

Title: Reported speech with subject ellipsis in family conflict discourse

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In Modern Russian, constructions such as *mne soobschili* '[they] declared to me' with ellipted animate subject and a manner verb of speech (*nameknuli* 'hinted', *soobschili* 'declared' and others) can be used to report a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1987). This paper summarizes the results of a large corpus-based study that identifies the construction and shows that it is used systematically in situations of family conflict: the speaker reports an offensive utterance by the ellipted subject (the original speaker). Thus in (1), a young man is complaining that his potential father in law has insulted his appearance:

1. U papy naschet dochki drugie plany. Tam pojavilsja odin xmyr' [...] A mne nameknuli, chto ja rylom ne vyshel.

I.dat.exp hinted.3pl

'The father has other plans regarding his daughter. This other suitor showed up there. [...] And to me it was hinted that I'm not handsome enough.'

In this paper, interpret the construction in terms of the theories of face (Brown and Levinson 1987, Culpeper 1996), and evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2004). The ellipted subject is shown to be referential, i.e. known and mentioned in the surrounding discourse. When the speaker reports a face-threatening act, the speaker avoids mentioning the subject (original speaker) in order to retroactively minimize the loss of face. However, the original impolite utterance might not have taken place as reported: thus the father-in-law in (1) is quite unlikely to have used the expression *rylom ne vyshel*. By reporting the insult as more offensive than what was originally uttered, the speaker boosts his own face while attacking the face of the original speaker.

#### Bibliography:

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra. 2004. Evidentiality. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
Brown, P. & Levinson, S. 1987. Politeness: Some universals in language usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  
Culpeper, Jonathan. 1996. 'Towards an anatomy of impoliteness', Journal of Pragmatics, 25, 349-67.