English; it seems to be a **good wish**; the expression is used when a person is healthy, so to speak for the future□.

Notably, the numbers of users who expressed, via vote, a preference for one of the three possible uses (greeting, farewell and well-wishing; the toast version was not discussed

online) are quite comparable.

This etiquette and discursive formula is usually applied in Russian-language communication in accordance with the boomerang rule. However, this rule is not followed in some situations, such as the following:

- 12) [Rektor, man] *Budem gotovit' prikaz. Idite, bud'te zdorovy!* [Sergey (A. Lyapin), man, 23, 1985] ***I vam ne khvorat'*** [Rektor, man] *A vy yeshcho i kham vpridachu, kak ya poglyazhu* [Ye. Nikishov, K. Shakhnazarov, S. Rokotov. Vanished Empire, film (2008)].

The response remark in the above dialogue appears to be appropriate; however, it was perceived by the interlocutor as an inappropriate remark.

From the perspective of native speakers, the emotional scale of this formula ranges from being completely positive (“*Normal phrase; good wish; a wish not to get sick, nothing bad with that; Just a kind word in reply to your kind ‘hello’...))))))))*); *this phrase can only be said from the heart and with a smile on your face!*”) to being completely negative (“*Moronity in this phrase...; this is a filthy expression; We should say this to idiots! And do not hide your position! this is a humiliating expression*”). This is a formula that is difficult to define. Internet users unanimously highlighted its informal nature (even for the polite form *Vam*) and the dependence of its real pragmatics on the communicative situation and intonation with which it is pronounced; the following comments were made by native speakers regarding the phrase:

- *The swear word BL’*D’ can express admiration, approval, condemnation. encouragement, ... and many more emotions! And **I vam ne khvorat'** ... Great and powerful is the Russian language, not only in words, but also in intonations!*
- *Depending on what was the question;*
- *Depending on the situation;*
- *In what tone it is said;*
- *It depends on what intonation and in what situation it is said;*
- *Context?!)) If it’s a joke or something like “ombaru” (get lost), it would be clear with a context.*

This formula can be a response to a rude remark in which the speaker offends a person with words, as in the case where he creates a “threat to a social person” [10] and hurts the person verbally [3]; the following are several relevant comments on this situation:

- *Could be bullying in this context: – IDI NA KH*Y! – **I vam ne khvorat'**;*
- *It means that I really don’t like what you have said;*
- *.... ahhh, you didn’t like my wish?)) Well then, watch how you say goodbye to a person.*

Sometimes the respondents perceived the pragmatics of an “insult” in this formula, enabling us to reveal its enantiosemy (ancient Greek *εναντιο-* – ‘opposite’ and *σημία* – ‘meaning’), which refers to the ability of a word (in this case, an idiomatic colloquial formula) to express antonymic meanings [19, p. 526]:

- *Bud' zdorov! (Be healthy!) (benevolently, with obvious tact) – I vam ... ne khvorat' (Subtext: you go to hell);*
- *Perceived as asking someone to get lost when there are no other words to say;*
- *No politeness to speak of. It’s more of showing someone his place without swearing...;*
- *...that sounds like “otvali” (get lost)...;*
- *I think that the speaker is annoyed with something;*

- *Ask someone to go away;*
- *Thank you for not saying “you go to...” ,,,,,))))));*
- *It's a hidden “go to hell.”*

In linguistics, enantiosemia is regarded as “a relatively rare and unproductive variety of antonymy” [20, p. 208]. Similarly, the colloquial formula, which is the object of the present study, is a rare type of idiomatic expression that lacks a specific status in Russian speech.

Linguistic survey results

A series of surveys was conducted both in person and online to clarify the obtained data. The native Russian speakers who were surveyed evaluated the formula and classified it as a greeting without any hesitation; this was apparently a reflex for a synonymic correspondence that was triggered, namely *zdravstvuyte = ne khvorayte* (*hello = do not get sick*). In Taiwan, 12 native Chinese speakers (9 teachers and 3 graduate students) who speak Russian well participated in the survey. Only one of the teachers knew about the expression and understood it as a greeting. The other respondents were unfamiliar with this expression and interested in knowing its meaning.

In China, a large-scale survey of Chinese people who speak Russian was conducted. This survey involved 94 respondents aged 17 to 78. The majority of the respondents were women (72.3 %), students (80.9 %), and individuals who were not in Russia at the time of the survey (84 %). The results of that survey indicated that the respondents were completely unfamiliar with the expression (75.5 %). For those who knew it, they gave various responses and mainly classified it as a good wish (43.5 %) or a farewell (39.1 %). Significantly fewer respondents classified the expression as a greeting (26.1 %) or a toast (21.7 %). Several Chinese respondents also detected the irony in this phrase.

The survey results clarified that this expression is truly “Russian” and unfamiliar to foreigners (i.e., native Chinese speakers in this context), especially for those living (at the time of the survey) outside of Russia. Respondents had a common feeling regarding the general sense ‘wish’, which is used in situations such as a meeting, a parting of ways, or a friendly feast.

Conclusion

Several quotations that emphasize the essential role of a word-by-word, “by-formula” analysis of the content of everyday speech, which is the essence of colloquialism, are a fitting conclusion to this paper; the quotations are as follows: “Regardless of the intellectual sophistication and explanatory power of a logically organized model of language, the fixed nature of such a model is obviously insufficient to explain this phenomenon, which is a part of our everyday lives, something we experience at every step and in every moment of linguistic existence. Given the intellectual brilliance and depth of the results accumulated through linguistics on the path to mastering a language as a rationally constructed object, I cannot help but feel that these results are a simplification and reduction; they are comparable with the hardly noticeable and elusive, dynamic aspects of our interaction with language, which accompanies our existence in language at every moment throughout our life experience” [2, c. 18]; “The natural desire of every linguist who is not indifferent to the subject of his research is to capture the reality of the speech that is being born before our eyes and then try to figure out where it comes from, how it changes our ideas about the world and about us, who needs it, and why...” [21, p. 8]; “The magic of language requires both a priest and an interpreter. If a poet is a priest, then a linguist is an interpreter, an intermediary between a language (i.e., a text) and an ordinary person” [2, p. 20].

This article was written by linguists “who are not indifferent to the subject of their research”; to some extent, linguists are “intermediaries between the language (respectively, the text) and the ordinary person” (both of the authors have been teaching Russian throughout their careers; one teaches it as a native speaker, and the other teaches it as a nonnative speaker). The interpretation of the colloquial formula *I Vam ne khvorat'* can be useful for native Russian speakers and scholars who want to focus not only on language canons but also speech usage; this knowledge can help a foreigner to adapt to the Russian language environment.

This speech (etiquette/discursive) formula and the attitudes of native speakers toward it highlight how the language that we speak is connected with “our ideas about the world and about us” [21, p. 8]. This is a key concern in modern linguistics.

The findings of the present study can be expanded through the use of extensive language/speech corpora, which would enable clarification of the properties of the formula to allow us to investigate specific idiolects or sociolects of the modern Russian-speaking society. This strategy would also help us to clarify the model of daily communication used in artificial intelligence. A potential research direction is a prosodic analysis of contexts through the application of this formula, which would allow for numerous interesting and significant results to be obtained.

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