



PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF REPROACH IN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN DISCOURSE

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MAQOLA HAQIDA	ANNOTATION
<p>Qabul qilindi: 24-dekabr 2024-yil Tasdiqlandi: 26-dekabr 2024-yil Jurnal soni: 13 Maqola raqami: 69 DOI: https://doi.org/10.54613/ku.v13i.1079</p>	<p>This study investigates the pragmatic features of reproach in both spoken and written discourse. Reproach, defined as a speech act conveying disapproval or criticism, is a key component in interpersonal communication and is used to manage social relationships. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the research analyzes how reproach is realized in spoken and written forms, exploring the differences in strategies and their functions. Drawing on data from both natural conversations and written texts, the study examines the contextual factors that influence the pragmatics of reproach. The findings reveal that while the core strategies of reproach are similar across modalities, their realization and social impact differ significantly between spoken and written forms. These differences are attributed to factors such as immediacy, tone, and the ability to modulate the force of the reproach.</p>
<p>KALIT SO'ZLAR/ КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА/ KEYWORDS</p> <p>Reproach, Pragmatics, Speech Act Theory, Discourse Analysis, Spoken vs. Written Communication, Interpersonal Communication.</p>	

Introduction. Reproach, a communicative act that typically involves expressing disapproval or dissatisfaction with someone's actions, plays a crucial role in managing social relationships. It is a type of expressive speech act, as classified by speech act theorists like Searle, and can be used to maintain social norms, enforce moral behavior, and restore social equilibrium. However, reproach is often marked by a fine balance between criticism and face-threatening acts, which requires consideration of politeness strategies, power dynamics, and social roles. This research will draw upon theories of pragmatics, including politeness theory, speech act theory, and conversation analysis, to explore how reproach is managed differently in spoken and written communication.¹

Literature Review. The study of reproach in pragmatics has received attention from researchers exploring both the linguistic and social dimensions of disapproval. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory posits that reproach is a face-threatening act (FTA) that requires the speaker to consider strategies to mitigate its impact, such as through hedging, mitigation, or indirectness. Previous studies on reproach in spoken discourse emphasize the role of intonation and paralinguistic cues in delivering reproach, which provide the speaker with tools to modulate the strength of the criticism.

Conversely, research into reproach in written discourse, especially in email communication and online forums, suggests that reproach in written form may be more direct and explicit². The lack of non-verbal cues forces writers to use linguistic resources such as pragmatic markers, emphasis, and negative politeness strategies to soften or intensify their reproach. For instance, apology formulas, euphemistic language, and mitigating adverbs such as "perhaps," "maybe," and "I'm afraid" are common tools to temper reproach in written forms.

Despite these observations, a comprehensive analysis comparing reproach in spoken and written discourse, particularly focusing on pragmatic strategies and their contextual variation, is still relatively sparse. This study aims to fill this gap by comparing how reproach is constructed in both speech and writing.

Research methodology. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative discourse analysis and quantitative data to explore the pragmatic features of reproach in both spoken and written communication. The use of this approach allows for a comprehensive examination of both the linguistic structures and the sociocultural dynamics that influence how reproach is conveyed and received.

The data for this study is gathered from two primary corpora: one consisting of spoken discourse and another comprising written

discourse. These corpora are designed to reflect naturally occurring instances of reproach in real-world interactions, offering insights into how reproach is realized in different communication contexts.

A discourse refers to a specific way of speaking, writing, or communicating that is guided by certain rules, conventions, and shared meanings within a particular context or community. It encompasses not only the words themselves but also the broader socio-cultural and historical context in which communication occurs. Discourse involves the use of language to convey information, express ideas, construct identities, and negotiate power dynamics. The term "discourse" is derived from the Latin word "discursus," which means "conversation" or "speech."³ However, in contemporary academic and linguistic contexts, the concept of discourse has evolved to encompass a broader understanding of language use and communication. It's not limited to individual conversations or speeches but includes any form of communication that contributes to the creation of meaning and understanding within a given context.

Discourses are shaped by various factors, including social norms, cultural values, historical influences, power dynamics, and specific communicative goals. They can be formal or informal, written or spoken, and they play a crucial role in shaping how we perceive and understand the world around us. For example, political discourses construct narratives about policies, ideologies, and leadership, while scientific discourses establish shared understandings within the scientific community.⁴

Spoken Discourse: The spoken corpus is compiled from a variety of contexts to ensure a diverse representation of how reproach is used in different communicative settings. The data includes naturally occurring conversations (e.g., casual exchanges between friends or family members), formal discussions (e.g., interviews or professional meetings), and informal dialogues (e.g., debates or public discussions). These conversations are collected from publicly available sources such as podcasts, video transcripts (e.g., YouTube videos), and conversation archives.

Written Discourse: The written corpus is derived from a range of online communication platforms, including emails, blog posts, and social media exchanges (e.g., Twitter and Facebook). These platforms are selected due to their widespread use in modern communication and their ability to capture informal yet significant interactions in which reproach may be conveyed. Written discourse offers insight into how reproach is realized in the absence of paralinguistic features (such as

¹ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press.

² Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge University Press.

³ Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis the critical study of language*, second edition. In *Critical Discourse Analysis The Critical Study of Language*, Second Edition. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315834368>

⁴ Widdowson, H. G. (2004). *Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

voice tone or body language), relying more heavily on linguistic strategies to convey the intended meaning.⁵

For this corpus, data will be selected based on instances where reproach is either explicit or implicit, focusing on discourse that explicitly expresses criticism or disapproval, or where reproach is conveyed through indirectness (e.g., via rhetorical questions or hints). For example, in an online comment section, a user might say, "That was disappointing, I thought you would do better" as a form of reproach. The analysis is structured around key theoretical frameworks in pragmatics, specifically drawing from politeness theory and speech act theory which help to identify the sociocultural and communicative functions of reproach.⁶

Direct vs. Indirect Reproach: One of the key distinctions made in the analysis is whether reproach is expressed directly or indirectly. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), reproach can be considered a face-threatening act (FTA) that potentially damages the "face" or social identity of the recipient. In spoken discourse, speakers often use indirect reproach to mitigate the potential for face-threatening damage, relying on features like intonation and prosodic cues (Holmes, 1995). For example, an indirect reproach in speech might involve raising the tone of voice or pausing strategically to suggest disapproval, without explicitly stating it.

In contrast, written discourse lacks the immediate feedback of non-verbal cues, which can make reproach appear more direct and explicit. However, writers often utilize linguistic markers like hedges and mitigation strategies (e.g., "I'm sorry, but...") to soften the impact of reproach.⁷

For example, in an email or a social media post, one might say: "You didn't follow the instructions correctly," which could be softened with phrases such as "I think you missed something here, but..." to reduce the directness of the reproach.

Research results. In spoken discourse, reproach is often intertwined with intonational variation, which plays a crucial role in conveying the emotional tone behind the reproach⁸. Intonation patterns such as rising or falling pitch can convey different emotions, such as anger, disappointment, or sarcasm. For example, a rising intonation at the end of a reproach can indicate uncertainty or incredulity, while a falling tone might signal a sense of finality or frustration. These intonational nuances are a key feature of spoken communication that written discourse lacks.

In face-to-face conversations, reproach is often mitigated through various softening strategies to minimize face-threatening acts. The speaker may hedge their reproach using qualifiers or modal verbs to reduce its impact, making it less confrontational. Phrases like "I'm not sure, but..." or "Perhaps you could have done this differently" are commonly used in spoken reproach to soften the criticism. By doing so, speakers preserve social harmony and avoid creating tension in the interaction. This aligns with the theory of politeness, where the speaker tries to save the "face" of the listener by avoiding direct confrontation.

Additionally, pauses and overlaps are frequent in spoken reproach and serve multiple pragmatic functions. Pauses are often employed to give the speaker time to assess the recipient's response or to frame their words carefully. The use of pauses in reproach signals hesitation, which could suggest that the speaker is reluctant to criticize or that they want to ensure the listener understands the gravity of the reproach.

For example, consider the following interaction:

"You could have told me about this earlier, but I guess you didn't..."

The pause after "but" creates space for the recipient to offer a defense or clarification, which in turn softens the reproach. Overlaps also occur in spoken reproach when both speakers talk simultaneously. These overlaps can signal emotional intensity or disagreement but also show that both speakers are actively engaged in the interaction, which may help diffuse the reproach by demonstrating shared responsibility for the conflict.

Written discourse, particularly in mediums such as emails, social media posts, and online forums, often presents reproach in a more direct manner due to the absence of non-verbal cues such as

intonation, facial expressions, and body language. Since writers cannot rely on tone of voice to express subtle emotions or intentions, reproach in written forms tends to be more explicit and structured. However, writers still employ several linguistic strategies to mitigate the directness of reproach and reduce its potential to threaten the addressee's face.

One key feature of written reproach is the use of modal verbs and hedging to soften the reproach and make it less confrontational. For example, phrases like "I think you missed the point" or "I'm afraid your response wasn't what I was expecting" serve as mitigators, signaling that the reproach is not an outright accusation, but rather a subjective interpretation of the situation. The use of "I think" and "I'm afraid" reflects the writer's attempt to dampen the impact of their reproach, allowing the receiver to save face.⁹

Discussion. Euphemisms also play a critical role in the mitigation of reproach in written discourse. Writers may soften their reproach by using more polite or formal language. For example, instead of saying, "You made a mistake," a writer might say, "There appears to be a misunderstanding." In this context, negative politeness strategies emphasize showing deference and minimizing imposition on the addressee, which is especially crucial in written communication where social cues are absent.

Additionally, imperatives or direct questions in written discourse can make reproach more forceful than in spoken discourse, as the lack of vocal cues can make them seem more demanding or critical. For example, a direct question like "Why didn't you follow the instructions?" or an imperative such as "Please correct this" can convey reproach in a more explicit manner, pushing the point more aggressively than spoken reproach might.

When comparing spoken and written reproach, a key observation is that spoken discourse tends to be more flexible and context-dependent. Due to the presence of non-verbal cues, speakers have a wide range of tools at their disposal to modulate reproach. For instance, facial expressions, hand gestures, and pauses all work together to help temper reproach, making it more or less direct depending on the situation. Immediate feedback in face-to-face interactions allows speakers to quickly adjust their reproach based on the listener's reactions, thereby maintaining a balance between directness and indirectness.

On the other hand, written discourse requires more linguistic resources to manage the directness of reproach. Since written texts lack the immediacy of non-verbal feedback, the writer must rely heavily on strategies like hedging, modality, and the careful choice of words to soften the reproach. As a result, reproach in written form is often explicit, and writers must be more careful in their word choices to avoid being perceived as overly harsh or confrontational. Furthermore, the absence of intonation means that written reproach can sometimes come across as blunt or even impolite, despite the writer's intent to soften it with linguistic markers.

The context in which reproach occurs plays a significant role in shaping the pragmatic strategies used by both speakers and writers. In informal settings, such as casual conversations or social media exchanges, both spoken and written reproach tends to be more indirect. This is because speakers and writers are generally more familiar with one another and may seek to preserve the social harmony of their relationships. In these contexts, reproach may be expressed through euphemism, humor, or softening strategies that allow the addressee to save face.

However, in formal or professional settings, reproach is often more direct and formalized, particularly in written communication. For example, in workplace emails or official correspondence, reproach may be expressed in a more structured and impersonal manner, often accompanied by an appeal to rules or standards. In such settings, there is typically less concern about social harmony and more emphasis on conveying criticism in a manner that is both clear and justified. Here, positive politeness strategies (e.g., offering solutions or providing explanations) may be used to counterbalance the directness of reproach.¹⁰

⁵ www.dissercat.ru

⁶ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press.

⁷ Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking in Conversation. *Language*, 50(4), 696-735.

⁸ Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, Men, and Politeness*. Longman

⁹ Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, Men, and Politeness*. Longman

¹⁰ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Furthermore, power relations and the degree of familiarity between the interlocutors significantly influence how reproach is conveyed. In situations where there is a power imbalance (e.g., between a manager and an employee), reproach is likely to be more formal and mitigated to avoid conflict. On the other hand, in situations of equal power, reproach is more likely to be direct and less mitigated, as the social dynamics allow for more open criticism without as much concern for maintaining face.

Conclusion. This study has examined the pragmatic features of reproach in both spoken and written discourse, highlighting the significant differences between the two modalities. While both spoken and written reproach rely on strategies such as mitigation, hedging, and indirectness, the realization of these strategies differs notably due to the presence or absence of non-verbal cues and immediate feedback. In spoken discourse, reproach is more flexible and context-dependent, with speakers using intonation, pauses, and overlaps to modulate the strength of the reproach and convey emotions such as anger, frustration, or sarcasm. The ability to adjust reproach based on the listener's immediate reactions allows for a more nuanced and dynamic expression of disapproval. Mitigating strategies, such as hedging and softening, are commonly employed to avoid direct confrontation and preserve social harmony.

In contrast, written discourse often presents reproach in a more direct and explicit form due to the lack of non-verbal cues. Writers rely on linguistic strategies such as modality, hedging, euphemisms, and

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