

THE THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS AND ITS PRAGMATIC FEATURES IN
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Abstract:

This research investigates the theory of speech acts and its pragmatic features in the context of the Uzbek and English languages. The main objective of the research is to analyze how speech acts function in both linguistic and cultural frameworks, with a focus on their illocutionary force and contextual meaning. The study compares the use of directives, commissives, expressives, and other types of speech acts in English and Uzbek, identifying both similarities and differences in their usage. Special attention is given to how social norms, politeness strategies, and power dynamics influence speech act realization. A contrastive pragmatic approach is used to examine authentic dialogues, literary texts, and conversational patterns. The findings demonstrate that while the core structure of speech acts is universal, their pragmatic realization is deeply culture-specific. The research contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics and offers insights for language learners, translators, and linguists interested in intercultural communication.

Keywords: Speech Acts, Pragmatics, Illocutionary Force, Cross-cultural Communication, Uzbek Language, English Language, Politeness Strategies, Direct and Indirect Speech, Sociolinguistics, Contextual Meaning.

In modern linguistics, the study of speech acts has become a pivotal area of interest within pragmatics. The theory of speech acts was first introduced by philosopher J.L. Austin in his groundbreaking work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), where he proposed that language is not merely a tool for conveying information

but rather an instrument for performing actions. The study of speech acts explores how utterances function within specific communicative contexts and how they influence the relationships between speakers and listeners.

While much of the research in speech act theory has been focused on languages such as English, there is a growing interest in comparing speech acts across languages, particularly between languages with differing cultural and grammatical structures. This paper aims to analyze and compare the pragmatic features of speech acts in two distinct languages: English and Uzbek. By focusing on both languages, this research will explore the shared and divergent ways in which these languages use speech acts to convey meaning and perform social functions.

The main objective of this study is to explore the similarities and differences between English and Uzbek regarding the realization of speech acts, politeness strategies, and cultural influences on communication. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into how pragmatic features in language are shaped by cultural and social norms, ultimately enhancing cross-cultural communication and understanding.

Theory and Key Concepts

Speech act theory, as proposed by J.L. Austin and further developed by John Searle, revolutionized the study of linguistics by shifting focus from the structural analysis of language to its functional use in communication. The theory asserts that language is not merely a tool for conveying information but is primarily used to perform actions, such as making requests, issuing commands, expressing emotions, or apologizing.

Austin's primary contribution to speech act theory was his distinction between three types of acts:

Locutionary Acts: The act of producing sounds or uttering words. This includes the pronunciation of words, their grammatical construction, and the literal meaning.

Illocutionary Acts: The communicative function of an utterance. For example, when a speaker says, "Could you pass the salt?", the illocutionary act is a request.

Perlocutionary Acts: The effect an utterance has on the listener. In the previous example, the perlocutionary act would be the listener's action of passing the salt.

Building upon Austin's framework, Searle (1969) categorized illocutionary acts into five broad categories: representatives (assertions or statements), directives (requests or commands), commissives (promises, offers), expressives (apologies, congratulations), and declaratives (e.g., pronouncements, baptisms).

Searle's theory emphasizes the social context in which speech acts occur, suggesting that the success or failure of a speech act depends not only on the grammatical form of the utterance but also on the context and the social relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Goals and Objectives

The primary goals of this research are:

To provide a comprehensive overview of the theory of speech acts, explaining the evolution of the theory from J.L. Austin's initial ideas to John Searle's later developments.

To analyze and compare the realization of speech acts in English and Uzbek, identifying how cultural and grammatical structures influence the way speech acts are performed in each language.

To examine politeness strategies: A key aspect of pragmatics involves understanding how speakers use language to show politeness, deference, or social status. This study will examine how politeness is encoded in both languages and how it affects the performance of speech acts.

To investigate social hierarchies and power dynamics: Both languages are shaped by cultural norms regarding politeness, formality, and respect for authority. This paper will explore how social status, age, and gender impact speech act performance in English and Uzbek.

To explore intercultural communication: By comparing English and Uzbek speech acts, this research aims to contribute to the field of intercultural communication, particularly in contexts where these two languages and cultures intersect.

Definition of the Topic

The theory of speech acts refers to the study of how language is used to perform actions rather than just convey information. It involves understanding the functions of language in communication—whether it is making a promise, issuing a command, asking a question, or offering an apology. Speech acts are essential components of human interaction, as they allow individuals to fulfill various social and communicative roles.

In English and Uzbek, speech acts play a vital role in shaping communication. While both languages rely on speech acts for everyday interactions, the specific realizations of these acts differ significantly due to the cultural, social, and grammatical structures inherent in each language. For example, in English, indirect speech acts are often employed to soften requests and mitigate impositions, such as using modal verbs (e.g., "Could you...?", "Would you mind...?"). In contrast, Uzbek speakers may rely on honorifics, formal address, and explicit speech acts to signal politeness and respect.

This study explores the nature of speech acts in both languages, focusing on how various types of speech acts are performed in different social contexts, such as formal and informal settings, and how cultural norms influence their realization.

References Analysis

A thorough analysis of the existing literature reveals the foundational contributions of scholars in the field of speech act theory. Austin's (1962) work laid the groundwork for understanding how language functions as a vehicle for action rather than just information transmission. Searle (1969), expanding on Austin's ideas, developed a more structured framework for categorizing illocutionary acts, which has been widely applied in the study of both Western and non-Western languages.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) seminal work on politeness strategies also plays a crucial role in understanding how social norms and politeness interact with speech acts. Their theory, which focuses on the concept of "face" and the strategies people use to maintain it, has been instrumental in examining how speakers in different cultures manage face-threatening acts in communication.

In the context of Uzbek, research by Tohirov (2003) and others on the pragmatics of Uzbek communication has highlighted the unique role of formality and social hierarchy in shaping speech acts. This work suggests that Uzbek speakers are more likely to use indirect forms and honorifics in situations requiring deference, while directness is more common in informal contexts.

By synthesizing these theories, this study seeks to provide a comparative analysis of speech acts in English and Uzbek, with a focus on politeness strategies, social hierarchies, and the contextual factors that influence communication.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach, combining corpus analysis and discourse analysis to explore the pragmatic features of speech acts in English and Uzbek. Data for this study will be collected from authentic language sources, including recorded conversations, public speeches, and written texts, to identify how speech acts are performed in both languages.

Corpus Analysis: This involves examining a collection of spoken and written texts to identify instances of speech acts, such as requests, promises, and apologies. The analysis will focus on how these acts are realized and what linguistic structures are used to convey them.

Discourse Analysis: This method will be used to analyze the social context of speech acts, examining the relationship between the speaker and the listener, the level of formality, and the politeness strategies employed. Discourse analysis will also consider the cultural and situational factors that influence how speech acts are interpreted.

Research Results

Preliminary findings suggest that there are both similarities and differences in the way speech acts are realized in English and Uzbek. English speakers tend to use indirect strategies, such as modals and hedging, to soften requests and avoid direct imposition. In contrast, Uzbek speakers rely more heavily on formal address and honorifics to signal politeness, particularly in hierarchical contexts. Furthermore, the

study highlights the role of social status in shaping speech act performance in both languages, with more direct forms being used among peers and less direct forms used in hierarchical relationships.

Conclusion

This study has examined the theory of speech acts and its pragmatic features in English and Uzbek, comparing how these two languages handle communication in different social and cultural contexts. While both languages rely on speech acts to perform social functions, the specific realizations of these acts differ due to the cultural, grammatical, and social differences between the two languages. Understanding these differences is crucial for improving intercultural communication and avoiding misunderstandings in multilingual settings.

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