

## ПОКАНЕНИ ЛЕКТОРИ

### HOW DEICTIC IS THE VERB ПРИСТИГАМ?

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**Abstract:** In the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' *Dictionary of the Bulgarian Language* the verb *пристигам* is defined as “usually” describing movement towards the speaker. However, no rules are given for the contexts where this is not the case. This article represents an attempt to pinpoint and describe (some of) these contexts.

**Keywords:** *deictic verbs, Bulgarian*

#### 1. The dictionary definition

Deictic verbs of motion are verbs that imply a certain direction of the motion relative to the speaker or the addressee. In English this meaning is typically denoted by pairs of verbs such as *come / go* and *depart / arrive*, indicating movement towards or away from the speaker or the originator of the message. In this paper, we will take a closer look at the syntax of the Bulgarian verb *пристигам / пристигна*, which is usually translated into English as “arrive”. In *Речник на българския език* (РБЕ/ RBE (1977 – 2015) the first of the verb's senses is defined as indicating movement towards the speaker, not always, but “usually”: “Идвам на определено място, стигам някъде, обикн. където е лицето, което говори.” (“To come to a place, to arrive, usually at the place where the speaker is located.”) The second sense is also defined as deictic but applies only to letters, parcels, merchandise and the like: “... идвам, доставен съм на някого или някъде, обикн. където е лицето, което говори.” (“... to arrive, to be delivered to someone or to a place, usually the place where the speaker is located”). Note that the differentiation between subjects in the first two senses is not one of ‘animate’ versus ‘inanimate’ as one of the usage examples for sense 1 has an inanimate subject: *Влакът София – Силистра пристигна със седемчасово закъснение в крайната гара.* (“The train from Sofia to Silistra arrived at its destination after a seven-hour delay.”) The third sense is described as having sound or noise as a subject, and the fourth concerns abstract concepts such as news or rumors; both of them are described as deictic and pointing to the speaker. The three final senses, 6 through 8, are described as obsolete, and some differ from modern use, for instance sense 8, where the verb governs a dependent clause: “... не пристигнали да приведат тези планове в извършване.” (“... did not manage to put these plans to action.”)

This definition leaves the reader with the question: what about the usages that do not fall under the qualification of “usually” as well as the ones where the movement is not towards the speaker? Are they restricted in any way?

#### 2. “Speaker” role not prominent

There are contexts where “the speaker” is not a very prominent element, and the most evident of these might be railway or bus timetables, where the third person singular is indicated for a large number of destinations, with the moving agent easily being understood as a train or a bus; “the speaker” is definitely not prominent in such contexts and is not taken into consideration (Fig. 1).

Гара/Спирка	Пристига	Тръгва
София	↔	04:55
Подуяне Пътническа	05:02	05:03
Подуяне Разпр.ср.р.	05:05	05:05
Смирненски	05:08	05:08
Искърско шосе	05:12	05:12
Искър	05:14	05:15

Fig. 1. Railway schedule (bdz.bg)

### 3. First-person forms

Applying the first part of the dictionary definition, i.e., to arrive where “лицето, което говори” (“the speaker”) is located, to first person-verb forms would tend towards the absurd, but such sentences may sound reasonable when referring to **past** or **future** movement by the speaker to where the speaker is now:

- 1.a. „Когато **пристигнах тук**, за мен беше доста страшно. Бях под карантина [...]“, каза още Ивет Лалова. (dariknews.bg)  
‘When I got here, it was really scary. I was under quarantine [...],’ said also Ivet Lalova.’
- 1.b. *Те са знаели, че някой ден ние **ще пристигнем тук**. И нарочно са поставили тая статуя, за да я видим.* (Павел Вежинов, Когато си в лодката).  
‘They knew that one day we will come here. And they placed this statue on purpose so that we may see it.’

We should note here that when we find a first-person form of *пристигам* followed by *там* (“there”), defined in RBE as “На място, където не се намира лицето, което говори; на онова място.” (“At a place away from the speaker; in or at that place.”), this is usually not this “distant location” sense, but an **anaphoric** sense, as described in König 2020 with examples such as *John has moved to Jakarta. Myself, I would not want to live there.* (König 2020: 23), where *Jakarta* is the antecedent of *there*. The anaphoric sense occurs with all three persons (see 2d-2e) but may seem slightly strange with first-person verbs. In examples (2a-2e) the antecedents are underlined:

- 2.a. *След кратка обмяна на малко инфо с приятели, се оборудвахме и заминахме за Лefкада. **Пристигнахме там** и риболовът започна.* (fish24.bg)  
‘After a brief exchange of information with some friends of ours, we got ourselves properly equipped, and we left for Lefkada. We arrived there, and the fishing began.’
- 2.b. *Отдалече сечището изглеждаше богато, но когато **пристигнахме там**, то се оказа доста опоскано и трябваше да го кръстосаме цялото, докато съберем дърва за огрев.* (Йордан Радичков, Скиорчето).  
‘From far off the clearing seemed abundant in wood, but when we got there, it turned out to be quite stripped and we had to cross it far and wide to gather enough firewood.’
- 2.c. *По обратния път тръгваме към комплекса Бяло камъне, като се предполага, че **ще пристигнем там** в ранния следобед.* (adventureclub.bg)  
‘On the way back, we head for the Byalo kamane complex; we are supposed to get there by the early afternoon.’
- 2.d. *Летището в столицата на Етиопия е хъб за китайските бизнесмени с интереси в Африка, а тестове за вирусът **пристигнаха там** едва преди 2 дни.* (flagman.bg)  
‘The airport of Ethiopia’s capital is a hub for Chinese businessmen with interests in Africa, but tests for the virus were delivered there just 2 days ago.’

2.e. *Военният самолет „Спартан“ ще бъде изпратен във Франция, за да прибере двама български студенти, които **ще пристигнат там** от Ухан.* (dnevnik.bg)

‘The Spartan military aircraft will be flown to France to collect two Bulgarian students who will arrive there from Wuhan.’

The anaphoric sense of the adverb denoting a distant place is not covered by RBE, but the dictionary is in good company – neither Merriam-Webster, nor Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary mention it.

A related construction has *там* as the head of a relative clause (3):

3. *Не винаги **пристигаш там**, за където си пътувал, често даже се намиращ в съвсем противоположната посока, но все пак си пътувал...* (kaminata.net)

‘One does not always get where one has headed and one often finds oneself to have arrived at a place that lies in an entirely opposite direction, but still, one has traveled...’

#### 4. Journalism

In news bureau items in newspapers or on the net, it seems that in most cases the location of the author or the paper’s place of publication is not taken into consideration, and any newsworthy person may *пристига* at any location:

4.a. *Папа Франциск **пристигна в Ирак**, стотици го приветстваха.* (24chasa.bg)

‘Pope Francis arrived in Iraq where thousands greeted him.’

4.b. *Помпео изненадващо **пристигна в Кабул**.* (duma.bg)

‘Pompeo arrived in Kabul unexpected.’

4.c. *Принц Хари и Меган **пристигаха в Нова Зеландия**.* (dariknews.bg)

‘Prince Harry and Meghan arrived in New Zealand.’

4.d. *Главата на римокатолическата църква **ще пристигне във Вашингтон** на 22 септември.* (trud.bg)

‘The head of the Roman Catholic Church will arrive in Washington on September 22.’

#### 5. Arrival by transport or from far away

A colleague and native speaker (who would like to remain anonymous) suggests that a prerequisite for the non-deictic use of *пристигам* involves traveling by a means of transportation or over a long distance – the “or” in this definition is not the exclusive “or” but is equal to the OR in logic: “a sentential connective that forms a complex sentence which is true when *at least one* of its constituent sentences is true” (“or” in Merriam-Webster online, my italics), as traveling over long distances often demands some means of transport. We may assume that this is the case for all the examples in (4a-4d), while the examples in (5) either contain an explicit *пеша* (“on foot”) or inherently imply a long distance (5d).

5.a. *Ако **пристигне пеша**, ще бъде подозрителен за всеки обикновен минавач със своите дрехи и с това, че идва от една посока, откъдето всички идват с коли.* (Любен Дилов, Атомният човек)

‘If he arrived on foot, he would seem suspicious to any ordinary passer-by because of his clothes and the fact that he came from a direction from which everyone was coming by car.’

5.b. *Японец, **пристигнал пеша** от Китай, посади дърво в Пловдив.* (marica.bg)

‘A Japanese who arrived on foot from China planted a tree in Plovdiv.’

5.c. *110-годишният афганистанец, който **пристигна пеша** в Германия, е глух и слеп.* (24chasa.bg)

‘The 110-year-old Afghan, who got to Germany on foot, turned out to be deaf and blind.’

5.d. *Първите **пристигнаха** в България.* (ekonovini.bg)

‘The first storks arrived in Bulgaria.’

## 6. Dubious cases

- 6.a. *Какво е първото нещо, което правите, щом пристигнете сутрин в офиса?* (Facebook, fb.me/)  
'What is the first thing you do when you get to the office in the morning?'
- 6.b. *Френският президент Еманюел Макрон, английският премиер Тереза Мей и германският канцлер Ангела Меркел пристигнаха пеша в НДК на срещата на върха.* (24chasa.bg)  
'French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Theresa May and German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived on foot at the National Palace of Culture to take part in the state summit.'

According to the "travel by a means of transportation or over a long distance" rule mentioned above, (6a) is only correct if the person arrives to work by some kind of transport, and (6b) is incorrect, as the heads of state would most likely not have had to walk very far to reach the National Palace of Culture. This gives rise to the suspicion that there might be some interference from the English verb *to arrive*. The definition in Merriam-Webster goes as follows:

- 1a: to reach a destination // The train *arrived* late.  
1b: to make an appearance: to come upon the scene // The crowd became silent when the officers *arrived*.  
2: to be near in time: COME // The moment has *arrived*.

Variant 1b. may carry an implication of movement **towards** the speaker.

And this is the definition in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (edited, examples reduced to one per sense):

1. to get to a place, especially at the end of a journey  
*I'll wait until they arrive.*
2. (of things) to be brought to somebody  
*A letter arrived for you this morning.*
3. (of an event or a moment) to happen or to come, especially when you have been waiting for it  
*The wedding day finally arrived.*

## 7. Conclusion

As we see, the deictic element is absent in the British definition and weakly stated in the American dictionary. Certain interference from English in the usage of the Bulgarian verb *пристигам / пристигна* cannot be ruled out. It could be direct, for language users exposed to and understanding English, or it could be indirect, from news items translated from English.

## References

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## КОЛКО Е ДЕЙКТИЧЕН ГЛАГОЛЪТ *ПРИСТИГАМ*?

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**Резюме:** В *Речника на българския език* на Българската академия на науките глаголът *пристигам* се дефинира като „обикновено“ представящ движение по посока на лицето, което говори. Не са представени обаче правила относно контекстите, в които това значение не е валидно. В статията е представен опит да се изведат (част от) тези случаи.

**Ключови думи:** *дейктични глаголи, български език*

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