

## **ILLOCUTIONARY SPEECH ACTS AS A SUBJECT MATTER OF LINGUISTICS: AN AXIOLOGICAL CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Speech Act Theory represents one of the most influential paradigms in linguistic pragmatics by conceptualizing language as a form of social action rather than a purely representational system. While early formulations of the theory emphasized the universality of illocutionary functions, subsequent research has increasingly demonstrated the significance of cultural, social, and axiological factors in shaping pragmatic meaning. This article examines illocutionary speech acts as a central subject matter of linguistics through an axiological and cross-linguistic analysis of English and Uzbek. Employing a qualitative contrastive-pragmatic methodology grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Austin and Searle, the study analyzes the realization of illocutionary force, degrees of directness, and value-laden pragmatic markers in both languages. The findings reveal that although English and Uzbek share a common inventory of illocutionary act types, their pragmatic implementation reflects distinct cultural value systems.*

**Keywords:** *speech act theory, illocutionary acts, axiology, pragmatics, cross-linguistic analysis*

### **ANNOTATSIYA**

*Nutq akti nazariyasi tilni sof vakillik tizimi emas, balki ijtimoiy harakat shakli sifatida tushunish orqali lingvistik pragmatikada eng ta'sirli paradigmalardan birini ifodalaydi. Nazariyaning dastlabki formulalari illokutsion funktsiyalarning universalligini ta'kidlagan bo'lsa-da, keyingi tadqiqotlar pragmatik ma'noni shakllantirishda madaniy, ijtimoiy va aksiologik omillarning ahamiyatini tobora ko'proq namoyish etdi. Ushbu maqolada illokutsion nutq harakatlari ingliz va o'zbek tillarining aksiologik va tillararo tahlili orqali tilshunoslikning markaziy mavzusi sifatida o'rganiladi. Ostin va Searlning nazariy asoslariga asoslangan sifatli kontrast-pragmatik metodologiyadan foydalangan holda, tadqiqot ikkala tilda ham illokutsion kuch, to'g'ridan-to'g'rilik darajalari va qiymatga ega pragmatik belgilarning amalga oshirilishini tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki,*

*ingliz va o'zbek tillari illokutsion akt turlarining umumiy ro'yxatiga ega bo'lsa-da, ularning pragmatik amalga oshirilishi turli madaniy qadriyat tizimlarini aks ettiradi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *nutq akti nazariyasi, illokutsion aktlar, aksiologiya, pragmatika, tillararo tahlil*

## **АННОТАЦИЯ**

*Теория речевых актов представляет собой одну из наиболее влиятельных парадигм в лингвистической прагматике, рассматривая язык как форму социального действия, а не как чисто репрезентативную систему. Хотя ранние формулировки теории подчеркивали универсальность иллокутивных функций, последующие исследования все чаще демонстрировали значимость культурных, социальных и аксиологических факторов в формировании прагматического значения. В данной статье рассматриваются иллокутивные речевые акты как центральный предмет лингвистики посредством аксиологического и межъязыкового анализа английского и узбекского языков. Используя качественную контрастивно-прагматическую методологию, основанную на теоретических рамках Остина и Сёрла, исследование анализирует реализацию иллокутивной силы, степени прямоты и ценностно-ориентированных прагматических маркеров в обоих языках. Результаты показывают, что, хотя английский и узбекский языки имеют общий набор типов иллокутивных актов, их прагматическая реализация отражает различные культурные системы ценностей.*

**Ключевые слова:** *теория речевых актов, иллокутивные акты, аксиология, прагматика, межъязыковой анализ*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The reconceptualization of language as a form of action has profoundly influenced modern linguistic theory. Moving beyond structuralist and formalist approaches that treated language primarily as an autonomous system of signs, contemporary linguistics emphasizes the functional, pragmatic, and social dimensions of meaning. Within this paradigm, Speech Act Theory occupies a central position by demonstrating how speakers use language to perform actions, establish social relations, and express evaluative stances.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The foundations of speech act theory were laid by Austin (1962), who challenged the traditional distinction between constative and performative utterances and introduced the model of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

Searle (1969, 1976) further systematized this framework by proposing a taxonomy of illocutionary acts that has since become a cornerstone of pragmatic analysis.

Despite its theoretical significance, early speech act theory tended to assume a degree of functional universality and cultural neutrality. More recent research in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication has problematized this assumption, demonstrating that illocutionary acts are deeply embedded in cultural value systems (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Levinson, 1983). These axiological dimensions—relating to politeness, authority, morality, and social hierarchy—play a crucial role in shaping illocutionary force and interpretation.

The present article examines illocutionary speech acts as a subject matter of linguistics from an axiological and cross-linguistic perspective, focusing on English and Uzbek. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are illocutionary speech acts realized in English and Uzbek?
2. What axiological markers accompany illocutionary acts in each language?
3. How do cultural value systems influence illocutionary force and pragmatic interpretation?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopts a **qualitative, descriptive, and contrastive-pragmatic research design**. Given the theoretical and value-oriented nature of the research questions, qualitative analysis is particularly suited to capturing subtle pragmatic distinctions and culturally embedded meanings that resist quantitative measurement. The study is exploratory rather than hypothesis-testing and aims to identify recurrent pragmatic patterns in the realization of illocutionary speech acts.

### **Theoretical and Analytical Framework**

The analytical framework integrates three complementary perspectives:

1. **Classical Speech Act Theory**, drawing on Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969, 1976) foundational models;
2. **Axiological Linguistics**, which examines how values, evaluations, and normative judgments are encoded in language;
3. **Cross-Cultural Pragmatics**, particularly theories of politeness, face, and indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Illocutionary acts are treated as the primary unit of analysis, while axiological meaning is operationalized through markers such as honorifics, politeness strategies, evaluative lexemes, religious references, and formulaic expressions.

### **Data Sources**

The data consist of a small, purpose-built qualitative corpus comprising English and Uzbek utterances drawn from:

- Naturally occurring spoken interaction,
- Literary dialogue and scripted discourse,
- Pedagogical materials used in language education.

The data were selected to represent comparable communicative situations across both languages, such as requests, apologies, advice-giving, and expressions of obligation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Distribution of Illocutionary Act Types**

All five categories of illocutionary acts—representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations—were attested in both English and Uzbek. Representatives and directives occurred most frequently, while declarations were limited to institutional contexts. This finding supports the notion of functional universality at an abstract level.

### **Directives and Directness**

A clear contrast emerged in the realization of directive speech acts. English directives were predominantly indirect, relying on interrogative structures, modal verbs, and hedging devices. Uzbek directives, by contrast, were often realized more directly, particularly in contexts involving social hierarchy. Directness in Uzbek did not necessarily signal impoliteness but reflected culturally sanctioned expressions of authority and responsibility.

### **Commissives and Obligation**

Commissive acts in English tended to emphasize individual agency and personal commitment. In Uzbek, commissives frequently conveyed a stronger sense of moral or social obligation, often reinforced through evaluative or religious language. This difference reflects divergent axiological orientations toward responsibility and commitment.

### **Expressives and Axiological Density**

Expressive speech acts exhibited the highest degree of axiological contrast. Uzbek expressives were characterized by formulaicity and dense evaluative content, frequently invoking moral or religious values. English expressives were more individualized and context-dependent, with less reliance on fixed formulas.

### **Indirectness as a Cultural Strategy**

Indirectness emerged as a culturally contingent strategy rather than a universal politeness marker. In English, indirectness served to preserve negative face, whereas

in Uzbek, social harmony was often achieved through explicit acknowledgment of roles and relationships

The findings confirm that illocutionary speech acts are value-neutral communicative units and culturally embedded actions shaped by axiological frameworks. The contrast between English and Uzbek illustrates how pragmatic meaning arises from the interaction of linguistic form and cultural rationality. Differences in directness, formulaicity, and evaluative density reflect broader social orientations, such as individualism versus collectivism and egalitarianism versus hierarchical organization.

The study also challenges universalist interpretations of politeness and indirectness, demonstrating that pragmatic strategies must be interpreted within their cultural contexts. These findings reinforce the need for culturally informed pragmatic models that integrate axiological variables into speech act analysis.

From an applied perspective, the results highlight the importance of teaching illocutionary competence alongside grammatical accuracy. Failure to account for axiological differences may lead to pragmatic misunderstanding in intercultural communication.

## CONCLUSION

This article has examined illocutionary speech acts as a central subject matter of linguistics through an axiological and cross-linguistic analysis of English and Uzbek languages. The findings demonstrate that while illocutionary categories may be functionally universal, their pragmatic realization is deeply shaped by culturally embedded value systems.

By integrating axiological analysis into speech act theory, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of pragmatic meaning as both action-oriented and evaluative. The results have implications for linguistic theory, cross-cultural pragmatics, and applied linguistics, particularly in language education and intercultural communication. Future research may extend this approach through corpus-based or experimental studies to further explore the relationship between language, action, and values.

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