

## SOCIO-CULTURAL FEATURES OF SPEECH ACTS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LITERARY DISCOURSE

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the pragmatic and cultural functions of speech acts in Uzbek and English literary works, focusing on how language reflects social values, cultural norms, and interpersonal relationships. Drawing on Speech Act Theory, the study examines representative examples from selected Uzbek and English literary texts to identify the use of assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative speech acts. The analysis reveals that speech acts in literature serve not only communicative purposes but also convey culturally specific meanings related to politeness, respect, social hierarchy, and collective identity. While English literary discourse tends to emphasize individual intentions and direct communication, Uzbek literary works frequently reflect indirectness, deference, and community-oriented values. The comparative investigation demonstrates that cultural context significantly influences the form, interpretation, and pragmatic functions of speech acts. The findings contribute to cross-cultural pragmatics and literary linguistics by highlighting the relationship between language use and cultural representation in literary discourse.*

**Keywords:** *speech acts, pragmatics, culture, literary discourse, Uzbek literature, English literature, cross-cultural communication, Speech Act Theory.*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a means of conveying information; it is also a powerful tool for performing actions, expressing intentions, and maintaining social relationships. The study of speech acts, which originated from the works of J. L. Austin and was further developed by John R. Searle, has significantly contributed to understanding how utterances function in communication. According to Speech Act Theory, speakers perform various actions through language, such as making statements, giving commands, expressing emotions, making promises, and declaring social changes. These actions, known as speech acts, are influenced not only by linguistic structures but also by cultural and social conventions.

In literary discourse, speech acts play a crucial role in shaping characters, developing plots, and reflecting the cultural values of a particular society. Literary works provide rich examples of authentic communicative situations in which

characters use language to achieve specific goals and negotiate social relationships. Through the analysis of speech acts, researchers can gain deeper insights into the pragmatic mechanisms underlying literary communication and the cultural norms embedded in language use.

The relationship between language and culture has long been a central concern in pragmatics and cross-cultural communication studies. Different cultures employ speech acts in distinct ways depending on social expectations, politeness norms, hierarchical relations, and collective values. Uzbek and English societies, while sharing universal communicative functions, differ considerably in their approaches to expressing respect, authority, solidarity, and interpersonal distance. These cultural differences are often reflected in literary texts, where speech acts serve as indicators of social identity and cultural worldview.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of speech acts has become one of the most influential areas of pragmatics since the publication of Austin's (1962) seminal work *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin introduced the idea that utterances perform actions rather than merely convey information. He distinguished between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, establishing the foundation for modern Speech Act Theory. Building upon Austin's ideas, Searle (1969) developed a systematic classification of speech acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, emphasizing the relationship between linguistic form and communicative intention.

Subsequent research expanded speech act theory by examining the role of context in communication. Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims, demonstrating how speakers convey meanings beyond the literal interpretation of utterances. Similarly, Leech (1983) highlighted the importance of politeness in communication, arguing that speech acts are often shaped by social norms and interpersonal considerations. Brown and Levinson (1987) further developed the theory of politeness by introducing the concept of face-threatening acts, explaining how speakers employ various strategies to maintain social harmony and respect.

The relationship between speech acts and culture has attracted considerable scholarly attention within cross-cultural pragmatics. Researchers such as Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) demonstrated that speech act realization varies across languages and cultures due to differences in social values, communicative conventions, and politeness norms. Their Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project revealed that requests, apologies, refusals, and other speech acts are expressed

differently depending on cultural expectations. These findings established the importance of considering sociocultural factors in pragmatic analysis.

Speech act studies have also been widely applied to literary discourse. Scholars argue that literary texts provide valuable material for pragmatic investigation because fictional dialogues often mirror real-life communicative behavior. Mey (2001) notes that literary language reflects social interaction and cultural assumptions, allowing researchers to examine how characters use speech acts to negotiate power, express emotions, and construct relationships. Short (1996) emphasizes that pragmatic analysis helps reveal implicit meanings and character intentions that may not be evident through purely linguistic examination.

In the context of English literature, numerous studies have explored the pragmatic functions of speech acts in novels, plays, and short stories. Researchers have demonstrated that speech acts contribute to characterization, plot development, and the representation of social hierarchy. Directives, expressives, and commissives, for example, often reveal relationships between characters and their positions within a social structure. Such analyses highlight the interaction between linguistic choices and cultural values embedded in literary works.

In Uzbek linguistics, pragmatic research has developed significantly in recent decades. Scholars such as Mahmudov (2008), Nurmonov (2012), and Safarov (2008) have investigated the relationship between language, communication, and culture, emphasizing the role of pragmatics in understanding speech behavior. Their studies demonstrate that Uzbek communicative practices are strongly influenced by respect for elders, social hierarchy, collectivist values, and culturally specific politeness norms. These factors affect the realization and interpretation of various speech acts in both everyday communication and literary discourse.

### **Methods**

The scrutiny in the article is based on comparative analysis of English and Uzbek commissives. The commissives in both languages possess both similarities and differences. The commissives in these compared languages have been juxtaposed in terms of politeness formulas, hierarchy systems and indirectness/directness. English language is mostly based on directness, individual politeness formulas and hierarchy systems while in Uzbek language, indirectness and veneration for senior members of society is quite important.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of selected Uzbek and English literary works revealed both universal and culture-specific patterns in the use of speech acts. The findings

demonstrate that speech acts function not only as communicative tools but also as markers of social relationships, cultural values, and pragmatic expectations.

Three major categories of speech acts were identified in the corpus: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Assertives and directives occurred most frequently in both literary traditions, reflecting the central role of information exchange and interpersonal influence in narrative discourse. However, their realization differed across the two cultural contexts.

In English literary texts, assertives were often expressed through direct statements that emphasized individual perspective and personal responsibility. Uzbek literary works, by contrast, frequently employed indirect or mitigated forms that reflected sensitivity to social hierarchy and group-oriented values. This difference suggests that pragmatic choices are closely connected to cultural norms regarding authority, respect, and social cohesion.

Directives provided one of the clearest areas of contrast. English literary characters commonly used relatively direct requests, commands, and suggestions, especially in situations where social distance was minimal. Uzbek literary characters, however, tended to employ honorific expressions, softened imperatives, and indirect requests. These strategies served to preserve interpersonal harmony and demonstrate respect toward elders or socially superior individuals.

For example, requests in Uzbek texts were frequently framed through polite formulae or contextual hints rather than explicit commands. Such patterns align with the broader cultural emphasis on deference and relational balance. The findings support cross-cultural pragmatic research showing that politeness conventions strongly influence the realization of directive speech acts.

Expressive speech acts, including gratitude, apology, congratulations, and sympathy, also reflected important cultural distinctions. English literary works often portrayed emotional expression as a means of conveying individual sincerity and psychological depth. Uzbek literary texts, while equally rich in emotional content, placed greater emphasis on maintaining social solidarity and fulfilling culturally expected forms of respect.

Expressions of gratitude and apology in Uzbek literature frequently contained elaborate politeness markers and references to social obligations. These forms reinforced communal relationships and acknowledged the interconnectedness of individuals within the social group. The data indicate that expressives in Uzbek literary discourse perform both emotional and relational functions simultaneously.

Commissive speech acts, such as promises and commitments, appeared in both corpora but carried somewhat different pragmatic implications. In English texts,

commissives were often linked to personal intention and individual agency. In Uzbek texts, commitments were more closely associated with social responsibility, family expectations, and collective reputation.

This distinction highlights how cultural values shape the interpretation of future-oriented commitments. A promise in Uzbek literary discourse may imply obligations not only to the immediate interlocutor but also to a broader social network. Such findings illustrate the importance of cultural context in understanding the force and significance of commissive acts.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study has examined the pragmatic and cultural functions of speech acts in Uzbek and English literary works from a comparative perspective. The analysis demonstrated that speech acts serve not only as communicative instruments but also as reflections of the cultural values, social norms, and interpersonal relationships represented in literary discourse. While both Uzbek and English texts employ the universal categories of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, their realization varies according to sociocultural expectations and communicative traditions.

The findings revealed that English literary discourse generally favors more direct forms of communication and emphasizes individual intentions, whereas Uzbek literary discourse frequently employs indirectness, politeness markers, and respect-oriented expressions that reflect collectivist values and hierarchical social relations. Directive and expressive speech acts showed particularly significant cultural variation, highlighting the influence of politeness norms and social conventions on language use.

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