

**JIHOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V ČESKÝCH BUDĚJOVICÍCH**

PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

KATEDRA ANGLISTIKY

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

**PRAGMATIC AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND CZECH PUBLIC  
SIGNS**

PRAGMATICKÉ A SÉMANTICKÉ ASPEKTY ANGLICKÝCH A ČESKÝCH  
VEŘEJNÝCH NÁPISŮ

Andrea Pavlíčková, 6. ročník, ČJ-AJ/ZŠ

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jana Kozubíková Šandová, Ph.D.

2013

## **PROHLÁŠENÍ**

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma *Pragmatic and Semantic Features of English and Czech Public Signs* vypracovala samostatně pouze s použitím pramenů uvedených v bibliografii.

Prohlašuji, že v souladu s §47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb., v platném znění, souhlasím se zveřejněním své diplomové práce, a to v nezkrácené podobě elektronickou cestou ve veřejně přístupné části databáze STAG provozované Jihočeskou univerzitou v Českých Budějovicích na jejích internetových stránkách.

V Českých Budějovicích 28. června 2013

Andrea Pavlíčková

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge my debt to Mgr. Jana Kozubíková Šandová, Ph.D., for her encouragement, support and invaluable comments. Furthermore, I would like to thank my family for their endless patience and support.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis deals with pragmatic and semantic features of English and Czech public signs. In the theoretical part, there are some basic facts about language, its functions, communication, and public signs presented. Moreover, the types of meaning within semantics and pragmatics are introduced. There is also a special focus on the Speech Act Theory, as introduced by J. L. Austin and later developed by J. R. Searle, and the maxims of the Cooperative and Politeness Principles, as proposed by H. P. Grice and G. Leech.

The practical part is based on an analysis of English public notices, which are classified on the basis of Searle's Speech Act Theory and analysed from the viewpoint of the observance or non-observance of the Cooperative and Politeness Principles. Furthermore, each notice is compared with its Czech equivalent.

## **ANOTACE**

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá pragmatickými a sémantickými rysy anglických a českých veřejných nápisů. V teoretické části jsou předložena základní fakta o jazyce, jeho funkcích, komunikaci a veřejných nápisech. Dále jsou představeny typy významů v rámci sémantiky a pragmatiky. Důraz je kladen na Teorii řečových aktů, jak byla představena J. L. Austinem a později rozvinuta J. R. Searlem, a teorie Kooperativního a Zdvořilostního principu, jak byly předloženy H. P. Gricem a G. Leechem.

Praktická část je založena na analýze anglických veřejných nápisů, které jsou klasifikovány na základě Searlovy Teorie řečových aktů a následně analyzovány z hlediska dodržování či nedodržování Kooperativního a Zdvořilostního principu. Mimoto je každý nápis porovnán se svým českým ekvivalentem.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 LANGUAGE .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Definitions of Language .....	2
2.2 Functions of Language .....	3
2.2.1 Language Functions according to David Crystal .....	3
2.2.1.1 Emotive Expression .....	3
2.2.1.2 Social Interaction .....	4
2.2.1.3 The Power of Sound .....	4
2.2.1.4 The Control of Reality .....	5
2.2.1.5 Recording the Facts .....	5
2.2.1.6 The Instrument of Thought .....	5
2.2.1.7 The Expression of Identity .....	6
2.2.2 Language Functions according to Roman Jakobson .....	6
2.2.2.1 Referential Function .....	8
2.2.2.2 Emotive Function .....	8
2.2.2.3 Conative Function .....	8
2.2.2.4 Phatic Function .....	8
2.2.2.5 Metalingual Function .....	8
2.2.2.6 Poetic Function .....	9
<b>3 COMMUNICATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Definitions of Communication .....	10
3.2 Types of Communication .....	10
3.3 Forms of Communication .....	11
3.4 Functions of Communication .....	12
3.4.1 Information Function .....	12
3.4.2 Instructive Function .....	12
3.4.3 Persuasive Function .....	12
3.4.4 Entertainment Function .....	12
<b>4 PUBLIC NOTICES .....</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>5 SEMANTICS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1 Definitions of Semantics .....	14
5.2 Meaning .....	14
<b>6 PRAGMATICS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
6.1 Definitions of Pragmatics .....	17
6.2 The Theory of Speech Acts .....	18
6.2.1 John Langshaw Austin .....	18
6.2.1.1 Constatives and Performatives .....	19
6.2.1.2 Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts .....	21
6.2.1.3 Classification of Illocutionary Acts .....	22
6.2.1.3.1 Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Acts .....	22
6.2.1.3.2 Searle's Classification of Illocutionary Acts .....	22
6.2.1.4 Speech Acts .....	23
6.2.1.4.1 Direct and Indirect Speech Acts .....	23
6.3 Herbert Paul Grice .....	24
6.3.1 Cooperative Principle .....	24
6.4 Politeness in Pragmatics .....	26
6.4.1 Geoffrey Leech .....	27
6.4.1.1 Politeness Principle .....	27
<b>7 ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
7.1 Directives with the Function of Warning .....	30
7.1.1 Warnings in the Form of a Declarative Sentence .....	30
7.1.2 Warnings in the Form of an Imperative Sentence .....	39
7.1.3 Warnings in the Form of a Negative Imperative .....	43
7.2 Directives with the Function of Requesting .....	44
7.3 Expressives with the Function of Welcoming .....	46
7.4 Directives with the Function of Banning .....	48
7.5 Directives with the Function of Instructing .....	49
7.6 Expressives with the Function of Apologising .....	52
7.7 Directives with the Function of Commanding .....	53
<b>8 CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>55</b>

**9 BIBLIOGRAPHY .....57**

## **TABLE OF DIAGRAMS**

Scheme 1 (Jakobson's model of communication) .....	6
Scheme 2 (Jakobson's model of language functions .....	9
Picture 1 ("Under Construction") .....	16



## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1	.....	30
Figure 2	.....	32
Figure 4	.....	32
Figure 5	.....	34
Figure 6	.....	34
Figure 7	.....	36
Figure 8	.....	37
Figure 9	.....	38
Figure 10	.....	38
Figure 11	.....	40
Figure 12	.....	41
Figure 13	.....	42
Figure 14	.....	43
Figure 16	.....	44
Figure 20	.....	45
Figure 21	.....	47
Figure 31	.....	50
Figure 33	.....	52
Figure 35	.....	53

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Generally speaking, public signs can be considered as a part of our everyday life. With little effort, they can be noticed at almost every opportunity. Of course, there is also the possibility that most people are not aware of them as they have got used to seeing various public notices daily. However, if we turn our attention to those signs and think about them for a while, we will certainly discover that they are not pointless at all.

Public signs refer to a number of thematic areas and their functions seem to be very various. In most cases, such notices inform, warn, ban or command. On one hand, they can be really useful and helpful, on the other hand, very annoying.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to present public signs from a different point of view, as one of the means of human communication. Undoubtedly, we unintentionally observe a set of rules when we communicate with others. We change the shape of our voice or use different words when we want to make somebody do what we intend them to do. Apparently, we do so when we speak but what about in the case of written communication? Are there any principles that should be respected for communication to be effective and to fulfil its function properly? In terms of the functions, which are the most common ones?

In the theoretical part, first of all, language as a means of social interaction will be presented, with various functions it can carry out. We will also have a look at communication in general and extend our knowledge of public signs. Furthermore, we will introduce some definitions what a notice is. We will also transfer our attention to more specific fields within the study of language, semantics and pragmatics, with major focus on the meaning words, phrases or utterances can convey. Moreover, we will introduce three influential theories that have been presented in pragmatics in the preceding century, i.e. the Speech Act Theory, the Politeness and Cooperatives Principles.

In the practical part, we will apply the knowledge gained in the theoretical part on the corpus of 35 English public notices and try to answer the questions that have arisen above.

## **2 LANGUAGE**

First of all, before we directly focus on public signs and their features from the point of view of semantics and pragmatics, in this section, language with the variety of its functions will be mentioned.

### **2.1 Definitions of Language**

It stands to reason that there would be no point in introducing language by providing some items of information which are generally known, e.g. how language works or originates, both spoken and written. However, it is Yule (2006: 1-42) who deals with it in a really engaging way.

Definitely, it would be appropriate to mention some definitions of language which appear to be fairly widespread, basically to get a general idea of what language is. There have been a number of such definitions presented during the years. Thus, let us introduce some of them.

Goldstein states (2008: 357): “We can define language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that enables us to express our feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences.”

Sapir, for instance, cites (1921: 8): “Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols.”

Alternatively, Bloch and Trager claim (1942: 5): “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates.”

Chomsky (1957: 13): “From now on I will consider a language to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.”

At this point, we should remark that the definitions above bring different viewpoints on the characteristic of language. Whereas the first three linguists understand a language as a means of social interaction, for Chomsky, the language is a set of sentences, a subject to be studied further.

## **2.2 Functions of Language**

Further to the language, its functions should also be pointed out and described in details. No matter how much we are accustomed to using a language, there is still a lot left that we can reveal about ourselves, our attitudes or opinions unintentionally when we communicate with others.

In this respect, let us have a closer look at how David Crystal and Roman Jakobson classify the functions of language.

### **2.2.1 Language Functions according to David Crystal**

Crystal cites (2010: 10) as the most obvious language function “to communicate our ideas”, i.e. “to exchange facts and opinions”. However, he also adds (ibid. 12): “Language scholars have identified several other functions where the communication of ideas is a marginal or irrelevant consideration.”

Thus, except from the above-mentioned function, there are seven more functions of language listed by Crystal (ibid. 10-13):

#### **2.2.1.1 Emotional Expression**

*Emotional Expression*, alternatively called (ibid. 10) an “expressive” or “emotive” language function, is considered by Crystal to be the most common function of language ever. As the author mentions, it could be described as the way of expressing some negative feelings when being under stress, or positive impressions from breathtaking natural scenery or works of art, for instance. Moreover, Crystal comes with more detailed information (ibid. 10): “The most common linguistic expressions of emotion consist of conventional words or phrases (such as *Gosh, My, Darn it, and What a sight*) and the semi-linguistic noises often called interjections (such as *Tut-tut, Ugh, Wow, Ow, and Ouch*).”

### 2.2.1.2 Social Interaction

*Social Interaction*, another function of language defined by Crystal, helps, from the author's point of view, to cultivate relationships between people. Within this language function, as he further continues, such utterances are presented that, in general, prevent people from being embarrassed in a certain situation. Furthermore, David Crystal instances that a conversation on health and weather, or simply greetings, eventually phrases being produced automatically, such as *Bless you* or *Pleased to meet you* are, definitely, of the same purpose, i.e. of the same language function; and if there is an absence of such phrases when they are fully expected to occur, it could be considered as showing alienation or distance.

### 2.2.1.3 The Power of Sound

Within the language functions as David Crystal presents, *The Power of Sound* has also been distinguished. It clearly follows from the expression, and the author further confirms it, that there is one more significant reason to use a language, i.e. for the sound it has, simply to hear and feel how rhythmic the language can be and what effect it has, without any hesitation, on its users. To support these statements, Crystal provides children's rhymes and various games as examples; even singing in the bath is mentioned to be complying with the characteristics of this language function. Furthermore, it is clearly obvious that even some poetry is based on what we call *Onomatopoeia*<sup>1</sup>, which corresponds with all that have been mentioned, and, at the same time, is typical of this language function where, undoubtedly, the language is not used to communicate our ideas but for its sound.

The most famous example [of the onomatopoeic effect] is the phrase "*furrow followed free*" in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. It may be noted that the words "followed" and "free" are not onomatopoeic in themselves, but in conjunction

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: A word evokes the sound it describes/ a group of words evokes a certain sound by using words which start with the same letter.

(sic.) with “forrow” (sic.), they reproduce the sound of ripples following in the wake of a speeding ship.<sup>2</sup>

#### **2.2.1.4 The Control of Reality**

*The Control of Reality* as another function of language sounds a little bit as if it is beyond all our understanding. To illustrate the using of language in compliance with the characteristics of this language function, David Crystal provides the example of invoking a spirit power by an African tribe. Further, Crystal asserts (ibid. 12): “All forms of supernatural belief involve the use of language as a means of controlling the forces which the believers feel affect their lives.” It follows from the above listed that the use of language within this function is mainly addressed to God or supernatural powers in general. However, as Crystal emphasises, apart from the religious matters, there are many other examples that could be presented, e.g. those that are connected with a performative<sup>3</sup> function of language, such as baptising children, etc.

#### **2.2.1.5 Recording the Facts**

As the heading *Recording the Facts* reveals, it is clearly apparent which purpose language is also used for, i.e. to record facts or pieces of information so that people can take use of them in future. As examples Crystal gives scientific reports, parliamentary acts, historical records, or geographical surveys, etc. Such data form, as Crystal cites, a base for social development.

David Crystal describes the language corresponding with this function as explicit, organised, and impersonal.

#### **2.2.1.6 The Instrument of Thought**

As D. Crystal mentions, language as the instrument of thought arises from the need to record our thoughts or speak them aloud, which helps, as some people claim, to concentrate better. Crystal cites (ibid. 13): “[...] it is not essential that language used in this way should always

---

<sup>2</sup> In “Onomatopoeia”. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. 18 May 2013. Retrieved 26 May 2013. ><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onomatopoeia><

<sup>3</sup> Note: See page 19.

be spoken aloud or written down. Often, people can be seen to move their lips while they are thinking, but no actual sound emerges. Language is evidently present, but in a “subvocal” form.” The method of writing down thoughts can also be noticed in some literary works as a narrative technique called *Stream of consciousness*<sup>4</sup>. Among other authors, we can find this technique in the works of Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, for instance.

### **2.2.1.7 The Expression of Identity**

Through language, among others, we can also express our identity, i.e. to show what we like, who we are or, last but not least, what we are like. Crystal introduces more details (ibid. 13):

Many social situations display language which unites rather than informs – the chanting of a crowd at a football match, the shouting of names or slogans at public meetings, the stage-managed audience reactions to television game shows or the shouts of affirmation at some religious meetings.

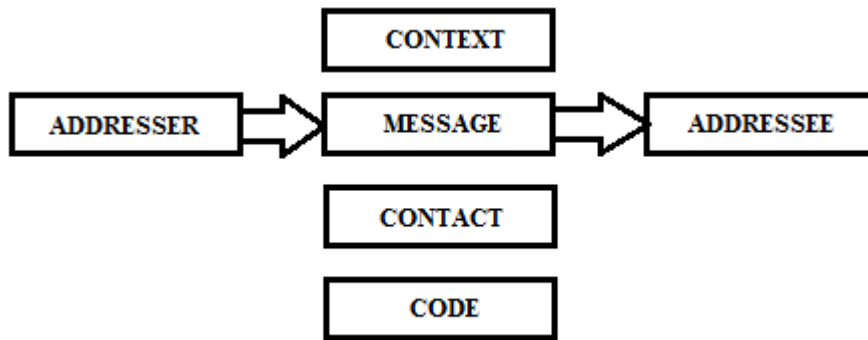
It is clearly understandable from all the above-mentioned information that people can tell a lot about themselves, sometimes more than intended, when they participate in the events that have just been presented.

### **2.2.2 Language Functions according to Roman Jakobson**

Before we present another point of view on the classification of language functions, the one of Roman Jakobson, we will introduce his model of communication (Scheme 1).

---

<sup>4</sup> Stream of consciousness = a continuous flow of ideas, thoughts, and feelings, as they are experienced by a person; a style of writing that expresses this without using the usual methods of description and conversation. In *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005: 1517).



Scheme 1: Jakobson's model of communication

This model of communication is based on six factors of verbal communication described by Jakobson (1987), namely an addresser, an addressee, a message, a contact, a context, and, as last but not least, a code. Further, Jakobson explains (ibid. 66) how effective communication should work:

The addresser sends a message to the addressee. To be operative the message requires a context referred to [...], graspable by the addressee and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a code fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee (or in other words to the encoder and decoder of the message); and, finally, a contact, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication.

As Jakobson continues (ibid. 66): "Each of these six factors determines a different function of language." Moreover, he makes another comment (ibid. 66): "Although we distinguish six basic aspects of language, we could, however, hardly find verbal messages that would fulfill only one function." It is, according to Roman Jakobson, very evident that there can be more functions of language identified within verbal communication; however, there will always be one that will prevail over the others.

Thus, in compliance with the six factors of verbal communication that have been introduced, Jakobson (1987: 66-73) differentiates six functions of language, also called communication functions.



### **2.2.2.1 Referential Function**

Within the *Referential Function*, Jakobson makes a mention of alternative terms (ibid. 67) – a “denotative” or “cognitive” function. This language function refers to the factor of context, i.e. aspects a message relates to, as Jakobson clarifies. Undoubtedly, we can say that it is the context that has to be taken into account when we decode the purpose of a message.

### **2.2.2.2 Emotive Function**

The *Emotive Function* or “expressive”, as R. Jakobson (ibid. 67) adds, is connected with the factor of addresser and also focused on “a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about” (ibid. 67). This can be expressed not only by using interjections, but even by “changes in sound shape of [...] words” (ibid. 68).

### **2.2.2.3 Conative Function**

As Jakobson claims, the *Conative Function* is oriented towards the person of the addressee, making him engaged in a conversation – it is realised especially through the addresser’s use of vocatives or eventually imperatives instead of declarative sentences.

### **2.2.2.4 Phatic Function**

Definitely, the *Phatic Function* is strictly adherent to the factor of contact and, furthermore, “may be displayed by a profuse exchange or ritualized formulas, by entire dialogues with the mere purport of prolonging communication” (ibid. 70). Such expressions or phrases are used when we speak to avoid embarrassing situations when there is nothing or nothing else to be said.

### **2.2.2.5 Metalingual Function**

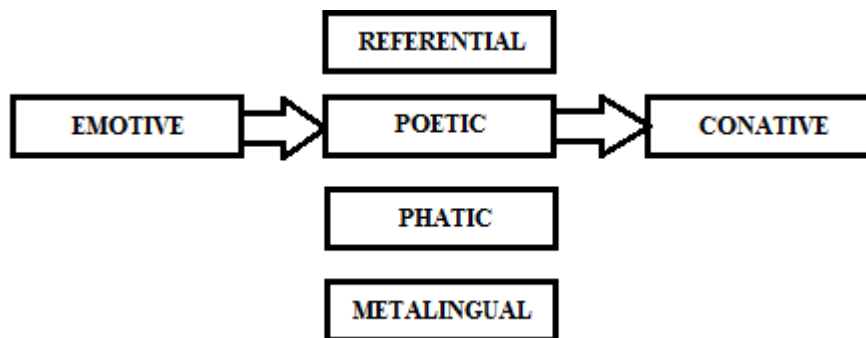
Roman Jakobson asserts that the *Metalingual Function* refers to the factor of code, so in this respect we could say to the way how both the addresser and the addressee use the language. According to Jakobson, for every communication to be effective, it is really necessary for all

participants to use an appropriate code, i.e. the same language code as the other participants in communication use; and, from time to time, it is desirable to check whether they follow it or not.

#### 2.2.2.6 Poetic Function

Last but not least, it is the *Poetic Function* to be mentioned, which focuses “on the message for its own sake” (ibid. 71). In short, we do not consider the content of a message within this function; however, the form of the message becomes a subject of further analysis.

It would be to the point to complement the Jakobson’s model of communication factors by a corresponding scheme that shows the language functions which have been introduced above as they may appear in a conversation.



Scheme 2: Jakobson’s model of language functions

### 3 COMMUNICATION

Undoubtedly, communication in all its varieties is a part of our lives that cannot be avoided. It is beyond imagination, indeed, to exclude communication from our everyday lives, for we need to communicate when we work, study or relax, basically when we satisfy all our needs. Even toddlers, to get what they want, learn how to communicate with their parents or, later on, with other people around them. Through communication, they become accustomed to the world that is around them.

However, not only young children, but we all learn a lot when we communicate. In general, communication is a means of getting knowledge and promoting our social development, for instance.

### **3.1 Definitions of Communication**

Definitely, it does not seem to be very difficult to understand what communication is. We all know it although we would not be able to explain this omnipresent phenomenon properly. In this respect, let us have a detailed look at some definitions of communication and how they are presented within the variety of specialised literature.

For our purpose, it will be sufficient to introduce some dictionary definitions to support our understanding of what communication is.

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005: 304) depicts communication as “the activity or process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people information”.

Likewise, *Cambridge Business English Dictionary* (2011: 151) describes communication as “the process of sharing information, especially when this increases understanding between people and groups”.

It is graspable from the above-mentioned definitions what communication is and, moreover, what purpose we communicate for.

### **3.2 Types of Communication**

To find out one general classification of types of communication is not an easy task indeed. Basically, it could be said that each author brings his own point of view on the classification.

However, it is Bartošová (2009) who introduces a rather complex viewpoint on this issue. In this respect, let us present the types of communication as she classifies them.

According to Bartošová, there are various types of communication, e.g. *horizontal*, which is realised between persons of a different social position, and *vertical* communication, which is realised, on the other hand, between persons of the same social position.

Moreover, as an alternative classification, Bartošová presents communication *intrapersonal*, the inner monologue, and *interpersonal*, on the other hand, where more than two participants are involved.

However, the most common classification, as Bartošová emphasises, is the one that includes *verbal* and *non-verbal* communication.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the definitions of verbal and non-verbal communication how they are presented on BusinessDictionary.com webpage to extend our knowledge of the two most widespread types of communication.

Verbal communication is “the sharing of information between individuals by using speech”<sup>5</sup>.

*Non-verbal communication* is described as “behaviour and elements of speech aside from the words themselves that transmit meaning. Non-verbal communication includes pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance, an proximity to the listener, eye movements and contact, and dress and appearance”<sup>6</sup>.

### 3.3 Forms of Communication

Except from the types of communication which have been presented, we further distinguish various forms of communication. For instance, Bartošová differentiates, among other forms, *visual* communication (graphs, pictures, etc.), *written* (letters, e-mails, notices, etc.) and, last but not least, *acoustic* communication (spoken communication in general).

---

<sup>5</sup> “Verbal communication”. *BusinessDictionary.com* [online]. Retrieved 3 June 2013.  
><http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/verbal-communication.html><

<sup>6</sup> Non-verbal communication”. *BusinessDictionary.com* [online]. Retrieved 3 June 2013.  
><http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/non-verbal-communication.html><

### **3.4 Functions of Communication**

So far we have concentrated our attention only on various types and forms of communication but there are also functions of communication to be mentioned.

For instance, Zbyněk Vybíral, a famous Czech psychologist, who dedicated a number of his works to communication, distinguishes the following functions (2000).

#### **3.4.1 Information Function**

The aim of communication in compliance with this function is to inform. As Vybíral states, people can be informed via mass media, such as the Internet, newspapers, TV or radio. Or, if we consider the main subject of this thesis, by public notices, for example.

#### **3.4.2 Instructive Function**

Sometimes we communicate with the aim to instruct, to teach various skills, provide receipts or give directions. Basically, people can follow instructions as presented in manuals, cookery books or on public signs.

#### **3.4.3 Persuasive Function**

Communication is, without question, an effective means of persuading people. To provide an example, we could mention advertisements, a current phenomenon, which is primarily based on persuasion.

#### **3.4.4 Entertainment Function**

Definitely, it seems to be utterly pointless to explain the principle which this communication function, as distinguished by Vybíral, is based on. However, it will be to the point to mention that mass media, for instance, fulfil this function.

An alternative point of view on the functions of communication can be noticed in the works of Roman Jakobson as presented in the previous section.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, there is a far more to be said about communication, e.g. how the whole system works or, at least, should work; however, we have already become familiar with it in the previous, where the Jakobson's model of communication<sup>8</sup> was examined rather thoroughly. Certainly, there are other models that have been presented during the years, but, in general, all function the same way as the one of Jakobson. Among other linguists, we could mention John Lyons and his model of communication as introduced in *Semantics, Volume I* (Lyons, 1977).

#### **4 PUBLIC NOTICES**

To understand what a public notice is, it seems to be sufficient to provide general definitions of the word notice how they appear in dictionaries. Since the word notice is classified as the polysemous<sup>9</sup> one, there have been only those meanings chosen that correspond to the theme of this thesis.

*Cambridge Business English Dictionary* (2010: 573) brings the following definition: “[It is] a piece of written information on paper, a board, a website, etc.”

Likewise, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005: 1038) provides two other relevant definitions: “[A notice is] a sheet of paper giving written or printed information, usually put in a public place”. Alternatively, a notice means (ibid.) “a board or sign giving information, an instruction or a warning”.

#### **5 SEMANTICS**

Since semantics is a very wide field to study, we definitely will not examine it in full details. However, some basic facts that could seem to be essential to introduce for the purpose of this thesis will be provided anyway.

---

<sup>7</sup> Note: See the Functions of Language/ Communication Functions pages 7 – 9.

<sup>8</sup> Note: See the Model of Communication page 7.

<sup>9</sup> Note: See page 16.

## 5.1 Definitions of Semantics

First of all, it stands to reason that before we introduce more details related to semantics, we will confine our attention what semantics is.

Yule (2006: 100) mentions the following description: “Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences.” Further, he provides an explanation as to what a semantic analysis means (ibid.): “In semantic analysis, there is always an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean, rather than on what an individual speaker [...] might want them to mean on a particular occasion.”

Obviously, it arises from the above-mentioned approach and, definitely, Yule confirms it that semantics is primarily targeted at general or objective meaning rather than meaning local or subjective.

## 5.2 Meaning

Thus, we have come across the term word meaning in both preceding definitions. Therefore, let us have a quick look at Yule’s (2006) and Lyons’s (1995) word meaning classifications.

Within the word meaning in a language, Lyons differentiates two basic types, *grammatical* and *lexical*. The grammatical meaning could be explained on the example of two words, cars and a car. Here we have two words that are different in terms of their grammatical meaning. The word car is in its singular form, the word cars, on the other hand, in its plural form. Both these meanings can affect the meaning of a sentence.

Within the grammatical meaning, Lyons also mentions the term *categorical meaning*, which is based on the principle which part of speech a word belongs to.

Lexical meaning, on the other hand, could be characterised as what differs words from each other.

In an attempt to introduce the lexical meaning more properly, we would like to make a brief mention of how Yule (ibid.), within the lexical meaning, distinguishes between *associative* and *conceptual meaning*.

In terms of the conceptual meaning, G. Yule (ibid. 100) provides the following explanation: “Conceptual meaning covers those basic, essential components of meaning that are conveyed by the literal use of a word.”

Basically, it could be said that conceptual meaning unquestionably corresponds with what is listed in dictionaries. To give an illuminating example, let us present a definition of the word car how it is explained in a dictionary.

In the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* we can look up the following definition (2005: 221): “[A car] is a road vehicle with an engine and four wheels that can carry a small number of passengers”.

Associative meaning, on the other hand, is a highly subjective one as it is closely connected to associations and connotations. In short, it means what we readily imagine when we think of a certain word or expression.

For example, we can use the same example word as in the case of the conceptual meaning. Thus, we may associate the word car with petrol, air pollution, smog, work, motorways, etc.

Yule (2006: 100) notes that “poets, novelists, advertisers and lovers may be very interested in using words in such a way”.

To support his statement, let us introduce a printed advertisement for a documentary about Michael Jackson called “Under Construction”. The hoarding placed on a building, which is currently under construction as well as the face of Michael Jackson, which is very likely to be under permanent construction.





Picture 1: “Under Construction”. In *Advertising Now. Print.* (2004)

Now, let us mention what Thomas (1995: 3) asserts: “The term abstract meaning<sup>10</sup> does not apply only to single words. It can apply equally well to phrases or even to whole sentences.”

Within the word meaning, there are three other related terms, *homonymy*, *homographs* and *polysemy*, to be pointed out as they may appear to be important for the purpose of this thesis.

Yule (2006: 107) cites: “[Homonymy is] when one form [of a word] (spoken or written) has two or more unrelated meanings”. Among other examples, the author mentions the word bat, which carries two unrelated meanings, an animal or sports equipment.

Polysemy, on the other hand, is characterised by G. Yule (ibid. 107) as “one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are all related by extension”. Further, he provides the following comment (ibid.): “Examples are the word head, used to refer to the subject on top of your body, on top of a glass of beer, person at the top of a company or department, [...]”

Concerning homographs, let us explain this term in the words of J. Thomas (1995: 7): “[...] homographs – words which have the same spelling but different pronunciation and meaning [...]” For better understanding, we could provide the words meat and meet.

---

<sup>10</sup> Note: An alternative term to the lexical meaning.

## **6 PRAGMATICS**

Similar to semantics, pragmatics is a wide field to study as well and, therefore, let us follow the same approach as we have applied in the preceding section, i.e. to present some general facts at first and then focus on more details which could seem to be essential for our further analysis in the practical part of this thesis.

To start with, it should be pointed out what pragmatics actually is and what part of language it deals with.

### **6.1 Definitions of Pragmatics**

Definitely, there is no better way how to introduce pragmatics, a subfield of linguistics, than by quoting Thomas (1995: 1): “People do not always or even usually say what they mean. Speakers frequently mean much more than their words actually say.”

For better understanding, let us analyse the following sentence: ‘It’s 7 o’clock.’

From the point of view of semantics, in compliance with the abstract meaning, this utterance tells us what time it actually is.

However, there is much more that could be hidden beyond this sentence. ‘It’s 7 o’clock’ can also mean ‘Hurry up, please!’ or ‘He’ll be back in 30 minutes’.

Thomas further asserts (ibid. 1): “People can mean something quite different from what their words say, or even just the opposite.”

We have introduced the subject semantics studies, i.e. the abstract meaning. Pragmatics, on the other hand, deals with other types of meaning an utterance can bear. In general, within a variety of linguistic textbooks, the most widespread definitions are – meaning in context and meaning in use. However, Thomas remarks (1995: 2):

Although these definitions are accurate enough and perfectly adequate as a starting point, they are too general for our purposes – for example, there are aspects of

semantics, particularly semantics of the type developed since the late 1980s, which could well come under the headings of meaning in use or meaning in context.

According to Jenny Thomas, some up-to-date theories suggest as more accurate definitions – *utterance meaning* or *speaker meaning*. However, as Thomas further asserts, each of these definitions is focused on a different participant of communication, the utterance meaning, on one hand, is aimed at the hearer (or receiver, addressee); the speaker meaning, on the other hand, at the producer (or, alternatively, speaker or addresser) so “neither of them is entirely satisfactory” (Thomas *ibid.* 2).

To support her statements, she introduces three levels of meaning (*ibid.* 2): abstract meaning (or lexical), utterance meaning (or contextual) and, as the last level, the force of an utterance, i.e. the speaker’s intention. The last two levels are, as Thomas claims, components of what has been mentioned as the speaker meaning.

Through this approach, Thomas emphasises that pragmatics cannot be judged only as a study of the speaker or utterance meaning as these terms are not interchangeable at all.

## **6.2 The Theory of Speech Acts**

Before we introduce the Theory of Speech Acts, we will focus on the person of J. L. Austin, who is considered to be a founder of this theory.

### **6.2.1 John Langshaw Austin**

J. L. Austin was a philosopher working at the University of Oxford in the 1940s and 1950s. He and other like-minded philosophers working at Oxford University at the same time, such as H. P. Grice, became known as ‘ordinary language philosophers’. This movement is a kind of reaction to ‘Logical positivism’, a philosophical movement represented by G. E. Moore or Bertrand Russell, Oxford based philosophers.

Thomas cites (*ibid.*30): “Logical positivism is a philosophical system which maintains that the only meaningful statements are those that are analytic or can be tested empirically.” It is

thus obvious, in compliance with the theory of Logical positivism, that if a sentence cannot be verified, it is meaningless. Their aim was to remove all imperfections that a language has and create an ideal language. The same approach has also been identified in semantics under the term ‘Truth conditional semantics’.

Austin absolutely rejected this attitude and concerned himself with the fact how it is possible that a language works, i.e. people understand each other, even with all its imperfections and ambiguities (Austin 1962). According to Austin, there is far more hidden within a language, not only the meaning of its words or phrases. “Austin was convinced that we do not just use language to say things (to make statements), but to do things (perform actions) (Thomas *ibid.* 31)”<sup>11</sup>.

#### **6.2.1.1 Constatives and Performatives**

Austin was persuaded that most utterances have no truth conditions (1962), i.e. they cannot be verified whether they are true or not. Based on this approach, he developed the theory of *constatives* and *performatives*. From Austin’s point of view, constatives are just statements, we can judge whether they are true or false. Performatives, on the other hand, Austin (*ibid.*) classifies as a class of utterances that cannot be verified since they are performing an action. As an example of a performative utterance, let us mention the sentence ‘I promise<sup>12</sup> you to be there’. By saying this, we do not make a statement at all but, actually, perform an act – the act of promising.

“Austin observed that although performatives are not subject to truth conditions, yet they can ‘go wrong’ (Thomas 1995: 36).” This is not the case of all performatives, some of them are not dependant on whether they observe or not the conditions as Austin listed (1962: 14-15):

(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

---

<sup>11</sup> Note: On this approach, Austin’s theory of illocutionary acts is based.

<sup>12</sup> Note: The verb promise is a performative verb – it does not make a statement.

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely.

(Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

(Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

Those performatives that are not successful if one of the external conditions presented above is not observed, Thomas (1995: 36) calls ritual performatives, i.e. those performatives which are connected to rituals or formal events, such as baptising a child or a wedding, for instance.

In the end, Austin's hypothesis collapsed. Thomas comments it in the following words (ibid. 46):

The most important reason for the collapse of Austin's performative hypothesis was the realization that Austin had (at least tacitly) equated 'doing things with words' with the existence of a corresponding performative verb. This is clearly erroneous: there are many acts performed using language where it would be impossible, extremely odd or very unusual to use a performative verb.

Before leaving this theory, Austin briefly distinguished (1962) between *explicit* and *implicit* performatives.

Let us explain it by using two examples; both of them perform the same action, i.e. the act of ordering somebody not to do what they are doing.

1. Don't do that!

2. I order you not to do that!

Whereas the first example is an implicit performative utterance, the second one illustrates an explicit performative utterance (with the use of a performative verb).

### **6.2.1.2 Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts**

As a mention has already been made, Austin's theory of the distinction between constatives and performatives can no longer be maintained since even constatives (statements) can have "a performative aspect" (Thomas 1995: 49).

Consequently, Austin made a three-fold distinction of acts (1962): *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary acts*. Before we move to a brief explanation of what the terms introduced mean, we will take an opportunity and quote the following words: (Yule 1996: 48) "On any occasion, the action performed by producing an utterance will consist of three related acts."<sup>13</sup>

Further to the Austin's classification, let us now explain what he meant by those three above-mentioned acts. According to Austin (1962), the locutionary act represents actual words that have been uttered, with their abstract meaning.

The illocutionary act, on the other hand, as Austin cites, means the act performed by uttering words, i.e. the act of warning, requesting, thanking, etc.

Within the illocutionary act, Austin also mentions the term *illocutionary force*, which can be understood as the intention a speaker has.

Last but not least, the perlocutionary act represents the effect words can have on a hearer, i.e. a *perlocutionary effect*.

---

<sup>13</sup> Note: What Austin calls locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts.

### **6.2.1.3 Classification of Illocutionary Acts**

#### **6.2.1.3.1 Austin's Classification of Illocutionary Acts**

Austin (ibid.) further distinguishes five categories of illocutionary acts, namely *Verdictives*, *Exercitives*, *Commissives*, *Behabitives*, and *Expositives*. Definitely, we will not examine the classes in this thesis. There are two significant reasons for it. Firstly, Austin himself was not satisfied with this classification: "I distinguish five more general classes: but I am far from equally happy about all of them." (ibid. 150)

Secondly, Austin's categorisation of illocutionary acts was a base for the one John R. Searle, Austin's student, suggested. And Searle's classification of illocutionary acts will be a subject of our further examination.

#### **6.2.1.3.2 Searle's Classification of Illocutionary Acts**

Let us now have a brief look at how Searle classifies the illocutionary acts (1976).

*Representatives* are acts which "state what the speaker believes to be the case or not" (Yule 1996: 53). 'Water boils at 100° C' is a typical example sentence of what is supposed to be a representative act.

*Directives* are those acts that "speakers use to get someone else to do something" (Yule ibid. 54). We could provide the sentence 'Make me a cup of tea, please' as an obvious example of a directive.

*Commissives* are considered to be those acts which "speakers use to commit themselves to some future action" (Yule ibid. 54). For instance, 'I will do it' is, undoubtedly, a promise and thus a kind of a commissive act.

*Expressives*, other acts, are such acts "that state what the speaker feels" (Yule ibid. 53). 'We are very sorry for your lost' is believed to be one example utterance which can represent the group of expressives.

**Declarations** are supposed to be those acts which can “change the world via their utterance” (Yule *ibid.* 53). These utterances are pronounced by an authority, such as a priest, a jury or a referee, etc. In Yule’s words (*ibid.*): “[...] the speaker has to have a special institutional role [...]”. For better understanding, we can mention the sentence said by a boss: “You are fired.”

#### 6.2.1.4 Speech Acts

Originally, the term *speech acts* was used by Austin (1962: 52) to refer to “the total situation in which the utterance is issued”.

Thomas (1995: 51) makes the following remark: “Today the term *speech act* is used to mean the same as illocutionary act [...]”.

##### 6.2.1.4.1 Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

Before we present Searle’s classification of speech acts into direct and indirect, let us cite the following words: “A different approach to distinguishing types of speech acts can be made on the basis of structure. A fairly simple structural distinction between three general types of speech acts is provided, in English, by the three basic sentence types.” (Yule 1996:54)

Thus, in English, we distinguish three basic types of sentences, i.e. *interrogative*, *imperative* and *declarative* sentences. Each of these types corresponds with a certain illocutionary act as follows:

You wear a seat belt. → A DECLARATIVE SENTENCE (the act of stating)

Do you wear a seat belt? → AN INTERROGATIVE SENTENCE (the act of asking)

Wear a seat belt! → AN IMPERATIVE SENTENCE (the act of commanding)

(Yule 1996: 54)

“Whenever there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function, we have a *direct speech act*.”(Yule *ibid.* 54+)



On the other hand, if the structure of a sentence does not correspond with the function it has, then we can recognise what we call an *indirect speech act*.

Do you have to stand in front of the TV? → AN INTERROGATIVE SENTENCE (but the act of commanding)

(Yule 1996: 55)

### 6.3 Herbert Paul Grice

H. P. Grice worked with J. L. Austin at Oxford University in the 1940s and 1950s and was one of the ordinary language philosophers. His theories of *Cooperative Principle* as well as *Conversational Maxims* arise from what we call ordinary language philosophy.

#### 6.3.1 Cooperative Principle

Grice, as well as other ordinary language philosophers, concerned himself with the fact how it is possible that people understand each other even though they do not explicitly say what they mean. He supposed that all participants of conversation observe certain rules for better understanding.

In compliance with this hypothesis, he introduced the concept of the Cooperative Principle, which was based on four Conversational maxims.

*Quantity* Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

*Quality* Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

*Relation* Be relevant.

*Manner* Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

(Grice 1975)

In terms of the Conversational maxims, people can either observe them or not. There are five ways how to fail in observing a maxim. The first three non-observances of the maxims were introduced by H. P. Grice (1975: 49).

**Flouting of a maxim** Grice describes as “blatantly fail to fulfill it”. To illustrate it, we could provide the following example of the flouting the Maxim of Quantity:

‘*As far as I know*, she is married.’ In this sentence, *as far as I know* seems to be redundant.

**Violating of a maxim**, Grice explains, occurs when the speaker “is liable to mislead”. As an example of violating the Maxim of Quantity, we will outline the situation as follows: A man (M) has just discovered that there is no money on his account and asks his wife (W):

(M) Have you spent all the money?

(W) No, I haven’t spent all the money.

In fact, the wife has spent only part of them; the other part has been spent by their daughter.

**Opting out a maxim** can be easily explained by quoting the following words: (Thomas 1995: 74) “A speaker opts out of observing a maxim by indicating unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires.” Thomas further notes that it is common in public life to opt out maxims because sometimes the speaker cannot answer in the way that is normally expected. Among others, Thomas mentions priests or police officers.

“He<sup>14</sup> later added a fourth category of non-observance: *infringing a maxim*. Several writers since Grice have argued the need for a fifth category – *suspending a maxim*.” (Thomas *ibid.* 72)

Thomas further claims that infringing a maxim is not intentional as it “stems from imperfect linguistic performance rather than from any desire” (*ibid.* 72). As an illuminating example, she gives the speech of children and drunkards.

Thomas makes a remark (*ibid.* 76): “Several writers have suggested that there are occasions when there is no need to opt out of observing the maxims because there are certain events in which there is no expectation on the part of any participant that they will be fulfilled [...]”

The above-mentioned quotation clearly explains why the fifth group of *suspending a maxim* has been added. For better understanding what suspending maxims mean, let us take a book series about Harry Potter<sup>15</sup> as an example. Lord Voldemort, one of the characters, cannot be named, saying his name aloud is taboo for everyone. As a result, all other characters call him ‘You Know Who’ or ‘He Who Must Not Be Named’.

#### **6.4 Politeness in Pragmatics**

Before we move on to Leech’s theory of politeness, one of the most influential works in this field of pragmatics, let us start with a quotation: (Thomas 1995: 149) “In the past twenty-five years within pragmatics there has been a great deal of interest in *politeness*, to such an extent that politeness theory could almost be seen as a sub-discipline of pragmatics.”

It is apparent, not only on the basis of the above-mentioned quotation, that there have been a number of theories of politeness presented within a few years; let us remember, among other authors who concerned themselves with this topic, Brown and Levinson, Fraser and already aforementioned Leech, whose work we will introduce in more details.

---

<sup>14</sup> Note: H. P. Grice.

<sup>15</sup> Note: Written by J. K. Rowling.

### 6.4.1 Geoffrey Leech

Geoffrey Leech, a professor of linguistics at Lancaster University, followed Grice's theories of Cooperative Principle and Conversational maxims and developed a theory of politeness, the *Politeness Principle*, which he considered, in the matter of observing and not observing it, as significant as the Cooperative Principle (Leech 1983). According to him, the Politeness Principle participates in establishing harmonious relationships – if there is no politeness in a conversation, the conversation could fail and end.

#### 6.4.1.1 Politeness Principle

Within the Politeness Principle, Leech distinguished six maxims and 12 sub-maxims (ibid. 132):

##### **I. The Tact Maxim**

- (a) Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other;
- (b) Maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other.

'Would you mind opening the window?'

##### **II. The Generosity Maxim**

- (a) Minimize the expression of benefit to self;
- (b) Maximize the expression of cost to self.

'Feel free to join us!'

##### **III. The Approbation Maxim**

- (a) Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other;
- (b) Maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of other.

'Is that nice car yours?'

**IV. The Modesty Maxim**

- (a) Minimize the expression of praise of self;
- (b) Maximize the expression of dispraise of self.

‘I’m sorry for asking you such a stupid question.’

**V. The Agreement Maxim**

- (a) Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and other;
- (b) Maximize the expression of agreement between self and other.

‘Oh, I understand your reasons.’

**VI. The Sympathy Maxim**

- (a) Minimize antipathy between self and other;
- (b) Maximize sympathy between self and other.

‘I’m sorry for your mother.’

According to Leech, the first and the second maxim form a pair, as well as the other two. As he further states, the first maxim is more important than the second one, the third than the fourth one. In general, “politeness is focused more strongly on *other* than *self*” (Leech *ibid.* 133).

## 7 ANALYSIS

Within the fields of pragmatics and semantics as they have been presented in the theoretical part, we encountered several types of meaning. Moreover, we introduced words which could cause, especially when they are taken out of context, ambiguities of sense. Those words were homonyms, homographs and polysemous words. However, since public signs can only fulfil their function properly when it is clear what they refer to, we will definitely not analyse them in terms of the abstract meaning. Accordingly, it is the contextual meaning then that we have to take into account when we decode the purpose of public notices. The following words also support that idea: “Although it is certainly the case that the majority of sentences, taken out of context, are, at least from the point of view of the hearer, potentially multiply ambiguous, in real life we rarely have difficulty in interpreting them correctly in context.” (Thomas 1995: 16)

Thus, in this section, all public notices, the English ones, will be classified on the basis of the Speech Act Theory how it was defined by J. R. Searle. However, the public signs should not be strictly regarded as a part of one particular group only, for, surely, the boundary between each category is not clear-cut, and therefore some signs having been placed in one class can belong, undoubtedly, to another one as well.<sup>16</sup> To support that idea, let us introduce a public notice placed at a very expensive gourmet restaurant.

If you want to enjoy the full flavour of your food and drink you will, naturally, not smoke during this meal. Moreover, if you did smoke you would also be impairing the enjoyment of other guests.<sup>17</sup>

Let us also provide the commentary on the above-mentioned notice (Thomas 1995:159): “In a restaurant of this calibre, the management obviously thought it inappropriate simply to put up ‘No Smoking’ signs. Instead, it is left to the guests to decide for themselves whether they are being asked or ordered not to smoke.”

---

<sup>16</sup> Note: From the point of view what function the public notice performs.

<sup>17</sup> In *Meaning in Interaction* (Thomas 1995: 159).

Further, each public notice from the corpus of 35 examples will be analysed whether it does observe or not the Cooperative and Politeness Principle as they have been presented above in the preceding theoretical part.

Finally, each sign will be compared with its Czech equivalent, if there is any, in terms of the speech act it performs, and also from the point of view of the observance or non-observance of the Cooperative and Politeness Principle.

## **7.1 Directives with the Function of Warning**

According to Searle (1969), warnings refer to a future event which a hearer<sup>18</sup> has no interest in. Frequently, at least in the case of the public notices having been included in this category, it is, undoubtedly, within the power of the addressee to successfully avoid that event with all its consequences.

Thus, the whole corpus of 15 notices which express the function of warning has been divided up into three parts according to their grammatical form.

### **7.1.1 Warnings in the Form of a Declarative Sentence**



Figure 1 (see APPENDIX page 1)

Due to the contextually determined place deictic *these*, it is clear which railings the bicycles cannot be chained to, and thus the notice is completely understandable.

Within the Cooperative Principle and the observance and non-observance of its maxims, this public notice does not fail to observe them at all. However, let us examine it in more details. The public sign evidently provides all information needed to decode its contextual meaning.

---

<sup>18</sup> Note: Or a reader/ addressee in the case of public notices.

There is neither redundant information nor a lack of it. And, of course, there is no ambiguity of sense that could be noticed. Thus, in the case of this public sign, two maxims, the maxim of Manner and the maxim of Quantity, are strictly observed. Furthermore, public notices, at least those that have been officially placed and approved, can be considered to be completely truthful. Evidently, there is no convincing reason why a reader should be provided with what is believed to be false or which there is a lack of evidence for. Therefore, another maxim, the one of Quality, is observed as well. Last but not least, since the information displayed on the notice can be, with no doubts, regarded as relevant, even the maxim of Relation has not been exploited by this sign.

In terms of observing or not observing the Politeness Principle, the sign presented above can be regarded as a neutral one. There is no significant observance or non-observance that could be identified within all the maxims related to the Politeness Principle. Of course, there could be more politeness shown; the notice would be much more polite in the way, for instance, as follows: *Please note that any bicycles chained to these railings will be removed without any notice*. On the other hand, this public sign is a typical example of a warning notice so nobody expects it to be written in a polite way.

To compare this public sign with its Czech equivalent that is normally used and has the same function, there is none we could think of which would be the literal translation of this notice. The only one we could use is the sign *Nepřivazujte kola k mřížím*, which performs, contrary to the English sign, the function of commanding/ ordering in its direct form. The function is not the only aspect both signs differ from each other; apart from the fact that the Czech sign is considered to be a direct speech act whereas the English equivalent indirect, it should also be pointed out that the Czech notice does not observe the Tact maxim as it is in the form of a direct command or order and thus does not minimise the expression of beliefs that imply cost to other at all.



In the corpus, there is one more notice (*Figure 2*) that is almost identical with the one above, and thus will not be analysed any further.



Figure 2 (see APPENDIX page 1)

Both above-mentioned English public notices perform indirect speech acts and, on the basis of the Searle's classification of illocutionary acts, are those that are called directives.

Another three public signs do not relate to unauthorised parking of bicycles as the preceding notices but to vehicles in general. They are in the form of a declarative sentence and function as warnings. Therefore, they have been included in this sub-category, which gathers warning signs.

Since the three notices, *Figure 3* [all vehicles will be towed away], *Figure 4* [unauthorised parked vehicles will be clamped] and *Figure 5* [unauthorised vehicles will be removed] are almost the same, let us analyse them together.



Figure 4 (see APPENDIX page 2)

They all are set in context and relate to some private roads where parking is not permitted to unauthorised vehicles. *Figure 3*<sup>19</sup> is the only exception that does not allow anybody to park on that road. Based on the fact that the three signs undoubtedly refer to the place where they

---

<sup>19</sup> Note: See APPENDIX page 1.

are located, it can be said that the maxim of Relation is observed in these cases. Moreover, as stated before, public signs should not provide misleading information, and therefore even the maxim of Quality is not exploited. The other two maxims, those of Manner and Quantity, are strictly observed as well since it is clearly understandable what the purpose of the notices is.

In terms of the maxims within the Politeness Principle, in this way, these notices are similar to the Figure 1 and 2, where no significant violation, eventually observance, was identified. However, also in this case the way how to inform potential drivers about the possibility that their car will be removed or towed away could be more polite. On the other hand, to express such a kind of a warning notice more politely, the public sign would not be much economic then and would hold drivers' attention longer than it is desired.

In the Czech Republic, such public notices do not commonly occur in the form as presented above, but in the form of a symbol only that shows a car being towed away. Rarely, we can see the notice *Vozidlo může být odtaženo*, which corresponds with the English equivalent in all above-mentioned aspects. As alternative notices, we could also mention *Zákaz parkování* or *Neparkovat*; both in the form of a minor sentence<sup>20</sup> and strongly discouraging drivers from parking on the place where these signs are located.

Thus, the three notices that have just been introduced perform indirect speech acts with the function of warning and, furthermore, in compliance with the classification of illocutionary acts as Searle presented, are directives.

However, there is one more speech act that can be identified within the **Figure 5** [parking on this estate is strictly for residents only]. Thus, this sentence represents the function of stating and, moreover, performs a direct speech act. Based on the Searle's classification, statements belong to the group of representatives.

---

<sup>20</sup> Note: Jednočlenná věta neslovesná in Czech.

Within the observance and eventual non-observance of the Principles as H. P. Grice and G. Leech specified, we could say that this utterance corresponds with the other part of the notice as analysed above.



Figure 5 (see APPENDIX page 2)

The Czech equivalent of this part of the sign could be the one of *Parkování je vyhrazeno pro držitele parkovacích karet*. Although it is not a direct equivalent to the English sign, it is the nearest one which normally occurs on estates or in car parks and, furthermore, corresponds with the English notice in terms of the function it expresses, i.e. the one of stating, and even in the fact that there have been no violations of maxims identified.

The following public sign (**Figure 6**) appears to be very similar to the previous one (**Figure 5**). To analyse the sign in full details, let us divide it into two parts and start with the second one.



Figure 6 (see APPENDIX page 2)

The second part of the notice [motorcycles will be removed] undoubtedly refers to the future event of removing motorcycles if they enter the estate this sign relates to, i.e. to the event the addressee has no interest in, and thus has been included in the group of warnings in the form

of a declarative sentence. As the other notices from this category do, even this one represents an indirect speech act with the warning function, which belongs to the category of directives.

If we examine only the second part of the notice, it could be thought that there is no relation to the context, i.e. where the motorcycles will be removed from and, what is important, why. In this form, the maxim of Relation would be exploited by this sign. Apparently, even a lack of information would be identified in this case so the maxim of Quantity would be flouted as well. However, if we take into account the information provided on the whole notice, we will find out that the above-mentioned maxims are strictly observed.<sup>21</sup> Since it is fairly clear what is meant by the words on the notice, there is no ambiguity of sense, the maxim of Manner is also observed, as well as the maxim of Quality.

Regarding the maxims within the Politeness Principle, it can be stated that in this respect this public sign is the same as the preceding ones, i.e. no violations have been identified.

Concerning the first part of the *Figure 6* [no dogs, skates, skateboards or cycles allowed on this estate], it should be pointed out that it is in the form of a minor sentence<sup>22</sup>. Nevertheless, it can still be identified as the speech act with its function of stating, a direct speech act and, further, from the point of view how J. R. Searle classified illocutionary acts, a representative.

It is clearly expressed on the notice what means of transport are not allowed on that estate. Which estate the addresser has particularly in mind, this is ensured by the place deictic *this*, which refers to one estate only. The meaning of the sign is clear as well; despite the omitted finite verb, there is no ambiguity of sense. On the basis of the facts that have been presented, it is apparent that all the maxims within the Cooperative Principle have been respected in this case.

Similarly to the preceding notices, this one as well could be written in a more polite way, to kindly ask all potential addressees not to enter that estate.

---

<sup>21</sup> Note: Figure 5, which has been divided into two parts as well, is based on the same principle, i.e. only the whole notice conveys the full meaning.

<sup>22</sup> Note: Neslovesná věta dvojčlenná in Czech.

If we think of the Czech equivalent to the *Figure 6*, we will come to the conclusion that such a public sign occurs in the Czech Republic in the form of symbols only, which do not allow particular means of transport to enter a certain road or area.



Figure 7 (see APPENDIX page 2)

Another notice, *Figure 7* [unauthorised access, theft or vandalism will result in prosecution], is, definitely, of the same sentence structure as well as function as the preceding signs of an indirect warning and, moreover, in terms of the observance of the two pragmatic principles appears to embody the same features. Therefore, it stands to reason that it would be pointless to analyse this public sign in its full details.

Although we will not examine the above-mentioned warning in depth, the Czech equivalent to the notice should not be omitted. However, there is no public sign in Czech which would inform any potential vandals or thieves about the possible prosecution that could be initiated on the basis of unauthorised access to private property. There are at least two Czech notices which fulfil the same function, i.e. to prevent an object or area from unauthorised access of other people. They are *Nepovolaným je vstup zakázán* and *Objekt je monitorován*. Both signs function as stating, carry out direct speech acts and thus are classified as representative acts.

Likewise in the case of the English notice, in both examples no violations within the maxims of pragmatic principles have been identified.

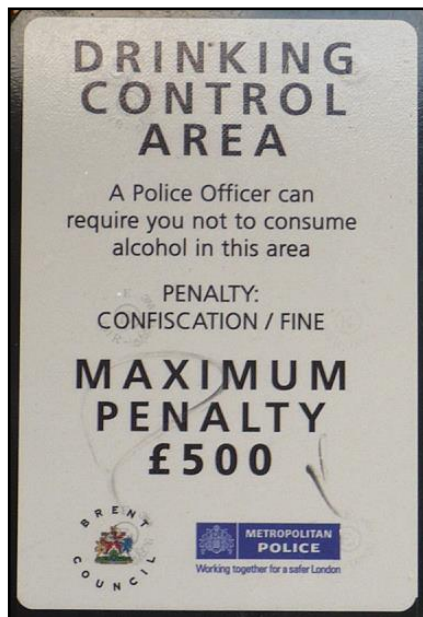


Figure 8 (see APPENDIX page 3)

*Figure 8* [a police officer can require you not to consume alcohol in this area] is an example of a public notice that also fulfils the function of warning. However, at the same time, it can represent the function of informing, etc.

Thus, this sign evidently refers to an area where drinking of alcohol in public is controlled by police officers. Such a notice cannot be seen all over the Czech Republic; of course, there are places in public where drinking of alcoholic drinks is something undesirable yet still has not been banned.

Neither the previous public notices nor this sign exploits the maxims within the Cooperative Principle. It seems to be very obvious as, especially in the case of public signs, the addresser intends the addressees to follow carefully what is adduced on the notice, not to engage them with decoding its meaning.

So far as concerns politeness, indeed, there is not much space to show it within this form of communication as public signs are, though we could say that the Figure 8 is a vivid example of how to express an indirect warning in a rather polite way. Otherwise, there is no apparent non-observance that could be noticed.

Thus, as it has been already mentioned, the Figure 8 represents a warning, an indirect speech act, and as Searle defined illocutionary acts, a directive one.

**Figure 9** and **Figure 10** are the last two examples of public notices that have been included in the category of warnings in the form of a declarative sentence.

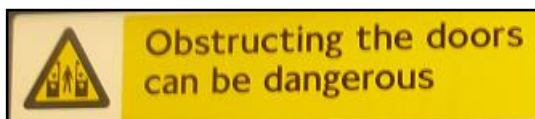


Figure 9 (see APPENDIX page 3)

Thus, both these signs have been classified as warnings in their indirect form. As it has been already mentioned, the acts with the warning function belong to the group of directives if we take into account how J. R. Searle divided illocutionary acts.



Figure 10 (see APPENDIX page 3)

Evidently, both public notices are set in context. This is easily noticeable on the presence of the deictic expressions, *the doors* and *this*, which refer to a particular door in the place where these signs have been located. Although there is not explicitly mentioned on the notices what consequences the failure to respect the notices could lead to, there is no information missing that could seem to be essential for the signs to be perfectly understandable. Therefore, all the maxims of the Cooperative Principle are strictly observed in these cases.

If we consider whether the maxims of the Politeness Principle are observed or not in the two instances, we will certainly find out that there is no exploitation or significant observance to be registered.

To find any Czech equivalent to the Figure 9 is not an easy task indeed. Such a public sign is located next to an automatic door, which is installed, for example, in supermarkets, shopping halls or, as in the case of the Figure 9, in a tube. In the Czech Republic, there is a similar one of *Neblokujte dveře*, also placed in the underground. However, the English notice is a kind of a warning sign making people alert when they stand in the door, the Czech alternative, on the other hand, functions as a command/ order, which commands/ orders passengers not to stand in the door. Nevertheless, both signs obviously fulfil the function they perform and represent the illocutionary acts that are called directives. However, contrary to the English equivalent, the Czech sign does not observe the Tact maxim as it is a direct command/ order.

Regarding the Czech counterpart of the Figure 10, *Objekt je strážěn elektronickým systémem* appears to be the most likely option. Contrary to the English version, this sign represents the function of stating and, furthermore, a direct representative speech act. In terms of observing or not observing Grice's Conversational maxims, the rules for communication to be effective and easily processed have been strictly adhered. Concerning the maxims defined by Geoffrey Leech, the maxims within the Politeness Principle, the Czech public notice does not embody any exploitation or significant observance, the same as the English one.

### **7.1.2 Warnings in the Form of an Imperative Sentence**

The second sub-category within the whole group of warnings gathers those public signs that are in the form of an imperative sentence. Although the three notices that have been included in this category differ from the preceding ones in their structure, they still carry out the same function, i.e. the function of warning in its direct form. Identically, these signs as well warn about a future event that can be avoided only by respecting and following what is displayed on the notices.





Figure 11 (see APPENDIX page 4)

*Figure 11* [beware, thieves operate in this area] is the first notice that represents the group of signs in the form of an imperative sentence. Apparently, such boards are located there where it is possible that people will be robbed. There must have been a theft or robbery in that area and, consequently, it appeared to be appropriate to place this warning sign there then. Thus, the information on the board evidently refers to the context and is based on some true facts so the maxims of Quality and Relation are observed in this case. The notice, with no doubts, makes people alert, and therefore the information on the board seems to be sufficient for the sign to fulfil its function, i.e. to warn people, and to be understood in a right way. Therefore, the maxims of Quantity and Manner have been adhered as well.

All the English warnings which have been analysed so far were regarded as neutral from the point of view of observing or exploiting the maxims of the Politeness Principle. The notice represented by the Figure 11, on the other hand, obviously does not observe the Tact maxim.

*Auto není trezor* is a Czech public notice mainly located in car parks and, as the English sign, warn people against thieves. Of course, it is not an exact equivalent but certainly the nearest one that functions in the same way. Whilst the English sign has been classified as the speech act which fulfils the function of warning, the Czech notice, on the other hand, expresses the function of stating. Moreover, within the classification of illocutionary acts, warnings belong to the group of directives whereas statements to representatives. However, both public signs are direct speech acts but, furthermore, the Czech counterpart does observe all the maxims of the pragmatic principles, contrary to the English notice.

There are two speech acts that can be identified within the *Figure 12* [beware of pickpockets + keep an eye on your possessions]. Since the first part of the sign is similar to the Figure 11, let us have a closer look at the second part of the board, which has the function of advising in its direct form. Advice, as well as the warning, falls into the class of directives if we take into account the division of illocutionary acts.



Figure 12 (see APPENDIX page 4)

In terms of Grice's Conversational maxims, it should be pointed out that there is no feature that could be classified as the non-observance of the four maxims and which would prevent the notice from being fully understood.

In point of the Politeness Principle, similarly to the preceding Figure 11, also in this case the non-observance of the Tact maxim has been identified. The advice would be more polite if there was, instead of the imperative, a declarative sentence used.

If we think of the Czech equivalent to this kind of advice, there is none we could present that would advise people to keep a watch on their possessions.

Within the corpus, there has been one more public sign indicated that meets the criterion for the speech act with the function of warning in the form of an imperative sentence. As some other notices which have been analysed so far, *Figure 13* [keep off – scaffolding incomplete] as well represents a direct speech act with the function of warning and thus belongs among illocutionary acts that are called directives. However, this public notice can be viewed from more than one perspective and represent the act carrying out the function of commanding or ordering as well.



Figure 13 (see APPENDIX page 4)

Although the public sign above could appear to provide less information than it is necessary, actually, there is no relevant fact which would prevent the notice from being understood well missing. Evidently, what is written on the board warns the addressee about a possible danger which could eventually arise. Thus, in this respect we can state that the maxim of Quantity is strictly observed. Furthermore, even from the photograph it is noticeable that the warning is set in the context of a building ground and therefore no exploitation within the two maxims, those of Relation and Quality, can be identified. Since the information displayed on the sign is clear, orderly and not ambiguous, the public notice is absolutely in compliance with what the maxim of Manner says and how it is formulated.

What is considered to be compatible with the maxim of Manner could be, on the other hand, regarded as the non-observance of the Tact maxim as it was defined by Leech. The strictness and directness shown within this public notice is beyond the borders that have been laid out for observing the Tact maxim.

In terms of the Czech equivalent, *Procházíte stavenišťem* seems to be the nearest one, though there is no mention of scaffolding. Contrary to the English notice, which represents a direct speech act expressing the function of warning, this one is considered to be an indirect speech act which functions as warning as well. And, moreover, the Czech warning does not exploit the Tact maxim at all.

### 7.1.3 Warnings in the Form of a Negative Imperative

A negative imperative is another way how to create a direct speech act that would fulfil the function of warning. There are two photographs within the corpus that have been included in this category.



Figure 14 (see APPENDIX page 4)

The sign represented by the *Figure 14* [poison – do not touch] is stuck on a metal box which is labelled as poison and placed on a pavement. *Figure 15*<sup>23</sup> [do not climb – risk of falling], on the other hand, is fixed to railings where the danger of falling over is really evident. Thus, both notices are set in the context of placement where they fulfil their function properly since the meaning they convey is clear and understandable. On the basis of the facts that have just been introduced, we may assume that all the maxims of the Cooperative Principle are strictly observed.

To provide Czech equivalents to the above-mentioned notices that would normally occur, we could think of *Nebezpečí pádu*, for instance, as an alternative to the Figure 15, and *Nedotýkat se*, an alternative to the Figure 14. In spite of being in the form of minor sentences, they both are classified as directives, indirect ones, with the function of warning.

Thus, both notices perform direct speech acts which function as warnings. Such speech acts are called directives.

What has been so far stated about warnings in terms of the observance or non-observance of the Politeness Principle becomes very obvious in the case of the Figure 14 and the Figure 15.

---

<sup>23</sup> Note: See APPENDIX page 5.

Definitely, if we examine all the speech acts, those which have been introduced in this part, we might assume that all warnings that appeared in the form of an imperative sentence were not observing the Tact maxim. Despite the fact that public notices are so specific if we take into account the forms of communication, still the directness and briefness that is shown in their structure should be assessed as the exploitation of the Tact maxim.

## 7.2 Directives with the Function of Requesting

The second class of public signs that has been formed on the basis of the Speech Act Theory gathers directives with the function of requesting. There are five notices altogether (*Figures 16 - 20*<sup>24</sup>) which have been included in this category; all of them perform direct speech acts. Since they are similar to each other in the respect of their structure and the way they observe the pragmatic principles, let us analyse them together.

If we consider how the rule for the maxim of Quantity is defined, we will certainly come to the conclusion that all the public signs represented by the Figures 16 – 20 observe the maxim but one. The *Figure 16* [please do not touch – even clean hands an (sic.) damage the surface of the sculptures] evidently flouts the maxim of Quantity. The additional information of why not to touch the sculptures seems to be redundant in this case since it is obvious that touching can cause damage to the art.

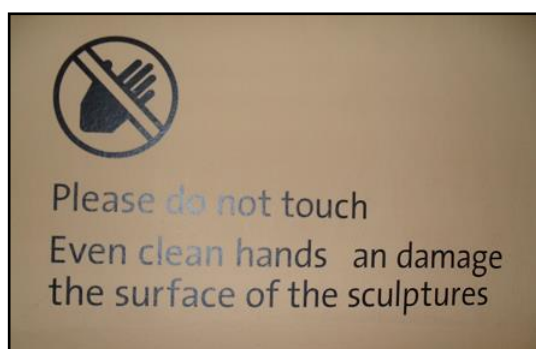


Figure 16 (see APPENDIX page 5)

---

<sup>24</sup> Note: See APPENDIX pages 5 and 6.

Incidentally, there has been one more direct speech act indicated within the Figure 16 [even clean hands an (sic.) damage the surface of the sculptures], i.e. a representative fulfilling the function of explaining.

Likewise, the **Figure 20** [no cycling – please dismount] provides, except from the speech act with the function of requesting, one more speech act [no cycling], namely a directive speech act with the function of banning. Additionally, it performs an indirect speech act. However, such a speech act will be introduced in depth in one of the following sections so let us leave it at the moment.



Figure 20 (see APPENDIX page 6)

Concerning the maxim of Quality, public notices in general are supposed to be truthful and thus corresponding with how this maxim runs.

Under analysis, we can assume that even the maxim of Manner is not exploited because the pieces of information that are displayed on the boards are entirely understandable, not prolix or ambiguous.

Last but not least, within the Cooperative Principle, it is the maxim of Relation which should not be omitted. Evidently, all public notices that function as requests are set in context. As it

has already been specified, the Figure 16 has been placed at an exhibition to request visitors not to touch the art there. The *Figure 17* [please keep off the lawns], on the other hand, has been located on a lawn. Both notices relate to the context by using the deictic expressions *the sculptures* and *the lawns*. Likewise, the *Figures 19* [please purchase tickets from the ticket booth, on the pier or onboard (sic.)], *20* and *18* [please keep your bags with you at all times and report any unattended items or suspicious behaviour to a member of staff] refer to the context in the same way. Thus, in all these cases, the maxim of Relation is properly adhered.

In terms of the maxims within the Politeness Principle, evidently, we may assume that there is an attempt to make the five signs more polite by using the word *please*, which functions as a ‘minimiser’ that reduces the implied cost to the addressees. However, all the notices which perform a direct request and have been introduced above cannot be regarded as beneficial to the readers, and thus the Tact maxim has not been observed in these cases.

If we compare the above-mentioned requests with their Czech equivalents, we will certainly discover that all the Czech signs are in the form of an imperative sentence with nothing what could be thought to be a minimiser to make them more polite. To be specific, to the sign that is represented by the Figure 16, we could think of the public notice *Nedotýkat se*, the Figure 17 could alternate with *Nešlapejte po trávníku*, the Figure 18 is similar to *Nenechávejte svá zavazadla bez dozoru*, the Figure 19 could be compared with *Jízdenky kupujte u řidiče*, and, as the last one, the Figure 20 occurs in the Czech Republic in the form of *Cyklisto, sesedni z kola*. All these Czech equivalents belong to, from the point of view of the classification of the illocutionary acts, directives with the commanding or requesting function. Incidentally, all these speech acts are direct ones. Thus, even in the case of the Czech public notices, the Tact maxim has not been adhered at all.

### **7.3 Expressives with the Function of Welcoming**

Two expressive speech acts have been indicated within the corpus of public notices, *Figures 21* [welcome to Victoria Embankment Gardens] and *22* [welcome to London Bridge City];

both of them carry out the function of welcoming and, moreover, are considered to be direct speech acts.



Figure 21 (see APPENDIX page 6)

If we examine the two above-mentioned notices, we will certainly find out that both strictly observe the four maxims that are known as Conversational maxims. To analyse it in details, let us have a closer look at each of the maxims separately.

Concerning the maxim of Quantity, we may conclude that both notices in this category fully respect the two sub-maxims that have been identified within this Conversational maxim. The notices make their contribution as informative as it is required with respect to the function of welcoming they fulfil. Simply, they reveal the place where the addressees are welcomed to, and therefore the maxim of Relation is adhered as well. Moreover, it can be assumed that the other maxim, the one of Manner, has not been violated since both public notices adequately convey their meaning to the addressees. Last but not least, providing that these notices have been placed there where they refer to, and they were, also the maxim of Quality is observed.

As far as concerns politeness, the two public signs represented by the Figures 21 and 22 can hardly be regarded as warm welcomes indeed. However, if we take into account that such a welcome is a kind of written communication, regarding the forms of communication, where the rules for what should be considered as violating the Tact Maxim are different and not so strict in comparison with speech, it would not be definitely right to assume that the welcome signs in the form of imperative exploit the Tact maxim.



In connection with the Czech equivalents to the welcomes as presented in this part, it should be pointed out that they occur as the literal translation of the English notices, in the form, for instance, of *Vítejte*, and thus are classified as expressives with the welcoming function, direct speech acts.

Incidentally, there can be one more speech act recognised within the **Figure 22** [please note you are now entering private property], i.e. a directive speech act with the function of request and, furthermore, a direct speech act.

Since we have already examined such a request in the preceding section, we will not analyse this one on the basis of all the maxims within the two principles as it functions in the similar way. However, the Czech alternative to this part of the notice should not be omitted anyway. In this respect, we can think of the signs *Vstupujete na soukromý pozemek*, which performs a direct representative speech act with the function of informing, or *Soukromý pozemek*.

#### **7.4 Directives with the Function of Banning**

We have already come across a directive speech act with the function of banning within the Figure 20. In this part, we will introduce seven more public signs, **Figures 23 - 29**<sup>25</sup>, which carry out the same function. As all of them are of the same sentence structure, in the form of a minor sentence<sup>26</sup>, we will have a look at them together.

There is also one part of the **Figure 27** [slow - children], which fulfils a different function in comparison with the other part within this figure, the function of ordering/commanding, so we will have analyse it in one of the following categories.

Generally, it is not necessary to tell much when we ban. For instance, the structure which is used in the examples that have just been mentioned appears to be sufficient to make the signs effective. Thus, a public notice that is constituted of ‘no’ plus a noun or a gerund provides all information needed for fulfilling the function of ban properly. There are five signs, figures

---

<sup>25</sup> Note: See APPENDIX pages 7 – 9.

<sup>26</sup> Note: Jednočlenná věta neslovesná in Czech.

23 - 27<sup>27</sup>, which are of that structure, and therefore can be stated that they observe the maxim of Quantity. However, **Figures 28** [no parking – forecourt weight limit 3 tonnes] and **29** [no smoking – it is against the law to smoke in this coffee shop] appear to flout that maxim since there are pieces of information, except from the ban itself, which can be widely considered to be redundant in this case. Incidentally, there can be one more speech act identified within the Figure 29 [it is against the law to smoke in this coffee shop]; the one we have qualified as the additional information. Thus, it performs a direct representative speech act that functions as stating. As for the part of the Figure 28 [forecourt weight limit 3 tonnes], even this note can be regarded as redundant.

All other maxims of the Cooperative Principle, if we take into account all the signs that have been gathered for the purpose of this section are strictly adhered.

To analyse these public signs under the rules defined within the Politeness Principle, we may assume that all of them could be expressed in a more polite way by using a request instead; however, no exploitation has been identified.

In the Czech Republic, such public signs that perform the function of banning are in the form of a minor sentence as well; as examples let us mention those of *Zákaz míčových her*, *Zákaz vstupu*, *Zákaz rozdělování ohňů mimo vyznačená místa*, *Zákaz parkování*, and *Zákaz kouření*. Thus, all the Czech above-mentioned notices correspond to their English equivalents in the type of the speech act they perform, as well as the function. Moreover, in terms of pragmatic principles, there has been only their observance identified.

### **7.5 Directives with the Function of Instructing**

The three public signs, **Figures 30** [push button and wait for signal opposite + wait], **31** [pull the alarm handle to alert the driver] and **32**<sup>28</sup> [points 1 - 3], which will be analysed in details

---

<sup>27</sup> Note: See APPENDIX pages 7 and 8.

<sup>28</sup> Note: For all of them see APPENDIX pages 9 and 10.

in this section, have been classified as directive speech acts with the function of instructing. Moreover, they have been categorised as direct speech acts.



Figure 31 (see APPENDIX page 9)

In terms of the signs that fulfil the instructing function, it is necessary to provide information needed – to give all instructions step by step in a clear way for the user to understand. Thus, no matter that the above-mentioned public signs seem to be flouting the maxim of Quantity, especially the Figures 31 and 32, they all observe the maxim in compliance with the function they carry out.

Before we examine the three public signs from the point of view of their observance or non-observance of the maxim of Manner, it should be emphasised that the crux of all instruction notices is to instruct people as effectively as possible to be helpful and useful in a particular situation. Obviously, all the three signs fully observe that condition and thus can be regarded to be in compliance with the sub-maxims having been created within the maxim of Manner.

Concerning the third maxim, the maxim of Relation, we can definitely assume that even this one has been observed in the case of the three public notices. Evidently, it is clear what they refer to and therefore can be considered to be relevant.

Last but not least, the maxim of Quality has not been flouted as well because for such signs to be effective and helpful to their readers, they are expected to provide reliable information.

Before we conclude whether the instruction notices above respect the maxims that have been identified by Geoffrey Leech, first of all, we should think of the function they perform. It can be stated that the use of imperative sentences when we communicate is not definitely polite.

However, as it has been emphasised several times, for public signs of the instruction function to be effective, they should be expressed in a direct way to be readily understandable. Thus, the imperative used within the three public notices that have been introduced in this section is a means of explaining the use of a particular device as clearly as possible. However, all the notices from this sub-category should be qualified as not observing the Tact maxim anyway.

If we think of the instruction notices in Czech, we come to the conclusion that these notices are written in the form of imperative sentences as well and thus exactly correspond with their English equivalents. At least, let us present the Czech alternative to the Figure 30, *Stiskněte tlačítko* and *Čekajte*, to get a general idea of how such notices sound.

Incidentally, apart from the directive speech acts with the function of giving instructions, we can recognise other speech acts within the Figures 31 and 32. To be more specific, regarding the **Figure 31**, there has been one more type of a speech act identified, a representative with the informing function [the driver will stop immediately if any part of the train is in a station + if not, the train will continue to the next station where help can be more easily given] and, furthermore, one more directive speech act with the warning function [there is a penalty for deliberate misuse]. Thus, the speech act with the function of informing is, with no doubts, a direct one whereas the speech act which functions as the warning is an indirect one.

In terms of the observance or non-observance of the two pragmatic principles, the part of the Figure 31 that has just been analysed above corresponds with the other one examined before.

Concerning the **Figure 32**, there can be one more directive speech act found but, contrary to the one that has been already examined, this one fulfils the function of ordering or requesting [do not take any risks]. No matter which function it definitely performs, whether the order or the request, it is direct speech act anyway. If we look at this sentence from the point of view of the maxims of the Cooperative and Politeness Principles, we will come to the conclusion that it corresponds to the previous part of the figure. Moreover, except from those directives, within the Figure 32, we can also identify a direct representative speech act carrying out the

function of informing [no sound will be heard but the Fire Brigade will be called]. In terms of its Czech equivalent, we could think of the one that would be the literal translation of the English notice.

## 7.6 Expressives with the Function of Apologising



Figure 33 (see APPENDIX page 10)

In the corpus, there is one public notice only which can be classified as an expressive speech act with the function of apologising. Furthermore, this sign, **Figure 33** [sorry, no dogs except Guidedogs (sic.)], performs a direct speech act.

If we analyse the Figure 33 as one speech act, we may assume that the sign fully conveys the meaning to the reader, the word *sorry* indicates that this speech act is a kind of apology, the following part gives the reader further explanation of what the addresser is being apologised for. Apparently, it is clearly expressed which dogs are not allowed to enter the castle. Thus, the maxims of Quantity and Manner have been adhered. Concerning the maxim of Quality, we may assume that, providing it is true that apart from the guide dogs any other dogs cannot be let in, this maxim as well has been observed. And, of course, since the notice is evidently relevant to the context, there has not been any violation of the maxim of Relation identified.

Within the Politeness Principle, we can find an attempt to observe the Sympathy maxim, to be more specific, the sub-maxim of maximise sympathy between self and other. Evidently,

the addresser sympathises with the addressees because of the inconvenience that almost no dogs are not allowed to enter the castle.

In the Czech Republic, the most widespread equivalent to this notice is the one that is in the form of a symbol only.

### 7.7 Directives with the Function of Commanding

The last category gathers those public notices that have been classified as directives with the function of commanding. There are three signs represented by *Figures 27, 34* and *35*<sup>29</sup> which underlie the criterion; all of them are considered to be direct speech acts.

Generally, for every notice performing a kind of command to be fully effective it is essential to give the command as clearly as possible. Moreover, such signs should also be informative enough to convey their meaning to the addressees properly and, of course, directly relevant. All the three notices appear to fulfil those conditions and therefore, from the point of view of the observance of the Cooperative Principle, can be regarded as adhering to all the maxims.



Figure 35 (see APPENDIX page 11)

As for the structure, the three notices are in the form of an imperative sentence. Nevertheless how impolite it could seem to be, it is definitely effective. However, if we take into account

---

<sup>29</sup> Note: For the Figure 27 see APPENDIX page 8, for the Figures 34 and 35 pages 10 and 11.

the rules defined within the Tact maxim, we will conclude that these notices do not observe them at all.

In terms of the Czech equivalents, we could think of *Zpomal* as the alternative to the Figure 27, *Jízdenky kupujte u řidiče*, for instance, can be the equivalent to the Figure 35. In the case of the Figure 34, there is no such a written public notice that would command drivers to keep on the right.

## 8 CONCLUSION

In the practical part, we have analysed 35 English public notices. Within this quantity, there have been much more speech acts identified. To be specific, we have encountered 51 speech acts in terms of the English signs, and 47 speech acts, on the other hand, among their Czech equivalents. At the beginning of this thesis we have stated that the most common functions that can be noticed in the case of public signs are the functions of commanding, informing, banning, and warning. In this respect, let us provide the following table to check whether our estimation has been right or not.

FUNCTIONS WITHING THE ENGLISH NOTICES										
Banning	Commanding	Requesting	Warning	Instructing	Advising	Apologising	Welcoming	Explaining	Informing	Stating
8	3	7	16	6	1	1	2	1	3	3

From the table above it is clearly noticeable that the most widespread function which public signs express in the one of warning, not closely followed by the functions of banning as well as requesting. Surprisingly, the informing function has been recognised in three cases only. However, on the basis of the analysis of 51 speech acts, we should not claim that the warning notices are the most common ones.

To compare that outcome with the Czech signs, it would be definitely to the point to present a similar table which would contain the functions performing by the Czech equivalents.

FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE CZECH NOTICES										
Banning	Commanding	Requesting	Warning	Instructing	Advising	Apologising	Welcoming	Explaining	Informing	Stating
8	9	5	8	4	0	0	2	1	4	6

If we compare the two tables, we will find out that even in the case of the Czech notices, the ones that carry out the functions of banning and warning are numerous as in the first table.

Generally, it is said that English language uses a number of indirect speech acts to make the language more polite. However, if we compare the Czech and English public notices, we will come to the conclusion that in our corpus, the numbers of indirect speech acts within Czech



and English are equal. To support this statement, let us provide two tables with the frequency of direct and indirect speech acts as it has been identified in our corpus.

Direct speech acts	Indirect speech acts
32	19

within English public notices

Direct speech acts	Indirect speech acts
31	16

within Czech public notices

Concerning the maxims of the Cooperative Principle, we have found out that in most cases the four maxims with their sub-maxims had been observed. There were only two instances of non-observance of the maxim of Quantity identified. This is very obvious because it is not in the addresser's intention to engage the addressee with assigning the meaning to the notices.

In terms of the Politeness Principle and its maxims, only one maxim, the Tact maxim has not been observed within the Czech and English public notices. Apparently, the exploitation of the Tact maxim is connected to the purport to convey the meaning to the addressee as clearly as possible. Incidentally, in the case of Czech signs, the Tact maxim has not been observed in 19 examples, as for the English notices, there has been the non-observance identified in 13 cases.

## 9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austin J L 1962 *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Bartošová Z 2009 Význam komunikace se zákazníky. Diplomová práce, Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích
- Bloch B, Trager G 1942 *Outline of linguistic analysis*. Waverley Press, Baltimore
- Brown P, Levinson S C 1987 [1978] *Politeness. Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Chomsky N 1957 *Syntactic structures*. Mouton & Co., The Hague
- Crystal D 2010 *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Fraser B 1990 Perspectives on Politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics* **14** (2): 219-36
- Goldstein E B 2008 *Cognitive psychology: Connecting mind, research, and everyday experience*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont
- Grice H P 1975 Logic and conversation. In Cole P, Morgan J L (eds) *Syntax and semantics 3: Speech acts*. Academic, New York, pp 41-58
- Jakobson R 1960 Linguistics and poetics. In Sebeok T A (ed) *Style in language*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Leech G N 1983 *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman, London
- Lyons J 1977 *Semantics* (2 vols.) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Lyons J 1995 *Linguistic semantics: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Sapir E 1921 *Language: An introduction to the study of speech*. Harcourt, Brace and company, New York

- Searle J R 1976 A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society* **5**: 1-23
- Thomas J 1995 *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. Longman, London
- Vybíral Z 2000 *Psychologie lidské komunikace*. Portál, Praha
- Wiedemann J 2006 *Advertising Now. Print*. Taschen, Cologne
- Yule G 1996 *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press, Oxford
- Yule G 2006 *The study of language*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

**Dictionaries:**

- Cambridge Business English Dictionary*. 2011. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 2005. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford

**Online sources:**

“Onomatopoeia”. *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. 18 May 2013. Retrieved 26 May 2013.

><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onomatopoeia><

“Verbal communication”. *BusinessDictionary.com* [online]. Retrieved 3 June 2013.

><http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/verbal-communication.html><

“Non-verbal communication”. *BusinessDictionary.com* [online]. Retrieved 3 June 2013.

><http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/non-verbal-communication.html><

## 10 APPENDIX



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

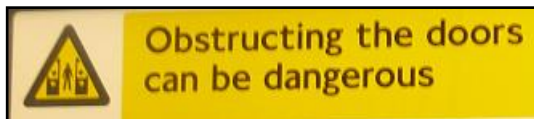


Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

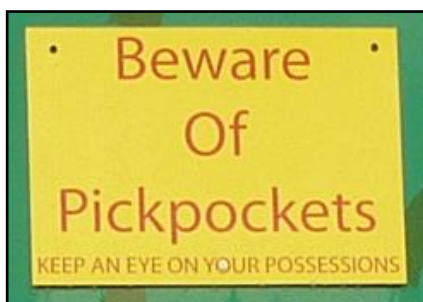


Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

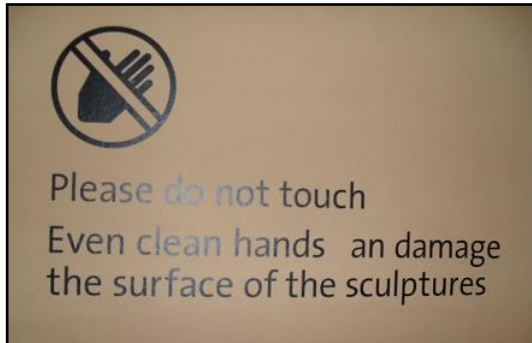


Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19





Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35