The Markers of Concession in Assertive Speech Acts in American and Bulgarian Discussion Programmes

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Abstract: *The relevance of the paper is due to the exponential increase in cross-cultural research interests in the area of communicative acts that are steadily becoming the matter of examination from linguistic and pragmatic perspectives. The study is aimed at defining, classifying and analysing the markers of concession identified and extracted from 6 consecutive broadcasts of two popular discussion programmes in American-English and Bulgarian (TED talks and Investbook) within the confines of the simple (extended) clause. In particular, the use of the descriptive-analytical method in the data interpretation allows distinguishing the structural and pragmatic specificities of the two sets of data. The focus is on the relations of concession within the boundaries of assertive speech acts and more precisely: the representations of certain linguistic means of concession with an emphasis on their functional-semantic and structural-syntactic features as well as on their pragmatic representation. The diversity and the linguistic variability of the adverbial forms of concession are further inspected in terms of their coherent deployment and respective reflection on their semantic functions and communicative meaning.*

Keywords: *assertive speech acts, markers of concession, syntactic relations, semantics, pragmatic meaning*

Introduction

In the linguistic studies the notion of concession has never been profoundly explored. A credible reason for this could be that it is not an easy task to qualify and characterize this semantic concept as the diversity and profoundness of its semantic references and linguistic structures, either clausal or fragmental (prepositions, conjunctions, phrases), have not been observed in great depth, especially in the area of cross-cultural pragmatics. Indeed, the matter of concession and concessive relations are typically approached in terms of their textual roles which represent aberrant propositional attitudes, leaving aside their pragmatic role in the acts of communicative interactions. In this paper, I dwell on certain fragmental markers of concession that were extracted from 6 consecutive discussion TV shows (American and Bulgarian), namely the prepositional expressions ***despite*** and ***in spite of*** and their respective translation equivalents in Bulgarian, the concessive conjunction ***макар*** (*makar*) and the preposition ***въпреки*** (*vapreki*), identified in the assertive speech acts. In that respect, the

article follows a several-dimensional examination aiming at introducing the essence of the concessive relations, the respective structural-syntactic specificities, the propositional attitudes and the assertive communicative performances in two different cultural settings. It further shows the formation of the sentence structures of concession in the English language as well as in the Bulgarian. Additionally, it speculates on the correlation and coherence of the elements in the framework of the extended simple sentence, namely, on certain formal constructs such as conjunctions, prepositions, prepositional phrases and some particles acting as lexical modifiers. On the other hand, the body of the research also stresses the quantity of the explored elements in view of their frequencies and semantic-communicative properties considering the situational context and inferred intention on the part of the speaker in the area of assertive speech acts.

Theoretical background
Linguists, grammarians in particular, have assumed that in the boundaries of the simple sentence, the extended simple sentence and the complex sentence the concessive element becomes explicit either in the form of a subordinating word or phrase, or an adverbial clause (*although, though, despite, in spite of*) that indicates either a contrast or concession in connection to the proposition in the matrix clause (Quirk, Greembaum, Leech, Scartvik 1995; Huddleston, Pullum 2002). In fact, it is not quite accurate to place 'contrast' and 'concession' on an equal footing as in the case of relations of contrast, there is a comparison of two related situations sharing a similar aspect or implying a contradiction (*I'd like to apologize but you should first thank me*), whereas in relations of concession the speaker compares different aspects but of the same situation (*I'd like to apologize though I do not regret*) (Rudolph 1996). Though both semantic techniques indicate oppositional relations, they show deviations in their semantic values. While in a contrast opposition the stress is on the difference, in a concession opposition the concessive element underestimates the truth-value semantics of the main segment creating some kind of expectation that is afterwards denied or lessened via the use of the concessive marker (Stassen 1985; Izutsu 2008). Indeed, the speaker's communicative performance in the matrix clause presupposes some kind of expectedness of event occurrence or some pragmatic inference which will be recognized by the hearer (for example, as an apology, a promise, as an act of assertion), however, the follow-up concessive structure creates a situation of unexpectedness which goes contrary to the hearer's expectations in that it provokes an illocutionary bias. For example:

> *e.g. I apologize for my harsh tone despite my overall disapproval of your point of view.*

The apologetic act is clearly indicated in the main clause, yet the succeeding concessive structure triggers a breach regarding the sincerity condition of the very act of apology, thus downplaying the truth-value semantics of the locutionary act (the propositional content in the main clause).

In this train of thought, some scholars state that the clause is the explicit signature of the speech event in that the thought expressed in a sentence correlates with the speech situation, or the contextual parameters (setting, participants) (Diessel, Hetterle 2011, Weisser 2018). In fact, the predicative character of the clause builds up a bridge among the syntactic structure that forms a sentence, the content of the sentence (the locutionary point) and their relation to reality (making it an act of communication).

Traditionally, the structure of the simple sentence or the clause is related to the existence of a single independent clause, which is mono-predicative (Cheneva 1995, Los 2015). However, since the paper investigates two concessive markers within the framework of the clause, it is more a matter of research within the boundaries of the extended simple clause, in that all examples excerpted from the two corpora become explicit in an extended simple sentence composition, with an additional word or phrase either preceding or succeeding the matrix clause (Jarrah, Alghazo 2021). Interestingly, although the lexico-grammatical content predetermines a mono-predicative syntactic structure, the semantic content (propositional meaning) of the extended simple sentence approximates to the content of the complex sentence, that is, it is a mono-predicative in form though poly-eventful in content. What is more, the concessive marker, either a word or phrase, enters into a collocation relation with the independent clause acting as a syntactically dependent part (Collins Cobuild 1996). In this respect, the latter, as a secondary part, corroborates the semantics of the predicate, in that, as an adverbial modifier it finds its place within the predicate semantics, manifesting either an extra condition or some particular lexical meaning, a prerequisite or an additional stipulation.

In this context, the adverbial modifier of concession makes reference to a condition which will hinder the performance illustrated by the predicate, though this hindrance will not be that strong to frustrate it.

Research questions

This study is based on two corpora of data, American-English and Bulgarian, which comprise five types of assertive utterances, elicited from two discussion TV programmes in American-English and Bulgarian. Both TV formats share similar discussion areas performed in spontaneous conversations, such as current events talks and discussions in business,

politics and economy, in which the contextual variables and situational settings are common for both groups of participants.

This case study provides an in-depth appreciation of the specific lexical and speech phenomena prioritizing the discrepancies that may occur in terms of the syntactic structuring of the inspected markers of concession, their semantic deviations and pragmatic usage and perception. In this context, the paper aims to encompass the following tasks:

1) to analyse and compare the structural-grammatical forms of the markers of concession in English and Bulgarian and their syntactic extensions;

2) to compare and contrast the semantic content of the markers and their impact on the propositional attitudes in both languages;

3) to outline the differences in the pragmatic behaviour of the markers of concession among the native speakers.

Methods

For the purposes of the study different methods were adopted. One of the methodological approaches in collecting, classifying and evaluating the empirical material is the systematic-descriptive approach which helps in gathering data and information from a variety of sources. It further proves beneficial in testing the tasks regarding the study matter and in examining the linguistic variables in question (Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper 1989; Byrne 2002, Roever 2011). Besides, it adds to the correlational approach which delves into the link between the variables, namely, the syntactic markers, their semantic content and practical usage.

Since the current article is a comparative analysis, the research design combines the systematic-descriptive and correlational methodologies in order to enable the quantitative and qualitative data processing. In this regard, the quantitative statistical analysis asks for a huge number of utterances or communicative acts, which are further summarized, classified and interpreted during the qualitative processing, the latter taking into account the contextual and subjective parameters.

Data analysis

The data comprise 141 assertive speech acts from the American TV show compared to a total of 135 assertive utterances extracted from the discussion programme in Bulgarian.

In view of the <u>concessive markers</u>, the following syntactic patterns were identified in the frame of the extended simple sentence:

➢ from the American-English corpus:

despite / in spite of   + a single noun / an extended noun phrase

despite / in spite of   + a gerund phrase

➢ from the Bulgarian corpus:
   makar / vapreki + a single noun / an extended noun phrase
   makar + ***I*** + adverb

In view of the <u>assertive acts</u>, the following sub-types were identified according to the character of assertive behaviour:
➢ asserting utterances
➢ stating utterances
➢ suggesting utterances
➢ reporting utterances
➢ concluding utterances

It should also be stated that the interlocutors in the respective discussion TV programmes share an equal and unbiased playing field with similar or almost identical social status and power; professionals in their areas of interest and occupation. The primary goal in such a TV format is to provide clarity and better understanding of an issue with the consideration that all participants aim to be accurate, elaborate, processing individually and outlining their own perspective. The emotional element is always present, though left in the periphery in the discussion since the latter is centered on content, not on a subjective feeling provoked by a response. However, as the excerpted utterances show personal opinions and attitudes, the expressive contour may give answers in terms of pragmatic dimensions in both cultures.

a) **Analysis of the American-English corpus**

The markers of concession excerpted from the linguistic material in the American database are reduced to two concessive connectors, namely, *despite* and *in spite of*, as they can only be recognized in the frames of the simple sentence in reference to their syntactic structural frame. **Grammatically**, they are prepositions which become explicit in the following syntactic patterns:

1) ***despite / in spite of*** followed by a single nominal or extended nominal phrase:

   e.g. *<u>Despite the unfavourable circumstances, I've spent a lot of time on the hotspot</u>*. (single nominal phrase)
   e.g. *I could still offer a strategy of pulling out of the crisis <u>in spite of the last weekend's disappointing results on the stock market</u>*. (extended nominal phrase)

2) ***despite / in spite of*** followed by a gerund phrase:

e.g. *I've noticed a decline in the import of insulation components despite ending the embargo*.
E.g. *In spite of investigating for months, I haven't come to any logical conclusion*.

We should take into account that in such a type of concessive relation, the latter is a connection between a clause, that is, the matrix clause and an adverbial introduced with a concessive marker. That, in itself, runs contrary to the syntactic structuring of the concessive relation between two clauses (*although, even though, though* (conjunctions)), in which the matrix clause (independent clause) is either preceded or succeeded by a subordinate (dependent clause) introduced with a concessive marker (*I apologize for the inconvenience though it was not my fault*).

It should also be considered that the study excludes the syntactic pattern *despite / in spite of + the fact that* since it represents a concessive clause, not a concessive phrase, which suggests an examination into the frame of complex sentences.

Additionally, the syntactic pattern *despite / in spite of + a gerund phrase* may provoke ambiguities in that whether the concessive structure represents a clause or not. Actually, as both concessive markers are prepositions, the gerundial form after the marker is stated to be a noun or a nominal phrase (Diessel, Hetterle 2011). In this case, the gerund phrase functions as an object of the prepositions *despite* and *in spite of*. For example:

e.g. *In spite of receiving strong support, my position has never fully recovered*.

In the example above, 'receiving' as a gerund form is attached to the nominal phrase 'strong support' which acts as a direct object of the action provided in the gerund form, while both are preceded by the concessive preposition 'in spite of'. The concessive phrase can be transformed in two ways: *In spite of the strong support*, with a type of concession omitting the gerundial word or *In spite of the fact that I received strong support*, with a concession introduced with a clause. Bearing in mind the syntactic ambivalence which the gerundial form provokes, we have assumed that it would be of use to comment on its occurrence in a concessive relation due to its ambiguous and debatable character.

Semantically, the two markers express the same lexical meaning: 'notwithstanding, regardless of, not affected by a particular factor' (Collins Cobuild 1996). The difference is that *despite* is one word whereas *in spite of* consists of three words. Both concessive markers or modifiers can occupy a

pre-position or inter-position in the sentence, that is, either preceding the matrix clause or succeeding it, but never being a final phrase in the sentence.

Table (1a) below illustrates the relevant quantitative values in relation to the frequency of occurrences of the examined markers of concession in the American-English corpus:

Table 1a: Frequency distribution of the concessive markers in Am-En corpus – summary table

Type of concessive marker	Am-Eng corpus	
	number of utterances	percent
despite / in spite of + single N	32	22.70%
despite / in spite of + extended NP	86	60.99%
despite / in spite of + gerund phrase	23	16.31%
Total	141	100%

Obviously, the most favoured grammatical pattern among interlocutors is *despite / in spite of* + *extended nominal phrase* in almost well under two thirds of the utterances while + *single noun* and + *gerund phrase* syntactic patterns come second and last in preference with significantly lower percentage rates.

Since all three syntactic extensions introduced after the concessive marker are considered to be a type of substantive form, the latter may refer either to a person, a place, a thing or to an idea. The propositional perspective can be submitted by a single word or by a cluster of words, though the locution can refer to one particular object, event or abstract concept. For instance:

> e.g. *Despite my scepticism I think I see your perspective*. (single nominal phrase referring to an idea)
> e.g. *My company and I have established a steady routine in casting technologies in spite of the persistent disciplinary problems by the managerial authorities*. (extended nominal phrase referring to an event)
> e.g. *I had to renegotiate the terms despite bureaucracy battles*. (single nominal phrase referring to an object)

In the majority of utterances the extended nominal phrase initiated by the marker of concession makes reference to some kind of an event or abstract matter which in most cases is manifested by means of explanations or clarifications, which undoubtedly will provoke a considerable adverse effect on the overall illocutionary performance of the speech act.

In a further breakdown of the markers of concession, *despite* gains prominence over *in spite of* owing to its high frequency of occurrence (Table 1b).

Table 1b: Frequency distribution of the type of concessive markers in Am-En corpus

Type of concessive marker	Am-Eng corpus	
	number of utterances	percent
despite + single N	28	19.86%
despite + extended NP	69	48.94%
despite + gerund phrase	11	7.80%
	108	**76.6%**
in spite of + single N	4	2.84%
in spite of + extended NP	17	12.05%
in spite of + gerund phrase	12	8.51%
	33	**23.4%**
Total	**141**	**100%**

In respect of the actual performance of the two performative entries, the data show that *despite* frequency usage is significantly higher than the use of *in spite of*, 76.6% and 23,4% respectively (Table 1a), which makes *despite* relatively more common and employed in a conversational format. What is more, *despite* is more frequent in an inter-position in the sentence when used with an extended NP. However, occupying a pre-position before the matrix clause, *despite* is more common in *a single noun* or *gerund* syntactic set. This, in turn, can be explained from another aspect, namely, in the light of the illocutionary component. Table (1c) provides details about the intended meanings derived from the illocutionary component.

Table 1c: Frequency distribution of the type of assertive speech acts

Type of assertive acts	Am-En corpus		Bulgarian corpus	
	number of utterances	percent	number of utterances	percent
asserting utterances	21	14.89%	72	53.33%
stating utterances	35	24.82%	23	17.05%
suggesting utterances	8	5.67%	2	1.48%
reporting utterances	62	43.98%	36	26.66%
concluding utterances	15	10.64%	2	1.48%
Total	**141**	**100%**	**135**	**100%**

Overall, *despite* and *in spite of* (the two markers are regarded inseparably since they have identical lexical meaning which does not change or cannot be changed in different illocutionary settings) become explicit in 5 types of assertive speech acts: ***asserting, stating, suggesting, reporting,***

concluding. Though all five types are quite similar in illocutionary force, as they are all assertive and commit the interlocutors to the truth of the locution (the propositional component), there are slight deviations in terms of assertive behaviour.

As is seen from the table the two markers are primarily exploited in *stating* and *reporting* assertive communicative interactions, in that, the speaker tries to express a straightforward and honest opinion or idea, which has a word-to-world 'direction of fit' (Kissine 2007). It means that speaker believes that the world, that is the external fact or contextual setting, represents a state of affairs that common sense reference depicts as true or false (Nguyen 2022). The speaker's belief is satisfied when his/her personal truth-value logic fits the external state of affairs (the situational setting), as in the case:

> e.g. *I've given all my efforts on the project despite the stout resistance of the deputy mayor.*

The matrix clause contains the illocutionary force of an assertive statement as the conversational implicature (intended meaning) connotes the idea of a clear indication of something that is equally recognized by either parties (the speaker and the hearer) as true or false. In regards, no evidence or attestation is needed on the part of the speaker to prove the truth of the proposition as the speaker and the hearer possess the same knowledge about the subject matter. On the other hand, as *asserting statements* can reveal either an analytic or synthetic semantic distinction (Locher, Graham 2021), the proposition of the utterance above obviously reveals a synthetic propositional attitude as the truth-value component is not disclosed either explicitly or implicitly in the locution. So, the hearer can test the validity or truthfulness of the subject matter only by his/her own observation and experience (Perdana, Bharati, Yuliasri 2021), which runs contrary to the analytic semantic distinction which rejection or negation is considered to be implausible in virtue of the objectivity of the locutionary content, as in the sentence:

> e.g. *Actually non-managers are used to taking orders in spite of the current situation on the workshop level.*

The propositional message in the matrix clause is true by reason of its meaning. The data analysis shows that the synthetic distinction is prevalent in the assertive statements.

From another perspective, though the illocutionary force in the matrix clause is indubitable, in that, the implied message is easily recognized, the

concessive extension challenges the felicity conditions in the assertive utterance (Bayat 2013), more precisely, the sincerity condition. Admittedly, the concessive marker downgrades or diminishes the genuineness of the statement by arguing that the statement in question is of less validity or questioning the preconditions on which the statement is based. However, as the current paper is a study on assertive speech acts, the sincerity criterion, being associated with a psychological state, is regarded to be directed to a state of belief rather than to a psychological disposition, in that, the expressive implicature is not that distinct. Nevertheless, the pragmatic point is violated as there is a breach in the assertive attitude due to the concessive modifier.

A similar analysis was carried out in relation to *reporting assertive acts*, which gain preference over the other assertive utterances. While they are discussed on an equal footing with the assertive statements, yet there is a slight deviation both in propositional and illocutionary perspectives. All *reporting assertive sentences* refer to the act of documenting or communicating something that the speaker has experienced, seen or done. Actually, the act of reporting seems to hold an element of stating as well as an element of informing. The *reporting assertives* have a broader meaning, in tha, apart from the factual or substantial assistance for *stating assertives*, they can also imply the element of hypothetical propositional attitude, as in the following example:

> e.g. *I've witnessed the stagflation on the market in spite of the still tolerable rate of unemployment.*

The *reporting* perspective is indicated in the main clause though its veracity is likely to be depreciated by the concessive modifier. Pragmatically, the speech act cannot be regarded as unsuccessful or infelicitous since the illocutionary message is to be adequately perceived by the hearer. However, the degree of its genuineness or to what extent it is realistic or true to life would be less low by virtue of the concessive marker. Indeed, the concessive modifier acts as a reducing agent of the main illocutionary force, which, in turn, results in a slight deviation from the main speech act presupposition.

Next in order of arrangement are the *asserting*, *concluding* and *suggesting* utterances, which communicative usage, displayed in a discussion interaction, is not so high. As for the *asserting utterances* within the domain of assertive speech acts, the speaker confidently reveals his/her intentions by directly asserting or declaring something (Jarrah, Alghazo 2021). In contrast to *stating* and *reporting utterances*, priority is given to asserting either as positive or negative, where the speaker in a more self-assured and forceful

manner communicates a fact or belief. The truth-value logic comes second in importance, though undoubtedly is an inseparable part of the propositional content. Conversely, the concessive component lessens the degree of illocutionary force. For instance:

> e.g. *I cannot work with these people any more despite their persistent repercussions.*

In a bigger part of the examples from the database, the speaker expresses negative feelings. The type of assertion is that it constructively places emphasis on the speaker's feelings of either anger, annoyance or dissatisfaction. In this respect, the concessive modifier can play a discrediting role as it can alleviate the negative expressive attitude in the matrix proposition. It can also be added that in *asserting utterances* the emotional contour is rather distinct compared to the other types of assertives.

As regards to *concluding utterances*, which come fourth in frequency usage, the proposition the speaker has arrived at follows a logical reasoning based on substantial evidence and attestation about a case. It further proceeds from a deduction about a state of affairs and its more narrow in character in terms of deductive reasoning, which refers to testing and authenticating, as is seen in the utterance below:

> e.g. *Despite the variety of scenarios, I am still firm in my position for a sustainable electricity facility.*

The speaker comes to a conclusion after implementing a deductive approach, starting from something more general ('the variety of scenarios') to something more specific ('his position') exercising his/her personal judgement from a set of options. From another perspective, the concessive modifier may extensively mitigate the assertive aspect, though in *concluding utterances* the assertive pragmatic point is more uncompromising and resolute in contrast to the other types of assertives. The concessive marker is more likely to incite doubt, hesitation or apprehension. Yet, the deductive inference may intensify the assertive illocutionary perspective (Kim 2002).

Last in order of occurrence are the *suggesting utterances,* which illocutionary component is implicitly stated. Contrary to the other sub-classes of assertive acts, the speaker involves the hearer into what is being uttered, that is, the idea put forward in the *suggesting act* makes reference to a premise which enables or leaves some room for the hearer to make their personal judgement to consent or dissent of the propositional content in the matrix clause, as in the case:

e.g. *My first suggestion may fit better to the quarterly account statement despite some derogatory attitudes.*

In truth, by making a suggestion, the speaker leads the hearer to provide an uncritical response that will engage their own evaluation based on their beliefs and understanding on the propositional matter. What is more, taking into account that the assertive perspective is less explicit in the act, the suggesting propositional content provides reasonable grounds for another illocutionary force, namely, that in the proposed utterance the pragmatic inference may also apply to the criteria of a directive speech act. Interestingly, it can be noted in the event of *suggesting utterances* that the issue of 'direction of fit' is bilateral. From the assertive side, the acts apply to a 'world-to-word direction of fit' which aims at truth based on beliefs, while from the directive side, it seems to be a matter of a 'word-to-world' relation, in that, it is the desires or personal intentions that the world should agree with (Kissine 2007). Nevertheless, though both types of direction of fit are inferred, the marker of concession reduces either of the illocutionary forces. This, in turn, can aggravate both pragmatic perspectives, if regarded as an assertive speech act, it would bear resemblance to a statement rather than to a *suggesting utterance*; if regarded as a directive speech act, it may mirror the request message.

b) Analysis of the Bulgarian corpus

The database in the Bulgarian language comprises 135 utterances with two performative entries, *makar* and *vapreki*. Apart from their translation equivalents in English which are prepositions, they have different grammatical behaviour, *makar* is a conjunction of concession while *vapreki* is a preposition of concession. Syntactically, they become explicit in the following structural patterns:

1) ***makar / vapreki*** followed by a single nominal or extended nominal phrase:

   e.g. *Rabotih po sluchaya tri sedmitsi <u>makar neblagopriyatnite usloviya</u>.* (in En.: *I have worked on the case for three weeks <u>despite the unfavourable conditions</u>*). (single nominal).
   e.g. *Nikoga ne sa mi bili priyatni diskusiite po temata <u>makar politicheskata mi obvarzanost kam komiteta</u>.* (in En.: *I have never liked the discussions on the topic <u>in spite of my political commitment to the committee</u>.*) (extended nominal phrase).
   e.g. <u>*Vapreki visokite danatsi*</u>*, za men nai-dobroto reshenie e nezabavnoto zakupuvane na industrialna plosht.* (in En.: *In spite of the*

high taxes, for me the best solution is the immediate purchase of industrial areas.) (single nominal phrase)

2) ***makar*** followed by the conjunction ***I*** (*and*) added to an adverb:

e.g. *Makar I relevantni, moite podchineni ne sa saglasni s novite merki za bezopasnost.* (in En.: *Though relevant, my subordinates do not agree with the new safety measures.*)

In comparison with the English concessive modifiers, whose structural and semantic parameters are the same, the concessive markers in Bulgarian, though semantically identical, illustrate deviations in their syntactic patterns. First, the marker ***makar*** is a conjunction of concession that can collocate with a nominal phrase (single/extended) or with an adverb. As for the nominal extensions, the percentage value is significantly lower than the extensions adding an adverb (Table 2a). Indeed, it has been observed that the concessive modifier introduced by the conjunction ***makar*** succeeded by the conjunction ***I*** (*and*) can be followed only by an adverb. The use of a morphologized part (the adverb) preceded by the concessive component plus ***I*** is rather common among the speakers, especially in a pre-position. The adding of ***I***, in turn, intensifies the concessive semantics as it further boosts and strengthens the aspect of concession. In that respect, the double-conjunction concessive frame sounds more conclusive, distinctly emphatic. This, in fact, is not the case with *makar + NP* pattern, which is mainly inserted in inter-position with a less low impact.

Table 2a: Frequency distribution of the type of concessive markers in Bg corpus

Type of concessive marker	Bulgarian corpus	
	number of utterances	**percent**
makar + single N	6	4.44%
makar + extended NP	11	8.15%
makar + I + adverb	45	33.33%
	62	**45.92%**
vapreki + single N	31	22.96%
vapreki + extended NP	42	31.12%
	73	**54.08%**
Total	**135**	**100%**

With regard to ***vapreki*** concessive modifier, it becomes explicit only in a nominal syntactic configuration mostly in pre-position, with prevalence of extended nominal endings, as in the example:

e.g. <u>*Vapreki pedantichno spazeniya protocol po monitoringa*</u>*, svidetel sam na golemi zagubi v byudzheta*. (in En.: *Despite the meticulously observed protocol on the monitoring, I am witness to extensive losses in the budget*.)

It cannot be precisely assumed that *vapreki* concessive marker is more exploited in speech than *makar*, as their percentage rates illustrate a slight difference. However, *vapreki* performance is moderately more favoured in formal register whereas *makar* is regarded as a colloquial word.

In reference to the propositional content of the utterances in which the two concessive markers are detected, they share the same locutionary perspective as their English counterparts. Conversely, there could be a case for saying that it might not be correct to say that there are no pragmatic distinctions (see Table 1c).

Particularly interesting is the fact that *asserting utterances* occupy the leading position in the Bulgarian corpus, which are well over three times as high as in the American-English database. Second in frequency performance are *reporting assertives*, which, on the other hand, follow a downward trend in comparison with the same type of utterances from the American-English corpus. Here are some examples:

e.g. *Tazi primerna finansova programa e sas sigurnost podhodyashta* <u>*vapreki leko zavisheniya lihven protsent*</u>. (in En.: *This financial draft programme is certainly adequate despite the slightly increased interest rate*.) (asserting utterance)
e.g. *Saobshtih na inspektora za iztichaneto na gaz makar I nyakoi predvaritelni merki*. (in En.: *I reported to the inspector about the gas leakage despite some preliminary precautions*.) (reporting utterance)

Regarding *asserting utterances*, it seems to be the case that Bulgarian speakers tend to be more opinionated and decisive in their utterances where the personal attitude is rather discernible. While the American speakers are more minimalistic in applying an individual approach and less self-confident in their utterances, Bulgarian speakers are more expressive and are likely to demonstrate authoritative verbal behaviour.

As for *reporting assertives*, presumably American interlocutors exercise a more data-driven verbal performance, in that, they are more anticipated, when making an assertive utterance, to substantiate it with some relevant information or facts, while Bulgarians seem to be less expected to report or document. However, the concessive marker may reduce the negative or positive attitude considerably, making the *asserting utterance* less insistent.

Next in ranking are the *stating utterances* which come third in preference among the Bulgarian speakers and second among the American. No significant differences were observed though the cases of analytic and synthetic statements are almost equal in the Bulgarian corpus, where the synthetic *stating utterances* prevail in the American-English database. Here is an example:

> e.g. *Vsichski sestri sa v risk ot infektsii v otdelenieto, <u>vapreki merkite za bezopasnost v bolnitsata</u>*. (in En.: *All nurses are at risk of infections in the ward despite the safety measures in the hospital*). (analytic statement)

Seemingly, Bulgarian speakers are prone to be more categorial and determinative compared to the American speakers, the former being more direct than the latter.

Suggesting and *concluding utterances* rank last in the scale of case occurrence with almost equal numbers, constituting about 3 percent of all cases in the Bulgarian database. In contrast, the combined total of the two types of assertives in the American-English corpus is well over 16%, which can make reference to a low pragmatic usage of the specific communicative interactions on the part of the Bulgarians.

Results and key findings

After exploring and analyzing the two corpora of data, the following distinctions have been observed:

In respect of the grammatical peculiarities:
- both sets of entries become explicit in the syntactic pattern – *matrix clause + concessive extension* or vice versa;
- the performative entries in English *despite* and *in spite of* are prepositions which syntactic extensions are centralized around a substantive phrase, either a noun or a gerundial form whereas the performative entries in Bulgarian are represented by the conjunction *makar* mainly succeeded by an adverb extension and *vapreki* coupled to a noun phrase. No gerundial forms are plausible in Bulgarian language.
- there is a marked discrepancy in the frequency usage of *despite* and *in spite of* (in a ratio 3 to 1) with prevalence of *despite* in inter-position + an extended nominal phrase;
- the performative entries in Bulgarian demonstrate almost equal frequency usage without a definite pre- or inter-position;

In respect of the illocutionary attitude:
-   the propositional content in the matrix clause in both sets of data asserts the truth-value semantics of the locution and the literal significance of the utterance though its further reflection on the pragmatic performance reveals discrepancies;
-   the prevalent illocutionary force in the matrix clause in the American-English data is clearly oriented towards *reporting* and *stating* assertive contour whereas the *asserting* behaviour is quite discernible in the Bulgarian corpus;
-   American speakers tend to be more factual and data-managed while the Bulgarian speakers tend to be more demonstrative and opinionated;

In respect of the aspect of concession:
-   in all, in both sets of data the concessive marker extensively modifies the assertive meaning communicated in the matrix clause;
-   as American speakers are more likely to exploit *reporting assertive acts*, where the truthfulness of the propositional content is essential, the marker of concession mainly affects the validity and reliability of the information;
-   as Bulgarian speakers seem to be predisposed to using *asserting utterances*, in which the deciding factor is not that the proposition is true or false but rather either positive or negative, the marker of concession would not only affect the truth-value semantics of the proposition but the sincerity of the utterance, whether the illocutionary force is assertive or more directive;
-   the assertive utterances in the American corpus are less expressive than the utterances in the Bulgarian corpus.

Conclusion

This paper has made an attempt to provide a brief insight into two sets of speech acts within the domain of assertive illocutionary implicature violated by a marker of concession in the structure of the extended simple sentence. The comparative research sheds some light not only on the peculiarities of the pragmatic performance in a given situational context and specific cultural settings but also how the inferred message can be transgressed by a single modifying lexical component. The empirical data and their interpretation can prove beneficial in identifying the discrepancies which may occur in communication in foreign language surroundings. Bearing in mind the fact that a comparative study of linguistic material is regarded as a solid base for the acquisition of pragmatic awareness, we believe that employing such an approach would be of great use to foster foreign language learners' ability to

communicate assertive speech acts and obtain further competence on the issue of concessive markers and their impact in terms of the main illocutionary force.

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