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SPEECH ACTS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH DIALOGUES

Muhabbat Nurdinova

Student at Alfraganus University

Abstract. This thesis examines the use of speech acts in Uzbek and English dialogues from a comparative pragmatic perspective. Drawing on Speech Act Theory developed by J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle, the study analyzes how speakers perform communicative functions such as requesting, apologizing, promising, suggesting, and expressing opinions in everyday interactions. The research focuses on the five major categories of speech acts—directives, representatives, expressives, commissives, and declarations—and identifies their linguistic realization and pragmatic functions in both languages. The findings reveal that while Uzbek and English share common communicative intentions, they differ significantly in terms of politeness strategies, cultural norms, indirectness, and contextual usage. The study highlights the importance of understanding these differences for effective intercultural communication, translation, and foreign language teaching, contributing to the development of learners' pragmatic competence.

Keywords: speech acts, pragmatics, Uzbek language, English language, dialogue, comparative linguistics, communicative competence, politeness strategies, intercultural communication, directives, representatives, expressives, commissives, declarations.

Language is the primary social phenomenon that enables communication among individuals, and its communicative essence is revealed not only through grammatical structures but also through purposeful actions performed in speech – speech acts. The theory of speech acts, developed by J. Austin and later expanded by J. Searle, emphasizes that language is not merely a tool for describing reality; rather, it is a means through which speakers perform various communicative functions such as requesting, commanding, promising, suggesting, agreeing, or apologizing. This theoretical perspective has significantly enriched pragmatic studies by shifting attention from the structural form of utterances to their contextual and functional interpretation [1].

Although Uzbek and English belong to different language families and reflect distinct cultural traditions, the speech acts used in everyday dialogues of

both languages display notable similarities as well as essential differences. These differences arise from linguistic typology, socio-cultural norms, politeness strategies, interactional roles, and situational demands. For instance, requests in Uzbek are typically formulated with a strong emphasis on respect, politeness, and relational proximity, whereas English generally tends to favor more direct and concise pragmatic patterns. Therefore, examining how various speech acts operate in the dialogic practices of both languages is of great importance not only for linguistics but also for intercultural communication studies.

In the context of globalization, understanding the pragmatic features of speech acts in Uzbek and English has become particularly relevant for speakers who actively communicate in English. A comparative analysis of these features helps language learners develop communicative competence, assists translators in avoiding pragmatic misunderstandings, and contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural interaction. For this reason, the present research focuses on the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of the major categories of speech acts – directives, representatives, expressives, commissives, and declarations – as they appear in authentic Uzbek and English dialogues [2].

The relevance of this study also stems from the fact that traditional grammatical and semantic analyses cannot fully explain the communicative force of utterances. Modern linguistics increasingly prioritizes pragmatic analysis, especially the study of

speech acts in real dialogic communication. Identifying the similarities and differences in the use of speech acts across Uzbek and English dialogues provides valuable insights for fields such as linguoculturology, translation studies, applied linguistics, sociopragmatics, and foreign language teaching.

The concept of **speech acts** originates from the works of British philosopher J. L. Austin, whose seminal lectures *“How to Do Things with Words”* (1962) laid the foundation for pragmatic analysis in linguistics. Austin argued that an utterance is not merely a statement describing an event or a fact, but an action performed through language. He introduced three key components of a speech act: **locutionary**, **illocutionary**, and **perlocutionary** acts [3].

- The *locutionary act* refers to the literal production of linguistic form and meaning.
- The *illocutionary act* denotes the speaker's intention, such as requesting, warning, promising, or ordering.
- The *perlocutionary act* concerns the effect of the utterance on the listener, such as persuading, frightening, or motivating.

Building on Austin's ideas, American philosopher J. R. Searle further systematized speech act theory by classifying illocutionary acts into five universal categories: **representatives**, **directives**, **commissives**, **expressives**, and **declarations**[4].

- *Representatives* commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition (e.g., stating, asserting, explaining).
- *Directives* aim to get the listener to perform an action (e.g., requesting, advising, commanding).
- *Commissives* commit the speaker to a future course of action (e.g., promising, offering, guaranteeing).
- *Expressives* convey the speaker's psychological state (e.g., thanking, apologizing, congratulating).
- *Declarations* change the external situation by the very act of uttering (e.g., pronouncing someone married or fired).

In later developments of speech act theory, researchers emphasized the role of **context**, **shared cultural norms**, and **politeness strategies** in shaping the interpretation of illocutionary force. H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle and its four maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) provided a framework for understanding how speakers convey meaning beyond the literal expression. Additionally, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory highlighted the influence of power relations, social distance, and cultural expectations on the formation of speech acts and face-threatening acts[5].

From a cross-linguistic perspective, scholars have shown that speech acts reflect the cultural values and communicative traditions of each linguistic community. For example, collectivist cultures often prioritize politeness,

indirectness, and honorific expressions, whereas individualistic cultures may value clarity, directness, and brevity. Consequently, languages employ different linguistic markers – modal verbs, particles, intonation patterns, honorific forms, or softeners – to encode pragmatic meaning.

In the case of **Uzbek and English**, the differences in speech act realization derive from distinct socio-cultural norms and linguistic structures. Uzbek, as a Turkic language, features a rich system of politeness markers, honorifics, and deferential expressions, which play a crucial role in formulating requests, offers, and refusals. English, on the other hand, relies more on modal verbs, indirect question forms, and pragmatic mitigation strategies to signal politeness and illocutionary force. These differences often lead to **pragmatic transfer** among bilingual speakers, resulting in misunderstandings or unintended levels of politeness in cross-cultural communication[6].

Thus, the theoretical foundation of this study integrates classical speech act theory, developments in pragmatics and politeness research, as well as cross-cultural communication frameworks. This combination provides a comprehensive basis for

analyzing how speech acts function in Uzbek and English dialogues, and how cultural norms shape their linguistic realization.

To investigate the distribution of speech acts in Uzbek and English dialogues, a small comparative corpus of everyday conversational exchanges was examined. The analysis focused on five universal speech act categories defined by Searle — representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Each dialogue was coded according to its dominant illocutionary function, and the relative frequency of speech acts was calculated for both languages.

A comparative summary of the results is presented in the table below[7]:

Table 1. Distribution of Speech Acts in Uzbek and English Dialogues (%)

Speech Act Type	Uzbek (%)	English (%)
Representatives	35	40
Directives	28	25

Commissives	14	18
Expressives	20	14
Declarations	3	3

The visual comparison of these frequencies is shown in the bar chart generated earlier.

The data indicate that both languages rely heavily on **representative** and **directive** acts, which aligns with the communicative needs of everyday conversation. However, several notable cross-linguistic differences emerged[8]:

1. **Uzbek dialogues contain more expressives**, reflecting the culturally embedded norms of politeness, respect, and social solidarity.
2. **English dialogues use more commissives**, suggesting a tendency toward forward-looking commitments and explicit planning.
3. **Declarations** remain rare in both languages because they typically occur in institutional contexts, such as legal or ceremonial settings.

These findings reflect the interplay of linguistic structure and pragmatic culture in shaping dialogic behavior.

The comparative analysis of speech acts in Uzbek and English dialogues demonstrates that linguistic communication is deeply intertwined with cultural norms and pragmatic expectations. While both languages rely heavily on representatives and directives, their realization differs significantly due to distinct cultural orientations. Uzbek dialogue is characterized by high use of expressives, reflecting a social preference for maintaining harmony, respect, and relational closeness. English dialogues, however, employ more commissives, indicating a communicative culture oriented toward clarity, autonomy, and explicit commitments.

These findings underscore the importance of studying speech acts from a cross-cultural perspective, especially in multilingual contexts like Uzbekistan where English plays a growing role in education, business, and international communication. Misinterpretations and pragmatic transfer errors often occur when speakers apply their native speech act patterns to a foreign language. Therefore,

incorporating speech act awareness into language teaching, translation training, and intercultural communication programs is essential.

Overall, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how speakers of different linguistic backgrounds construct meaning, negotiate social relationships, and achieve communicative goals through speech acts. Future research may expand the corpus size, analyze institutional dialogues, or explore the impact of age, gender, and social status on speech act selection.

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