Imperfect role
in speech tactics of information sharing

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Abstract—**This paper presents the results of studies of** *the imperfect* **in** *the speech tactics of information sharing* **(***explanation and supposition***). The pragmatic peculiarities of this grammar form were determined. The effect of** *the speech tactics* **on** *imperfect* **semantics, the influence of the** *imperfect* **on** *the speech tactics* **and the interaction of the general** *speech strategy* **with the** *speech tactics* **containing** *imperfect***, applied in it, were examined. It is found out that in** *speech tactics of explanation the imp*erfect **has mainly its prototypical meaning, which soften, thus, the message. In** *speech tactics of supposition* **the imperfect has mainly its marginal significations (the imperfect of politeness and the imperfect intentions) which refer to the present plan and bring a touch of formality in the speech of the addresser. Due to** *the imperfect the speech tactics of the strategy of information sharing* **get special flexibility and softness and in communication with other people. The socializing becomes less formal and trustful. Thus, from pragmatic sign influence on person's behavior point of view,** *the imperfect* **can be used for recognizing the speaker's speech goals and even revealing all his/her strategy line.**

Keywords— *imperfect, grammar form, semantics, pragmatic, speech tactic.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The grammatical form of the imperfect and the problem of interpreting its semantics attracted and continue attracting the attention of both foreign and domestic linguists (see the works of J. Roca Pons [1], A. Bello [2] N.M. Firsova [3], O.K. Vasilieva-Shvede [4] and others). The Imperfect is a time-tested form that is not easy to analyze thanks to the variety of its uses. Various theories were made out that tried to determine the single meaning of this form. There is no doubt that all previous studies of this grammatical form have linguistic importance, which must be taken into consideration in further scientific research [5].

In modern science, there is a transition from linguistic immanent with its setting to consider the language in itself and for itself to anthropological linguistics, suggesting the study of language in close connection with the man, his feelings, mentality, spiritual and practical performance.

Anthropocentric prospect in contemporary linguistics is also associated with a discursive approach (see the works T.A. van Dijk [6], H.H. Clark, E.F. Schaefer [7],

O.A. Krapivkina [8] and others), one of the demonstrations of which is the tactical use of the grammatical form, taking into account the goals and communicative intentions of the speaker. Being a concept of pragmatics, speech tactic is closely connected with speech influence and speech behavior.

Language is an objective phenomenon, existing as some system that has developed historically and acting according to certain internal laws. At the same time it realizes the main goal to serve the purposes of communication. Turning thoughts into a language form, a person pursues basically three goals: to inform the interlocutor (listener) about this or that fact of reality; to express the attitude to this information, that is to estimate it; to influence on a person who perceives his speech in a certain extent.

In the process of communication, communicators use certain goals in their speech behavior. To achieve their goals, they use those communicative tactics and strategies that help to make discourse the most successful. The presence of such "helpers" is obliged to the communicative function of the language, since the implementation of strategies and tactics is carried out in language communication. Giving preference to a particular strategy and translating it into speech, the speaker thus seeks to influence his interlocutor. The correctly chosen strategy is focused on certain aspects of the model of the world of the listener to change or, at least, to correct his knowledge and desires.

Communicative strategy is a potentially conscious plans to resolve the situation, which for the individual seem problematic from the point of view of achieving a specific communicative goal. That is why the speaker uses in his / her speech, the language tools that which optimally match the goals.

The function of the influence of the discourse on the addressee is implemented by various linguistic means. A specific role in achieving the perlocutive effect, without any doubt, belongs to the verb, which has been considered the center of the sentence, its dynamic basis, the moving force behind the strategic line of discourse. A verb is a language category that is ideally adapted by a language system to perform speech impact functions in any type of discourse.

In view of the human factor in linguistics, the addressee's active participation influences the use of the imperfect in speech. His/her discourse is a form of action because to speak means to effects another person, his/her conceptual system. From this point of view, the imperfect should be considered not only as a linguistic means of expression of tense and aspect, but also as a means of expressing the communicative intention of the speaker as a subject reflecting the connection between the speaker and the listener.

Contemporary linguistic studies pay attention to the study of the whole complex of conditions ruling the communicative process and determining the process of implementing one or another utterance. Speech strategies and tactics are given great importance in recent times (see the works of O.S. Issers [9], T.E. Yanko [10] C. Hardy, I. Palmer, N. Phillips [11] and others).

Revealing of the strategic use of the imperfect in the dialogue enables to identify speech tactics in which an interested participant in a communicative act could apply this grammatical form to influence the interlocutor effectively. Identification of the discursive aspects of the imperfect in modern Spanish is conducted from the point of view of a strategic approach to discourse, based on the types of tactical techniques corresponding to utterances with the use of the considered grammatical form.

The traditional classification of semiotics - semantics, syntactics and pragmatics - made in his time by C.S. Pierce and then taken by C. Maurice [12], was accepted as a theoretical basis by contemporary linguistics. Until now, linguists have mainly explored the semantics and the syntactics of the imperfect, where the imperfect was studied in distribution with other times. As for pragmatics, at the present time the first works devoted to the discursive use of the Spanish language began to appear in modern Spanish linguistic literature (see the works of A. Bello [2], M.L. Gutiérrez Araus [13]), but they are of a general nature. Thus, the imperfect is still little studied from the standpoint of pragmatics, and the strategic purpose of this form has not yet been considered.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials for the study were dialogues from the works of modern Spanish and Latin American authors.

The main research methods are induction method, elements of transformation analysis, comparative analysis, contextual analysis, interpretative method, method of continuous sampling and method of questioning (examples have been verified through the involvement of the informants - native speakers).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language is a human's activity referred to a specific purpose, to the best expression of one's thoughts and feelings. Any discourse has a communicative strategy, formed by a specific situation and certain tasks that the speaker sets. That is why the choice and interpretation of the reference situation, the communicative content of the utterance is determined by the addressee and his/her worldview. In this regard, the subject of speech is considered to be the main pragmatic category, and strategy and tactics are the basic concepts in the works of many linguists who study oral activity. The speaker's

worldview is reflected first of all on the lexical level, but the use of grammatical forms is also creative vision of the extralinguistic situation by the addressee.

A strategic approach to discourse allows identifying the reasons for the author of the utterance to apply that particular grammatical form in a certain situation, i.e. to determine the situational-strategic motivation for the use of the imperfect.

The strategic appliance of linguistic units in speech conception suggests the speaker to create the idea of the cognitive activity of the listener. Pragmalinguistics, studying the relationship of signs to interpreters, considers discourse as a means of expressing the intent of the addressee to convey a message to the addressee and to exert a certain influence on him/her.

To determine out the pragmatic features of the imperfect as a tactical tool used to build a strategy for expression of information sharing it is necessary to find out:

1) the influence of tactics on the value of the imperfect;

2) the influence of the imperfect on tactics; 3) the interaction of the overall strategy and the speech tactics implemented in it [5].

Information is the most important thing in modern society. A person who owns the information can have in a certain communicative situation a master position. When the speaker sets a "Global" goal to inform the interlocutor, it is a strategy of information sharing. Any information can be expressed in the form of factual statements or opinions (assumptions). Opinion (about facts, events, persons) is a judgment, expressing someone's subjective point of view, subjective (personal) attitude to someone or something [14]. The assumption contains information not about the reality itself but about what image of reality the speaker has.

In a dialogue the utterance containing the imperfect often takes the form of an explanation or clarification about what happened in the distant or recent past [14]. In this regard, it seems acceptable to distinguish two tactics in this strategy: the tactics of explanation and the tactics of assumption.

A. Tactics of explanation

An explanation is a statement of the state of affairs, a statement asserting something. Statements of facts, events or statements of facts or events are recognized by the absence of linguistic means of expressing uncertainty, doubt or by the presence of linguistic indicators that emphasize the veracity of the reported. The statement can be true or false. Imperfect in this tactics is mainly used in its prototypical meaning (past continuous action), which can be divided into an action close to the moment of the statement, and the action remote from the moment of the statement.

(1) *B – Bruno, J – Johnny, D – Dedée.*
J – El compañero bruno es fiel como mal aliento.
B – Hace rato que no nos veíamos. Un mes por lo menos.
J – Tú no haces más que contar el tiempo. El primero, el dos, el tres, el 21. A todo le pones un número. Y ésta es igual. ¿Sabes por qué está furiosa? Porque he perdido el saxo. Tiene razón, después de todo.
B – ¿Pero cómo has podido perderlo?

J – En el metro. Para mayor seguridad lo había puesto debajo del asiento. <u>Era</u> magnífico viajar sabiendo que lo <u>tenía</u> debajo de las piernas, bien seguro.

D – Se dio cuenta cuando estaba subiendo la escalera del hotel – ha dicho Dedée, con la voz ronca [15].

The example (1) shows the imperfect (era, tenía) in the segment of discourse implementing the speech tactics of explanation, the purpose of which is to give information about how the saxophone was lost by the addressee. The "global" goal of the addressee is to inform the friend about the latest events that took place in his life. The considered statement shows one of them. The depicted action takes place "outside" the communicative situation and the addressee uses the imperfect in its prototypical meaning (the last continuous action) to recreate it.

This implementation of imperfect N. M. Firsova calls the descriptive-narrative imperfect. The linguist notes that the form of imperfect is static, as opposed to "preterite", which is a dynamic grammatical form [3]. Due to its static nature and ineffectiveness, the imperfect acts as the background (scenery) on which the events take place. In the statement under consideration, the imperfect "envelops the sharp corners" of events, softening the impact on the addressee. Thus, in the communication strategy, is the marker of softering the utterance.

Something similar happens in the following example, where the imperfect is also used to refer to actions "outside" the communicative situation:

(2)   *P – padre, M (SM) – madre (se dirige a su marido y a su hijo).*

M – ¿Se puede saber qué tramáis, vosotros dos?
P – Nada: <u>estaba</u> enseñando a Pablo el cuadro que te he regalado.
M – Increíble, ¿verdad? Tiene luz, textura, es muy
... étnico – dijo SM.
P – Sí, ¿por qué no les pides a esos petimetres que
te has traído que nos sirvan ya la cena? Pasan de las nueve y media.
M – Precisamente venía a avisaros de que está servida [16].

The example (2) illustrates the imperfect, which is used by the communicant to depict an action that lasted for some time before it was interrupted by another speech action (a mother's question). Before her arrival, the father (addressee) and his younger son were talking about finding the missing eldest son of the addressee, information that they carefully conceal from the mother. The request for information, which she makes, is replaced by the father's tactics of explaining in which imperfect is used. The action expressed by the imperfect, lasts up to the present moment (it's so-called the perfect imperfect), when the mother starts talking. /-*Can I ask what You two are up to here? -I'm showing Pablo the painting I gave you.*/ The father deliberately hides the truth from his wife. This tactic is used very successfully by the addresser (the mother believed the father, which is evident by her reaction): she notes the positive aspects of the picture), this happens probably also due to the imperfect, which, taking off all the eventfulness, gives the statement of the father the peaceful nature.

In this regard, it seems appropriate to mention the studies of the Venezuelan linguist L.K. Diaz Salgado, who as a result of his research found that the television news announcers, using imperfect instead of effective time forms of the past plan, soften, thus, the message to divert the attention of the audience (listeners) and not to hurt their psyche [17]. The following example confirms the above reasoning:

(3) *S – señor, N – Nasim.*
N – ...Ignoro que habrá hecho el rey con ellos, pero me lo imagino. Contigo en libertad no hay más Boabdil que Boabdil...
S – ¿Y Aben Comisa es su profeta? – le pregunto con aviesa intención.
N – Y Aben Comisa es su profeta — me responde –. Tú has dicho. Luego, con una inflexión mucho menos terminante, ha proseguido:
– Decían los del Consejo Real que, puesto que tú firmas la concordia declarándote vasallo, <u>debías</u> besar la mano de los reyes. Yo me he opuesto en redondo; las rúbricas del protocolo, contra lo presumible, importan mucho [18].

The imperfect (debías) in the example (3) is used in a statement of a friend that implements the tactics of explanation. The purpose of this tactics is to report to his host what the Royal Council thinks about his future signing of the agreement on becoming a subject of the king. The "global" goal of the addressee is to inform the addressee about the events, therefore, this tactic is the main in the overall strategy of the communicant. Imperfect at the same time expresses a future action that conveys someone else's opinion (indirect speech). According to the classification of marginal values of H. M. Firsova, this implementation of the studied form is called "the futural imperfect of indirect speech" [3].

In indirect speech with past temporary center the imperfect can serve not only for transmission of simultaneity, that is, to express the so-called "present in the past», but to indicate a future action ("future in the past»), assuming for this synonymous connection with the ordinary conditional (a simple form on -ria), a specialized form of expression of this type of temporary relations [3]. Using the imperfect, which softens its message, which would sound offensive when using the present tense. Thus, the imperfect in the tactics of explanation can act as a marker of non-categoricity. Let's consider the following example:

(4)   *C – Carvalho (detective), M – Marqués.*

C – ... No me gustó nada saber que Ud había estado en San Magín husmeando. Si hay que encontrar algo encuéntrelo en cualquier parte, se lo repito, en cualquier parte menos en San Magín.
M – Nadie me acotó el terreno. Viladecans no me prohibió ir a San Magín. Ni la viuda.
C – Ya te lo había dicho. Viladecans no sabe lo que hace últimamente. Ayer incluso <u>me discutía</u> el que yo me negara en redondo a remover San Magín. ¿Qué le pasa a ese chico?
M – Yo apenas si tengo el disgusto de conocerle, es cosa tuya [19].

The example (4) illustrates the imperfect (discutía) in a statement that implements the tactic of explanation. The imperfect indicates a *completed* action, it is indicated by the adverb of time "ayer", however, the addressee uses this

grammatical form intentionally, to show that discussion with Villadecans seemed to the protagonist to be quite long. In connection with this fact O. Espersen wrote: "With some exaggeration, we can even say, using the biblical expression, the imperfect uses a person who one day seems a Millennium" [20]. The strategic goal of the addressee (Carvalho) is to convince the addressee (Marquis) to abandon his idea and not to appear in the San Martin area, at the same time he uses the tactics of explanation, which is subject to this goal (strategy of expression of will). This confirms the idea that tactics belonging to one strategy can be used to implement another strategy. In this case such tactics will be subordinate.

Thus, the imperfect tactics of explanation are primarily used in its prototypical meaning (a continuous past action, a past iterative action) the present imperfect of indirect speech and the future imperfect of indirect speech. This tactics, using imperfect, reflect objective reality, which took place immediately before the statement, or in the past, definitely uncertain or remote from a given point ("outside" of the communicative situation). In the allocated tactics the imperfect is used in its prototypical meaning (past continuous action). The considered tactics can mark the strategy of information sharing or be subordinate to the strategy of will expression. In addition, the imperfect acts as a softener of statements communicated to the addressee.

B. Tactics of supposition

Imperfect can also be used in discourse, in the tactic of supposition. An assumption is understood as a preliminary judgment, a guess [21]. The assumption, in contrast to the explanation (statement of fact), expresses uncertainty, the probability of the origin of an event, one of a number of possible versions. In fact, it is a form of expression of opinion, when the addressee wants to emphasize the preliminary nature of the arguments or own uncertainty in their reliability. "An opinion, unlike a statement, cannot be true or false, however, it can be confirmed or not confirmed by facts, events of objective reality [13]. Let's consider the following example:

(5) A – Augusto, M – mujer.
A – Dígame, buena mujer, ¿podría decirme aquí, de confianza y para internos, el nombre de esta señorita que acaba de entrar?
M – Eso no es ningún secreto ni nada malo, caballero...Pues se llama doña Eugenia Domingo del Arco.
A – ¿Domingo? Será Dominga...
M – No, señor, Domingo; Domingo es su primer apellido.
A – Pues cuando se trata de mujeres, ese apellido debía cambiarse en Dominga. Y si no, ¿dónde está la concordancia?
M – No la conozco, señor...
A – Y dígame... dígame..., ¿Cómo es que sale así sola? ¿Es soltera o casada? ¿Tiene padres?
M – Es soltera y huerfana. Vive con unos tíos....
A – Basta y aun sobra [22].

In this example (5) the imperfect (debían) is used by the addressee (don Augusto) in the discourse in which the tactic of supposition is realized. The protagonist's "global" goal is to get information about the girl he likes. Consequently, the addressee implements a strategic line of will expression. The protagonist assumes that the girl's surname communicated by the his servant was pronounced incorrectly: «Pues cuando se trata de mujeres, ese apellido *debía* cambiarse en Dominga» (it's known in Spanish nouns that have the ending -o – masculine and –a – feminine, but for surnames this is not true). Augusto understands because the information he learns from a young woman (a maid, who works in the house of that lady), he may become a subject of ridicule – he is in a week position. Therefore, finding a vulnerable spot of the maid – illiteracy, he is using tactics of assumptions, in which the imperfect is "a dynamic basis".

Thanks to this utterance the protagonist applies "game of decreasing of the listener's role / increasing his role". Thus, the tactic under consideration plays the role of self-defense (distraction of the addressee from the idea of making a sarcastic joke) and, thus, corrects the addressee's worldview. At the same time, in his strategy, don Augusto also implements an operation with the basic category of "friend – foe", entering into the trust of the girl as a friend, he learns all the information he needs. The imperfect in the tactic of the supposition in this example has a value of present time with a hint of the probability, presumably and non-categoricalness (the imperfect of politeness).

In the narrative, the tenses are interpreted with respect to another relational reference point.

Narrative elements may also appear in the dialogue, in this case the reference point is shifted to the past, the events take place "outside" the communicative situation. Let's consider an example:

(6) M – Manuela (escritora); A – su amiga.
A – Me ha pasado una cosa... He pensado que tenía que contártelo. Ayer se acercó una mujer que asegura conocerte y quiere que te pongas en contacto con ella. Una preciosidad de señora, cincuenta y tantos, quiza más, no los aparenta.
M – ¿Y qué? – corté, para impedir que siguiera divagando.
A – Al principio creí que era una fan psicópata, de las que matan si no ven correspondidas.
M – Play «Misty» for me, y yo, de Clint Eastwood.
A – Exacto. Manuela, tenemos que ir al cine un día de estos.
M – Bueno, ¿es una chiflada o no?
A – Tiene una foto dedicada por ti. ... en la foto estáis las dos, aunque la que menos ha cambiado es ella.
Tú no tienes más de diez u once años [23].

In example (6), the imperfect (tenía que) is used in a statement that implements the tactic of supposition included in the strategy of information sharing, the imperfect denotes simultaneity with another action (he pensado), which refers to the plan of the present, and according to the classification of H. F. Firsova is an imperfect of intention [3]. Due to the fact that the addressee uses the imperfect, the statement sounds very friendly, an atmosphere of complete trust is created. The purpose of the tactics under consideration (to inform) coincides with the main goal of the speaker's strategy. The tactic of supposition, in which the imperfect is applied, represents the main strategic line of the discourse of the speaker. In this example, the addressee informs the addressee about a past event, which, as a result of the mismatch of time plans (present and past), is "out" of the communicative situation.

Thus, the imperfect tactics of supposition are used as a linguistic tool, indicating a hypothetical, probable action, which refers to the present plan and brings a touch of formality

in the speech of the addresser. Tactics of supposition, in which the imperfect is used, can mark a strategy of information, as well as be subordinated to the strategy of will expression effect.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the appliance of the imperfect in the strategy of information sharing revealed its use in the tactics of explanation and supposition. The purpose of these tactics is to inform the interlocutor about certain or alleged facts and events.

TABLE I. IMPERFECT SIGNIFICATIONS IN TACTICS OF INFORMATION SHARING

Strategy of Information Sharing		
	Prototypical signification	*Marginal signification*
Tactics of explanation	the descriptive-narrative imperfect (past continuous, iterative action)	the future imperfect of indirect speech the present imperfect of indirect speech
Tactics of supposition		the imperfect of courtesy the imperfect intention

In the tactics of explanation imperfect is applied mainly in its prototypical meaning (past continuous, iterative or simultaneous action), and the tactics of supposition with the considered grammatical form denote the action probable, hypothetical, referring the action to the present plan (the imperfect of courtesy and the imperfect intention). The imperfect brings to the considered tactics special flexibility, softness and even carefulness in communication with other people. The socializing becomes more informal and trustful. Tactics of explanation and supposition may be major in the strategy of information sharing and can be used as subordinate tactics to implement other strategies.

The study of imperfect from the standpoint of discourse analysis of strategies and tactics allows us to take a fresh look at this problem and to identify pragmastylistic aspect in the use of the imperfect by participants of communication in the modern Spanish language.

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