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## **Language functions to communicate appraisal and child directed speech**

Funkcje języka w komunikacji oceny i mowy skierowanej  
do dziecka

### **Abstract**

Language used by parents to communicate with children is characterized by specific features. Adults use different language in communicating with other adults than in communicating with children. This paper is focused on analysing authentic recordings of common spoken discourses in families related to specific situations and activities (for example, children getting ready for school, art and craft activities, sitting at the table, etc.). The analysis will focus on examining the illocutionary language functions used to communicate the child's appraisal (mainly praise, criticism, reproach), i.e. on the parent's intent to express the appraisal of a child. The analysis draws upon the frequency of illocutionary language functions (in the whole sample, in pre-defined age categories of children, in specific activities offering examples of spoken discourse); further, the indication of illocutionary functions as expressed in the spoken discourse will be explored.

**Keywords:** spoken discourse, interaction, child directed speech, illocutionary language functions, language functions to communicate appraisal – praise and criticism, indication of language used in praise and criticism.

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### Streszczenie

Język używany przez rodziców w komunikacji z dziećmi charakteryzują pewne specyficzne cechy. Dorośli używają innego języka w komunikacji z innymi dorosłymi niż w komunikacji z dziećmi. W tym artykule koncentruję się na analizie nagrań prawdziwych mówionych dyskursów w rodzinach, związanych ze specyficznymi sytuacjami i czynnościami (na przykład, dzieci przygotowują się do wyjścia do szkoły, zajęcia plastyczne, siedzenie przy stole itp.). Analiza obejmuje badanie illokucyjnych funkcji języka, stosowanych by przekazywać ocenę dziecka (głównie pochwały, krytyka, nagany). Analiza opiera się na częstotliwości występowania illokucyjnych funkcji języka (w całej próbie, w predefiniowanych kategoriach wiekowych dzieci, w specyficznych czynnościach tworzących przykłady mówionego dyskursu); badane są również wskazania illokucyjnych funkcji języka wyrażanych w dyskursie mówionym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyskurs mówiony, interakcja, mowa skierowana do dziecka, illokucyjne funkcje języka, funkcje językowe przekazujące ocenę – pochwała i krytyka, wskazania języka używane w pochwałach i krytyce.

### Introduction

Spoken discourse between adults and children is characterized by specific features. Adults use different language in communicating with other adults than in communicating with children. Terminology related to the discourse in the family has gone through a number of changes. A variety of terms was suggested, the practical use of which later led to substituting one term for another. Most recently, the term child directed speech has been established by linguists, psychologists and other experts studying child development. The main advantage of this term is its focus on the receiver of the message rather than on the speaker. The term “child directed speech” means spontaneous, situational speech to the child. It is possible to consider such speech as being a simplified language register<sup>1</sup> containing a high measure of redundancy related to the specific features of such speech (for more information see for example<sup>2</sup>).

The term “child directed speech” describes the way adults speak to children when they are suckling infants or toddlers. For the purposes of our research, we used this term in a broader sense – for adults speaking to children between the ages of 3 and 15.

It was the spoken discourse as a part of everyday life that stood in the centre of our research interest. Such spoken discourse is related to a certain place and

<sup>1</sup> A. Mitrová, J. Sabol, D. Slančová, J. Zimmermann, *Realizácia suprasegmentálnych javov v reči orientovanej na dieta*, “Slovenská reč” 2006, 71, No. 1, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Ferguson, *Baby talk as a simplified register*, [in:] *Talking to Children: language input and acquisition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1977, pp. 237–253.

time, which is often referred to as “here” and “now”. It represents a unique speech act which can be characterized by a number of factors. Müllerová<sup>3</sup> emphasizes its dichotomy: spontaneity – binding. Spontaneity enables its users to be free in their expression. Spontaneous speech can be characterized as unofficial, private, unprepared, while the speech bound/related to the situation is in fact limited. It is not possible to maintain a uniform organisation of the spoken discourse, so for example the word order is free because speakers may utilise it to emphasise those elements of speech which are most relevant for passing the message.

While we need to note that our attention was focused on the spoken discourse in families (therefore unofficial and unprepared), there were certain limitations related to the activity present in the process (the characteristics of the pragmatic level are directly dependent on the activity in process). Similarly, Kořenský<sup>4</sup> describes the relation between the manner of a speech act and the activity in the process when he describes his analytic framework for analysing the spoken discourse. Kořenský draws upon a logical supposition that communication processes are anchored in a certain social entity – a social situation. The social situation determines the real characteristic features of the discourse (for example, parents’ speech is full of instructions when playing or competing with children, etc.).

## Methodology

The recordings of the spoken discourse between a parent/parents and a child/children aged 3–15 were transcribed, coded and analysed. It was our aim to describe the contents of the spoken discourse in families in concrete, pre-selected situations. Needless to say, a wide spectrum of possible situations reflected in the spoken discourse in families meant selecting some thematic situations which could be observed in our investigation. For the first stage, i.e. pre-research<sup>5</sup>, we selected the following set of situations to record the spoken discourses (although it was not possible to use all of them across all age groups):

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<sup>3</sup> O. Müllerová, *Mluvený text a jeho syntaktická výstavba*, Academia, Praha 1994, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> J. Kořenský et al., *Komplexní analýza komunikačního procesu a textu*, PdF v Českých Budějovicích, České Budějovice 1987, pp. 19–20.

<sup>5</sup> During our research from July to September, 2014, the communication situation related to the parents’ checking the child’s schoolwork assignment was eliminated from our data. The features of such a dialogue are very similar to the dialogue carried out between a teacher and a pupil/pupils to teach the subject matter – they both have a clearly specified aim. According to Höflerová (See: E. Höflerová, *Školský dialog a jeho vliv na rozvoj řeči dětí*, PdF Ostravské univerzity, Ostrava 2003, p. 70), the dialogue for teaching the subject matter is purposeful and focused on three key aspects – the process of acquiring knowledge and mastering skills, the effort

1. At the table.
2. Personal hygiene.
3. Going to bed.
4. Playing with a child.
5. Common activity of parents and children (e.g. tidying up, getting ready for kindergarten or school, doing art activities, etc.).
6. Talking about unspecified aspects of everyday family life (e.g. talking about a day at school, common family plans, etc.).

It was decided that the research data would be collected by recording conversations in randomly selected families. The selection of elements for the research set applies most to a stratified selection because it had to fulfil several conditions:

1. Parents had to agree to the recording of the spoken discourse within the family.
2. The discourse was related to a communication situation between a parent (parents)<sup>6</sup> and a child (children) concerning a specific working activity (e.g. getting ready for a day at school, during art or craft activities, preparing meals, etc.).
3. The child was between 3–15 years of age.
4. The length of a recording had not been decided before the data collection began (it was agreed that the parents themselves would decide how long the recording would be, yet they had been asked to make recordings as long as possible).
5. Intelligibility of a recording.

Due to a large number of families in which it would be possible to carry out such an investigation, we cannot claim that, strictly speaking, the research sample had been selected<sup>7</sup>.

In the first stage, the research sample was randomly selected – this is considered to be most appropriate with respect to the theory of probability. Random selection is not biased – any member of a concrete population stands the same chance of being selected into the final sample<sup>8</sup>.

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to receive an assessment of previously carried out learning activities and the effort to enlarge the child's language competence by communicating about the acquired knowledge.

<sup>6</sup> The parent's gender did not play any role in our research. It was not our aim to observe gender differences in the child directed speech. It is our belief that the way the parent communicates with the child is not directly related to the gender. Still, it is not possible to claim unambiguously that there are no differences (for more information please see: J. Průcha, *Dětská řeč a komunikace*, Portál, Praha 2011, pp. 98–110).

<sup>7</sup> "A reduced/small scale picture contains all the relevant information of the original, only its proportions are smaller, [...]. A selected sample should represent the original set appropriately". P. Gavora, *Úvod do pedagogického výzkumu*, Paido, Brno 2000, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup> N.F. Kerlinger, *Základy výzkumu chování*, Academia, Praha 1972, p. 62.

At the beginning of our research, it was also decided that the spoken discourse would be recorded by the parents themselves. It depended on them what and where they would record. Certainly, it would have been better if the participants in the discourse had not known about being recorded, but such an unethical approach had been rejected.

Obviously, any family communication runs fairly quickly. This may put high demands on an observer. Therefore, it appeared to be most suitable to audio-record the spoken discourse in respondents' families in order to obtain authentic data. Apart from the content of the conversations, the recordings may capture all the quality features of the spoken discourse. Further, non-bias and authenticity are considered to be very important features of data collection for the follow-up analysis of the discourse<sup>9</sup>. From a technical point of view, it was our aim to make the tools for recording the conversations as unobtrusive as possible so as not to interfere with the family conversations. With the help of modern technology a discreet Dictaphone offering high quality recorded data was used.

The analysis of the data recorded in respondents' families was carried out on the basis of literal/verbatim transcription. No changes were made in cited quotations, although it was sometimes necessary to shorten some of the samples (this is further indicated by square brackets [...]). Extra-linguistic aspects of the spoken discourse were also noted and considered. Even if it is not possible to achieve flawlessness in transcribing the spoken discourse, some of its extra-linguistic aspects can be noted with the help of special symbols. These symbols enable a recipient to imagine, to some degree, an authentic form of the discourse. Therefore, rules for transcriptions and the use of transcription symbols mentioned by Müllerová, Hoffmannová and Schneiderová<sup>10</sup> (1992) were followed. Given our aim we did not use the whole battery of transcription symbols. A list of symbols used in our transcriptions can be seen below.

The data for analysis was collected between July 2014 and September 2015. The result was a set of 67 recordings of different lengths, in total 15 hours, 53 minutes and 43 seconds of the spoken discourse in respondents' families.

## **Illocutionary functions related to appraisal within the framework of speech act classification**

The significance of realized utterances is given by their propositional content (i.e. what is really said), and also by their illocutionary function<sup>11</sup> (i.e. what

<sup>9</sup> M. Miovský, *Kvalitativní přístup a metody v psychologickém výzkumu*, Grada, Praha 2006, pp. 197–198.

<sup>10</sup> O. Müllerová, J. Hoffmannová, E. Schneiderová, *Mluvená čeština v autentických textech*, H&H, Jinočany, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> The term illocutionary function of speech is used in linguistics (from lat. illoquor = not expressed).

is intended by the utterance). So as to evaluate the communication as successful, it is necessary for the receiver of the message to interpret both elements of the utterance – s/he needs to know not only what is being said but s/he also needs to decode why it is being said. In general, an illocutionary function can be identified with conveying any meaning which delivers a concrete message during a speech act. In other words, it is the intent of the speaker realized in a concrete communication situation.

Traditionally, language functions were divided into four groups in language education in schools, i.e. declarative, imperative, interrogative, optative functions of utterances<sup>12</sup>. However, these are superordinate categories which include an almost infinite number of various communicative intents. It is exactly the great number of illocutionary functions that leads towards the efforts to systemize the functions by searching for common features which could serve as classification criteria<sup>13</sup>. With regards to the needs of our analysis, we selected Grepl's classification<sup>14</sup>, which may raise questions (as also may do many others) with regards to the distribution of speech acts into concrete groups<sup>15</sup>, but it appeared necessary (for our purposes) to hold on to a stable structure within which a new system might be suggested. The eight main categories were:

1. Utterances expressing an *assertive* function (declaratives including statement, information, notice, warning, classification, announcement);
2. Utterances expressing a *directive* function (of varying degrees of urgency) requesting the receiver to do what s/he is being asked to do (e.g. command, order, decree, rule, request, offer, instruction, appeal, invitation, suggestion, advice, recommendation, directions, bidding, advert);
3. Utterances expressing an *interrogative* function (questions) aiming at obtaining information which the speaker does not have at the time of the utterance (questions in all their variations);

<sup>12</sup> Exclamations are sometimes included into this category. However, it is the intonation of these utterances which makes the difference.

<sup>13</sup> For example: F. Daneš, *Verba dicendi a výpovědní funkce*, [in:] *Studia Slavica Pragensia*, Univerzita Karlova, Praha 1973, pp. 115–124; O. Müllerová, *Komunikativní složky výstavby dialogického textu*, Univerzita Karlova, Praha 1979; M. Hirschová, *Uplatňování negace ve výpovědích s performativní platností*, "Slovo a slovesnost" 1988, 49, No. 2, pp. 101–110; M. Grepl, P. Karlík, *Skladba češtiny*, Votobia, Olomouc 1998, etc.

<sup>14</sup> The classification above draws upon Searle's theoretical concept (1976). However, Grepl adds substantial adaptations regarding authentic speech acts. He describes eight illocutionary functions of utterances on the basis of two key criteria:

- a) Illocutionary point of the speaker – i.e. what the speaker attempts to achieve in relation to the receiver/listener;
- b) The relation of the words and the context (inspired by Searle's "direction of fit"). (See: M. Grepl, P. Karlík, *Skladba češtiny...*, op. cit., pp. 429–432).

<sup>15</sup> Each speech act is described by Grepl (Ibidem, pp. 433–478) in terms of illocutionary force indicators.

4. Utterances expressing a *commissive* function are promises or refusals, the deeds may serve the recipient (e.g. promise, obligation/commitment, oath, offer);
5. Utterances expressing *permissive* and *concessive* functions (allowance, agreement) aiming at eliminating/disposing of obstacles which prevent the recipient doing what s/he wishes to do (e.g. giving/not giving permission, agreement/disagreement, consent, refusal, rejection, objection, protest);
6. Utterances expressing a *warning* function aiming at warning the recipients to avoid action which might have a negative consequence for them (e.g. warning, notice, deterrent/caution, threat);
7. Utterances called *expressive* convey the speaker's positive or negative opinion of a recipient's behaviour or condition (e.g. reproach, rebuke, reprimand, rejection, praise, recognition, gratitude, congratulations, condolence, thanks, apology);
8. Utterances expressing a declarative function bring about a change – “a new state of being”. They are usually the result of institutionally based speech acts (e.g. baptism, appointment, verdict, opening and closing a meeting, etc.);

Grepl's (and later Searle's) classification relate to the whole area of using language for communication. Our sample of discourse used for investigation is focused only on spoken, unprepared speech of interactive character. For such purposes, Müllerová<sup>16</sup> offers a modified classification of interactive illocutionary functions whose main criterion lies in the potential of a function to express the meaning of a given utterance. According to the focus of the speaker on the recipient, all the illocutionary functions are then categorized into two groups; firstly, *operative*<sup>17</sup>, where the speaker's effort focuses on applying his will or enforcing his influence, and secondly, *inoperative*, where the speaker's primary intent is not leading the recipient towards an action, but where the speaker presents himself/herself. It is the latter category which will be in focus of our attention further in this paper. The *inoperative* category includes utterances expressing the mode of displaying reality and the mode of passing on a message about something (e.g. statement, characteristics, appraisal, or criticism).

Unlike characteristic which attempts to capture an entity or an event from different perspectives presenting a balanced view of their typical and substantial features, illocutionary language function used to communicate appraisal presents a narrower view. It expresses a positive or a negative attitude of the speaker to a situation or to a person; it expresses a value laden judgment. While appraisal usually arises spontaneously, the specific features of expressing criticism lie in

<sup>16</sup> O. Müllerová, *Komunikativní složky výstavby...*, op. cit., pp. 56–101.

<sup>17</sup> This classification draws upon Chloupek's description (1973) of operational speech acts and utterances. See: J. Chloupek, *(Ne)aktuálnost slovesného děje*, “Slovo a slovesnost” 1973, 34, No. 1, pp. 48–51.

the intent, usually focused on the negative features<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand, praising presents a state when the relations between the participants of the discourse are not usually disrupted. In fact, the opposite is true – the recipient feels positive.

As may be clear from the above, it is not completely satisfactory to use a simple classification of functions to analyse the data from an authentic discourse (especially that of an extensive character). Such a classification may appear too general. The emerging data shows that the search for a system at the discourse level is still evolving. The limited possibilities of exactly formulated descriptions do not always allow capturing the real communication in all its aspects. In other words, what we say, what kind of intents lead us to say what we say, what connection there may be between the utterances and actions may present so many individualized aspects that it is almost impossible to generalise. So, even if the expectations as to obtaining a clearly classified set of gathered findings have to be moderated, it is still possible to continue examining many partial findings provided by our research.

## Findings

All 67 sets of transcripts containing child directed speech by parents were analysed in detail. Speech acts and speech events were analysed and classified according to their pragmatic meanings, which resulted in gathering 5,013 parents' utterances analysed further as to their illocutionary functions. Table 1. shows a complex view of categories according to Grepl's classification<sup>19</sup>:

**Table 1. Frequency of functions**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Assertives	1 144	22.8
Directives	1 316	26.2
Interrogatives	862	17.2
Commissives	86	1.7
Permissives and concessives	474	9.5
Warning	260	5.2
<b>Expressives</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>9.1</b>
Declaratives	0	0
Utterances without content <sup>20</sup>	414	8.3

Source: Author's own research.

<sup>18</sup> O. Müllerová, *Komunikativní složky výstavby...*, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> M. Grepl, P. Karlík, *Skladba češtiny...*, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> There are also utterances without any content, resp. utterances whose content is very limited. The dominant feature of such utterances is in the illocutionary function. These are usually phrasological and conventionalised utterances – e.g. greeting (Ibidem, p. 477).



**Tabela 1. Częstość występowania funkcji**

Kategoria	Częstość	Procent (%)
Potwierdzenia	1 144	22,8
Polecenia	1 316	26,2
Pytania	862	17,2
Zlecenia	86	1,7
Zgody i ustępstwa	474	9,5
Ostrzeżenia	260	5,2
<b>Wyrażenia</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>9,1</b>
Stwierdzenia	0	0
Wypowiedzi pozbawione treści <sup>21</sup>	414	8,3

Źródło: Badania własne autora.

Utterances which inform the recipient about his/her verbal or non-verbal behaviour, or actions, reached more than 9%. The most frequent in our set was reproach (3.8%), followed by praise (2.6%), criticism (1.9%), reprimand (0.4%), mistrust (0.3%) and wish/es (0.1%).

The occurrence of using reproach in the illocutionary function was quite significant in our set. The total number of such utterances was 192, i.e. almost 4% in the investigated sample. It is necessary to say that parents resorted to this way of communication in stressful, emotionally demanding situations. Slančová<sup>22</sup> mentions the illocutionary function of reproach in the child directed speech used by kindergarten teachers... she states that:

„[...] in comparison with praise in the illocutionary function, the occurrence of reproach in the illocutionary function is [...] substantially lower. The research data showed that praise was used in 138 cases, reproach in 25 cases. [...] the positive holistic focus on the child is also documented by observing the speech sample where the reproach is closely related to the praise in the teachers' child directed speech [...]”<sup>23</sup>.

In the parents' child directed speech, the ratio of the two functions mentioned above is opposite – the illocutionary function of praise occurred 132 times in our sample; moreover, its occurrence was not related to the illocutionary function of reproach. It seems clear that the parent does not speak to the child as

<sup>21</sup> Padają również wypowiedzi pozbawione treści oraz wypowiedzi, których treść jest bardzo ograniczona. Dominującą cechą takich wypowiedzi jest funkcja illokucyjna. Mają zwykle charakter frazeologiczny i konwencjonalny, są np. powitaniem (Tamże, s. 477).

<sup>22</sup> D. Slančová, *Reč autority a lásky*, FF Prešovskej univerzity, Prešov 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 128.

a professional; further, s/he also needs to solve a number of everyday matters at the same time.

Analysing all the recordings provided the data for describing 53 types of illocutionary functions of speech. Table 2. shows more detailed information about twenty most frequent ones<sup>24</sup>:

**Table 2. Functions according to the frequency of occurrence**

Function	Total number	Percentage (%)
Need to inform	859	17.1
Instruction	528	10.5
Announcement	471	9.4
Appeal	432	8.6
Address	328	6.5
Explanation	317	6.3
Reproach	192	3.8
Disagreement, disconfirmation of information	188	3.4
Instruction	144	2.9
Reprimand	140	2.8
Confirmation of information, agreement	139	2.8
Assessment – praise	132	2.6
Assessment – criticism	94	1.9
Specification	86	1.7
Threat	78	1.6
Reasoning	66	1.3
Motivation	65	1.3
Suggestion	63	1.3
Warning	61	1.2
Promise	58	1.2

Source: Author's own research.

<sup>24</sup> It is of interest that three out of the first ten most frequent illocutionary functions may be classified as directives (order, appeal, instruction, reprimand).

**Tabela 2. Funkcje zgodnie z częstotliwością występowania**

Funkcja	Całkowita liczba	Procent (%)
Potrzeba udzielenia informacji	859	17,1
Polecenie	528	10,5
Przekazanie informacji	471	9,4
Wezwanie	432	8,6
Zwrócenie się do kogoś	328	6,5
Wytłumaczenie	317	6,3
Nagana	192	3,8
Niezgoda, zaprzeczenie informacji	188	3,4
Polecenie	144	2,9
Reprimenda	140	2,8
Potwierdzenie informacji, zgoda	139	2,8
Ocena – pochwała	132	2,6
Ocena – krytyka	94	1,9
Wyszczególnienie	86	1,7
Groźba	78	1,6
Przekonywanie	66	1,3
Motywacja	65	1,3
Sugestia	63	1,3
Ostrzeżenie	61	1,2
Obietnica	58	1,2

Źródło: Badania własne autora.

In a number of cases, it was not possible to identify only one illocutionary function unambiguously. This resulted in<sup>25</sup>:

- 9 types<sup>26</sup> of accompanying illocutionary function utterances to communicate criticism, sometimes formulated as a command (e.g. *show me those nice marks* ↓<sup>27</sup>);

<sup>25</sup> After a thoughtful consideration of Slančová's work (D. Slančová, *Reč authority...*, op. cit., p. 70) regarding the child directed speech of kindergarten teachers, we decided to use 3 similar categories of illocutionary functions: 1. The primary illocutionary function fulfilling the main role in the content-pragmatic unit; 2. The accompanying illocutionary function; 3. The combined illocutionary function with both functions interrelated in such a way that it is impossible to determine which is the primary and which is the accompanying one.

<sup>26</sup> The accompanying illocutionary function: address, making contact, evaluation (criticism and praise) statement, motivation, announcement, change of topic, reproach. The most frequent out of these were the address (46) and making contact (9).

<sup>27</sup> Ironic meaning.

- 21 types<sup>28</sup> of combined communicative functions where praising was closely connected with the communicative function of confirming the activity (e.g. *well done* ↓ *correct* ↓), criticism with the communicative function of a reproach (e.g. *you have copied it so badly* ↓ □), resp. with the communicative function of rejecting the activity and giving a recommendation (e.g. *you had better play Poe and earn some money* ↓).

### **Indication of illocutionary functions in the spoken discourse to express appraisal**

Different languages tend to have a set of means to express concrete illocutionary functions according to which the aim of communication could be unambiguously identified. In general, a universal language means for identifying the illocutionary function of an utterance is using performative verbs which describe these functions directly<sup>29</sup>. However, using performatives in everyday communication is not very common; they appear more in declarative speech acts. As our set of data includes a real, unprepared spoken discourse, the occurrence of illocutionary verbs appears to be insignificant. Nevertheless, in order to express illocutionary functions language may use other means. These means depend on the systemic typological features of particular languages, known as indicators of illocutionary functions. A majority of these means are ambiguous and they can express many functions.

In order to describe the most frequent illocutionary functions appearing in our data we used the conventional terminology established in literature to describe such utterances. However, it is not possible to claim that only conventional means were used. Repeatedly, the parent was led to use the language according to the concrete contextual situation. S/he selected the language means which not only promoted interaction sufficiently but which were also clear to understand.

The core of a content-pragmatic unit expressing the illocutionary function of appraisal is usually the evaluating/assessing word. When praising, naturally an expression with a positive connotation is used, usually an adjective, or an adverb (e.g. *fine* ↓; *what a lovely surprise* ↓/ *you have dressed up so nicely* ↓;

<sup>28</sup> Combined illocutionary functions: reprimand/address, evaluation/disagreement, evaluation/advice, motivation/threat, reprimand/reproach, disagreement/specification, disagreement/rationalization, rejection of activity/explanation, correction/unacceptance of information, address/change of topic, announcement/evaluation, announcement/motivation, evaluation/confirmation of activity, evaluation/change of topic, the need to get information/change of topic, the need to get information/reproach, order/reproach, reproach/evaluation, appeal/suggestion, appeal/change of topic, appeal/warning. The most frequent functions were reprimand/address (8).

<sup>29</sup> M. Grepl, P. Karlík, *Skladba češtiny...*, op. cit., p. 435.

*what good news* ↓; */how smart* ↓; *super* ↓/*excellent* ↓; *well done* ↓/*great* ↓; *great* ↓/*you have done it so nicely* ↓; *perfect* ↓ etc.), or a noun (e.g. *good girl* ↓; *great guy* ↓ etc.). Praising was also realized as a statement (with an explicit expression of a positive attitude) – e.g. *well done* ↓/*so you have got out of the bath all by yourselves today* ↓; *great guy* ↓/*it wouldn't occur to me* ↓; *see how many you know* ↓. The use of so called indirect praise was also noted, i.e. the positive attitude of a speaker is not passed on to the listener directly (in this way, such utterances may function as motivation – e.g. *see how Amelie has done it so nicely* ↑ □; *hmm how smart Lucka is* ↓; *also Kamilka can do it* ↓)

There were two specific aspects occurring in relation to praise at a preschool children's group (connected with common activity carried out by parents and children together):

- Using the inclusive plural (e.g. *look how well we've done it* ↓; *hmm super* ↓/*well done* ↓/*there you are* ↓ etc.);
- Praise as a so called assessing utterance (in connection with the previous pseudo didactic communication situation) – for example

M	36	<i>that is</i> ↑ □
Ch	37	<i>you mean A as in auto</i> ↓
M	38	<i>AUto</i> ↓ <i>excellent</i> ↓ <i>this is A</i> ↓ <i>excellent</i> ↓

F	6	<i>what colour is it</i> ↓ □
Ch	7	<i>sunny</i> ↓
F	8	<i>sunny</i> ↓ <i>excellent</i> ↓

Sometimes, it was possible to observe both praise and criticism together (e.g. *you read it nicely at the beginning* ↓/*and then you did a sloppy job of it* ↓).

The centre of an utterance functioning as criticism (very often combined with a reproach) is usually an expression with a negative connotation – verbs (e.g. *well you have not cleaned it up much, have you* ↓/*you have done it sloppily* ↓; *you are not trying* ↓/*don't tell me you don't know* ↓; *you are not doing it properly, are you* ↑ etc.), adverbs (e.g. *you have copied it so badly* ↓ □; *and you've made such a mess of it* ↓; *you made such a mess when you were cooking it* ↓ etc.), adjectives (e.g. *hmm/a stupid suggestion* ↓; *awful* ↓; *you* ↓/*you aren't normal* ↓; *it's so ugly* ↓ etc.), sometimes also nouns/noun phrases (e.g. *stop throwing a tantrum* ↓; *what a shame you were* ↑ □; *you are an idiot* ↓; *what a pig you are* ↓; *a right psychopath* ↓; *stop making a face* ↓/*like an IDiot* ↓; *you are a shame* ↓ etc.). There were a number of utterances in the interrogative as well (e.g. *you don't remember what* ↑ □/*you are old enough, aren't you* ↓ □; *what's that supposed to be/a way of washing your hands* ↓ □; *and why are always turning the same one* ↓ □; *do you want to live in a pigsty or in order* ↓ □ etc.)

and also as statements (e.g. *because you never go to sleep and you are messing about in bed* ↓; *you'd like to count out all the time* ↓; *oh dear, the teacher was so nice that she gave you a B* ↓ etc.). Only scarcely was it possible to note a conditional (e.g. *I'd like to see you how you'd prefer to have your lunches in the school canteen* ↓).

Using a polite form usually meant an emphasis on a particular discourse function – e.g. *could you sit up nicely on the toilet bowl please* ↑□/sit up nicely ↓; *can you stop messing about* ↓ □ etc.

Ironic expressions were also noted, regardless of the child's age (a pre-school child cannot understand irony yet) – e.g. *excellent* ↓ *pour it out once more please* ↓; *oh that's great* ↓ *you don't want to look clean by any chance* ↓; *oh that's wonderful really* ↓ *THERE a T-shirt* ↓ etc.

### **Communication intent of appraisal related to the child's age**

The following stage of our research was focused on investigating the occurrence of particular illocutionary functions in child directed speech in relation to the age of a child. Therefore, the transcribed recordings were divided into three groups according to the age groups of children participating in our research. 67 recordings in total were divided as follows:

- Category of children from 3 to 6 years of age consisted of 34 recordings (in total 2,872 utterances of child directed speech);
- Category of primary school children (children from 7 to 11 years of age) consisted of 19 recordings (in total 1,391 utterances of child directed speech);
- Category of lower secondary children (children from 12 to 15 years of age) consisted of 14 recordings (in total 639 utterances of child directed speech).

Each of the stages of the child development can be characterized by its specific features, also with regards to the parents' aims to appraise the child's behaviour. In the pre-school age, children usually begin their "full socialization", which is connected with attending a kindergarten, with establishing other than only family contacts, with the speech development, the development of thinking and emotions in other social situations and contacts, establishing values and norms, a significant development of self-confidence, etc. It is also emotional intelligence that develops during the pre-school age, children begin to understand their own emotions and also the emotions of the people around them, they are able to appraise a social situation and respond "appropriately". It can be said that self-assessment emotions also develop at that age, which relates to self-appreciation (pre-school children can experience feelings of pride and guilt). Later in the pre-school age, children are able to internalize the basic rules

of behaviour and identify with them. Child self-appreciation is still dependant on the appraisal received from others<sup>30</sup>.

Primary school aged children get acquainted with other social situations they widen their social contacts. They start to develop very fast, both in their thinking and in their emotions. More links between their rational thinking and emotional assessment can be observed children understand their feelings better, they begin to be able to control their emotions and to understand emotional ambivalence. It is possible to notice their increasing ability to recognize and understand the emotions of other people. Due to their experiences, their own self-assessment emotions are being developed as well. It is the stage in which a child affirms his/her qualities in the area of performance and social acceptance. The experience of success enhances a positive self-image, while the experience of failure leads towards developing an inferiority complex. At this age, the need to achieve good results in their performance increases together with the need to be appreciated for these results. Positive appreciation from adults satisfies the need to feel self-confident. It is still the family with its norms, values, demands and appraisal which offers the fundamental social and emotional background for the further development of a child beyond the boundaries of a well-known familiar space<sup>31</sup>.

Lower secondary school children start developing into teenagers, which means a search for their own identity, a different way of response, thinking and social interaction. The interaction between parents and children decreases; it can be said that pubescents distance themselves from their parents (the formal superiority of adults is decreasing) and the relations with adults are substituted for those with their peers. Self-respect is very vulnerable in this developmental stage as well as emotional reactions. Pubescents gradually reach the stage of cognitive and emotional autonomy, which is characterized as growing independence in thinking and not accepting the opinions of adults as the only valid options (this is also reflected in appraisal)<sup>32</sup>.

As the number of recordings in each set is different in our sample, it was necessary to calculate the occurrence of functions as a percentage. Clearly, it is the only way that a relevant picture might be obtained regarding concrete communication intents within given categories.

In cases of a recording consisting of the child directed speech to the children of two different age categories, the parents' utterances were analysed separately.

As may be expected, a significant disproportion appeared during the analysis of illocutionary functions. While in the first age group praise outweighed criticism (praise was recorded in 2.7%, criticism only in 1.4%) and the illocutionary function of reproach reached "only" 2%, the remaining two age groups

<sup>30</sup> M. Vágnerová, *Vývojová psychologie. Dětství a dospívání*, Univerza Karlova, Praha 2014, pp. 219–249.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 305–333.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 390–401.

presented a different picture. The child directed speech to 7–11 year old children consisted more frequently of criticisms (2.7%), while praise appeared only in 2.2%, the illocutionary function of reproach increased (to 4.8%). The parents of children aged from 12–15 tended to use these functions even more frequently – reproach was recorded in more than 10%, the ratio of assessing functions was balanced (praise 3%, criticism 2%).

The reason for the described distribution seems to be obvious – in the child directed speech towards pre-school children, the didactic principle of the positive motivation seems to be applied, the possibility of which naturally decreases with the increasing age of a child.

### **Communication intent of appraisal related to the dominant/central activity**

All communication processes, the communication between parents and children being no exception, are firmly established in concrete situations. A set of characteristics by which this entity can be described is named a social situation. Kořenský states:

“Practical activity of social subjects in a given social situation is mainly realized by common action of individuals towards a particular subject (transforming it); this action is also a means of creating their mutual relations [...] and their integration into the social situation.”<sup>33</sup>

As mentioned above, it was necessary to categorize the speech recordings in our research; otherwise we would have ended up with an almost “infinite” number of speech events. In the end, the communication situations as mentioned above were selected. However, not all of them were usable across all age categories. The recordings we obtained were not focused on one topic. Therefore, it appeared necessary to divide the transcriptions into segments according to the topics dominant in particular situations. In separate (differently saturated) groups, only the utterances occurring in the child directed speech related to the content of investigation were analysed – these were the utterances connected to concrete activities.

In such precisely defined sets of data, we focused on discovering the frequency of particular illocutionary functions in relation to the activity in process.

Another focus of our research was aimed at finding out the ratio of selected topics in the child directed speech in all three age categories.

The following table shows the data according to the central topics, the size, resp. sub-topics determined according to the range of spoken discourse in various families.

<sup>33</sup> J. Kořenský et al., *Komplexní analýza...*, op. cit., p. 19.



**Table 3. Child directed speech – data according to the dominant topics of spoken discourse (related to the activity in process)**

Topic	Number of utterances	Sub-topic	Size of sub-topics (number of utterances)
At the table	1.211	–	–
Personal hygiene	473	–	–
Putting children to bed	520	–	–
Playing with children	1.249	–	–
Other activities	1.049	Drawing and painting	156
		Going for a walk/ trip	182
		Tidying up	288
		Getting ready for a day at school/going to the kindergarten	423
Non-specific aspects of everyday family life <sup>34</sup>	511	–	–

Source: Author's own research.

**Tabela 3. Mowa skierowana do dziecka – dane według przeważających tematów dyskursu mówionego (w odniesieniu do trwającej czynności)**

Temat	Liczba wypowiedzi	Podtemat	Wielkość pod-tematów (liczba wypowiedzi)
Przy stole	1,211	–	–
Higiena osobista	473	–	–
Kładzenie dzieci spać	520	–	–
Zabawa z dziećmi	1,249	–	–
Inne czynności	1,049	Rysowanie i malowanie	156
		Wyjście na spacer/wyjazd na wycieczkę	182
		Sprzątanie	288
		Przygotowanie do dnia w szkole/przedszkolu	423
Niekonkretne aspekty codziennego życia rodziny <sup>35</sup>	511	–	–

Źródło: Badania własne autora.

<sup>34</sup> Communication is not determined by the common activity/action carried out by parents and children together

<sup>35</sup> Komunikacja nie jest określana przez zajęcia i czynności wykonywane wspólnie przez rodziców i dzieci.

Although the sets earmarked by the dominant activity differed in many aspects, the ratio of appraising comments was usually balanced. In none of the analysed groups did the utterances functioning as expressive reach significant values.

The activity “At the table” occurred in all age categories, but it was most frequently represented in the category of primary school children (parents of other age categories did not find so many opportunities to record the discourse during this activity). The focus of the discourse cannot be evaluated as either positive or negative – although praise was noted in 2.3%, (criticism only in 1.3%), the negative impact of the child directed speech was reached by a number of utterances functioning as reproach (2.3%).

As the parents of primary school children are not usually present during the “Personal hygiene” activity, the child directed speech related to this topic appeared only in the category of pre-school children. The described situation places rather high demands on the parents, which is reflected in the range of illocutionary points.

Most frequently, the utterances expressing the speaker’s will (i.e. the parent’s will) can be observed. The parent making the child to take an action used a directive most frequently. Illocutionary force of the utterance functioning as praise or reproach occurred only rarely (in 1.9%), criticism in 2.1%.

The utterances related to the thematic topic “Putting a child to bed” occurred only in the category of pre-school children. Due to the stressful character of this communication situation, it was observed that apart from passing on the information to the child there were quite a number of utterances expressing a view of the child’s behaviour. As the age of the children in this category was between 3 and 6, there appeared a significant majority of praise (3.1%) over criticism (0.4%) in the range of illocutionary points. However, this psychologically demanding situation was reflected in a significant increase of utterances functioning as reproach (3.5%).

Communication related to “playing with children” occurred in all three age categories. Its unbalanced representation in sets of transcripts (25.3% in talking to pre-school children, 12.6% in talking to primary school children, and 52.3% to lower secondary children) was caused by the offer of possible communication situations for recording the discourse. The recordings of speech to younger children were related to playing with children (e.g. with trains, in the garden, during competitions), in the cases of older children the speech was recorded when playing board and card games. As might be expected, an increased number of announcements (9.8%), instructions (9.1%) and explanations (4.2%) were noted, which relate to the need to explain the rules of the game, and its procedure. Utterances such as praise (3.8%) and criticism (2.3%) were also represented significantly. This is certainly related to the need to motivate a child and help him/her to play the game (praise was noted 26times in the whole set). On

the other hand, from the point of view of motivation, it seems controversial to use reproach (4%).

As the parents also recorded the child directed speech in a variety of situations which were not repeated so frequently that a special category could be made, the rest of the recordings were categorised as “other activities”.

The most frequent activity in this category was getting ready for school or kindergarten. Utterances related to this spoken discourse topic were fairly equally represented in both categories of schoolchildren (17.6% in the age group of primary school children – 18.2% in the age group of lower secondary school children). In the age group of pre-school children, the number of such utterances and situations was negligible – 1.5%). The child directed speech recorded during the activity called tidying up was represented in all three age categories fairly equally (pre-school children – 6.9%, primary school children – 4.3% and lower secondary children – 3.9%). On the other hand, utterances related to going for a walk, or a trip, were noted only in the category of pre-school children.

Apart from the speech related to the thematic topic going for a walk/trip (the most frequent illocutionary function was explanation – 15.4%), the need for obtaining and giving information was identified most frequently in all sub-topics in this thematic group. In this way, the parents not only obtained the required information from their children, but they also controlled their behaviour. Similarly to all the previous thematic groups, the directives such as an order, or a challenge formed almost a quarter of the utterances recorded (20.1%); as such, they played a significant role in expressing the illocutionary meaning. As for the appraising comments, praise slightly outweighed criticism (praise – 2.6%, criticism – 2%). The only sub-topic where this ratio was not respected was “tidying up”. Due to the character of the activity, the higher number of critical remarks from the parents was noted (praise – 1.4%, criticism – 2.1%), accompanied by the utterances functioning as reproach (6.6%).

The thematic group named as “non-specific aspects of everyday family daily life” was characterized by changing different topics without focusing on one. Moreover, the speech was not related to a particular activity. Although this type of discourse was noted in all age categories, it was represented more often in the schoolchildren category (in the child directed speech to the pre-school children – 6.2%, to the primary school children – 15.9%, to the lower secondary children – 14.9%). Obviously, the recordings were related to the propositional contents such as children’s duties, their success or failure at school, they related to the current elections, etc. In these cases, the most frequent illocutionary function was the need to inform, i.e. in more than 22%. As most of the interactions within this set were aimed at expressing the parental attitude to the child’s behaviour, there were many utterances functioning as explanations (12.1%) and reproach (9.4%). The negative trend is strengthened by frequent utterances functioning as criticism (3.1% – e.g. *you are a twit; you are a complete psycho-*

*PATH* ↓/*don't put on a SCENE* ↓/*that's really terrible* ↓) and threat (2.9% – e.g. *but on Friday you'll have to DO it* ↓/*you won't go out until you take care of your hamsters* ↓/*until you do the Hoovering* ↓; *and you should have announced that before* ↑/*so tomorrow you'll stay at home understood* ↑). On the other hand, praise occurred only in less than 1%.

## Conclusion

Our findings show that the recorded speech acts are determined situationally as well as in terms of time. Moreover, the recorded spoken discourse is usually related to a concrete activity in process. Another feature of child directed speech can be seen in its unbalanced relation between a speaker and a recipient. This is confirmed by the prevalence of utterances expressing the will of a speaker – in our case, a parent who needs to assert themselves in order to achieve their goals. It may be concluded that a whole number of identified illocutionary language functions used in the spoken discourse can be classified as those intending to lower the self-esteem of a child (e.g. a reproach, a threat, a warning, criticism and mistrust). The frequency of using these illocutionary language functions is alarming – in almost 8% of the utterances in total. As for the appraisal, an imbalance related to the age of a child was noted. In case of pre-school children, praise prevailed over criticism, while in case of school-aged children a fairly balanced ratio, with a slight inclination towards criticism, was identified. The reason for such findings is obvious – the principle of positive motivation is applied more frequently when dealing with pre-school children. However, it is more difficult to apply this principle when dealing with older children.

### List of abbreviations

↑	rising intonation at the end
↓	falling intonation at the end
/	pause
//	prolonged pause
□	utterance functioning as a question
∂	hesitation
=	interruption of the previous utterance
—	unintelligible speech
SLOWly	emphasized syllable/part of the word
Ch	child
M	mother
F	father

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