



CROSS-DISCOURSE REALIZATION OF SPEECH ACTS AND COMMUNICATIVE ERRORS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:

Speech acts constitute one of the most significant areas of pragmatic research, as they reveal how language functions not only as a medium of conveying information but also as a means of performing actions. In communication, speakers do not simply produce grammatically correct sentences; rather, they apologize, request, promise, refuse, thank, criticize, advise, and persuade through language. The present article examines the realization of speech acts across various discourse types, namely everyday discourse, academic discourse, institutional discourse, and media discourse, and analyzes communicative errors that arise from the misinterpretation or misuse of speech acts in intercultural communication. The study is grounded in classical speech act theory developed by J. L. Austin and John Searle, as well as subsequent pragmatic approaches to politeness, indirectness, and intercultural pragmatics. Through comparative examples from English and Uzbek, the paper demonstrates that speech acts are highly context-dependent and culturally conditioned. Communicative failures often occur when speakers transfer pragmatic norms from their native language into a foreign communicative environment without considering discourse conventions or sociocultural expectations.

Keywords: Speech acts, discourse, pragmatics, intercultural communication, communicative errors, academic discourse, institutional discourse, media discourse

Speech interaction is one of the most attractive areas of research. The prevalence of the dialogic type of speech in the conditions of modern communication determines the relevance of studying the units of speech. In the focus of the researchers' attention were the phenomena, which previously were on the periphery of linguistic science: speech act, speech interaction, and the interaction of communicants, the features of the speech situation, the causes of communicative failures, communicative strategies and tactics of colloquial speech. [1] In recent decades, linguistic research has increasingly shifted its focus from purely structural aspects of language to functional and pragmatic dimensions of communication. As a result, phenomena that were previously located on the periphery of linguistic inquiry have become central objects of analysis. These include speech acts, speech interaction, communicative behavior, interaction between interlocutors, characteristics of speech situations, causes of communicative failures, as well as

communicative strategies and tactics employed in everyday and professional discourse.

This shift reflects a broader recognition that successful communication depends not only on grammatical correctness but also on the ability of speakers to select linguistically and pragmatically appropriate forms according to context, communicative intention, and sociocultural norms. Consequently, the study of speech acts across different discourse types has gained particular importance, as it allows researchers to identify how speakers realize intentions and negotiate meaning in diverse communicative settings.

Language has traditionally been understood as a means of expressing thoughts and representing reality. However, modern pragmatics demonstrates that language also functions as a form of action. In language, words are similar to each other and their meanings change as they are used in different contexts. [2] When speakers apologize, request, promise, refuse, thank, or advise, they are not merely producing utterances but performing socially meaningful acts. This functional perspective forms the foundation of speech



act theory and provides the theoretical basis for the present study.

This research therefore investigates the realization of speech acts in everyday, academic, institutional, and media discourse, while also examining communicative errors that arise in intercultural communication due to differences in pragmatic norms and discourse conventions.

Speech act theory was first systematically introduced by Austin, who distinguished between constative and performative utterances. While constatives describe states of affairs, performatives accomplish actions through being uttered.

Austin later proposed that every utterance simultaneously performs three acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. This framework was further refined by Searle, who classified speech acts into five major categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

Assertives commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. Statements such as "The conference begins tomorrow" or "The results indicate a significant difference" fall under this category.

Directives are intended to get the hearer to perform an action. Requests, commands, suggestions, and advice belong here. Expressions such as "Please close the door" or "Could you review this article?" are typical examples.

Commissives commit the speaker to future action, including promises, offers, and threats. Examples include "I will send the report by Monday" and "We promise to improve the service."

Expressives communicate psychological states such as gratitude, apology, congratulations, or condolences. Statements like "Thank you very much" and "I am sorry for the inconvenience" belong to this category.

Declarations change institutional or social reality by virtue of being uttered by an authorized speaker. Examples include "You are hereby appointed," "I pronounce you husband and wife," or "The meeting is officially closed."

Later pragmatic scholars, particularly Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, emphasized the role of politeness strategies in speech act realization. Their theory of face-saving explains why speakers often avoid directness in order to preserve social harmony.

Intercultural pragmatics further demonstrated that speech acts are culturally variable. Researchers found that apology, gratitude, refusal, and request strategies differ substantially across languages and cultural systems.

Everyday discourse represents one of the most natural and frequently occurring forms of human communication. It is primarily characterized by informality, spontaneity, emotional expressiveness, and dependence on shared contextual knowledge between interlocutors. Unlike institutional or academic communication, everyday interactions are generally less regulated by formal conventions and are more strongly influenced by interpersonal relationships, situational context, and cultural expectations. As a result, the realization of speech acts in everyday discourse often involves implicitness, indirectness, and context-dependent interpretation.

A significant feature of everyday discourse is the tendency to mitigate potentially face-threatening acts, particularly requests. According to politeness theory, requests inherently impose upon the interlocutor by asking them to perform an action, provide assistance, or grant permission. For this reason, speakers often employ indirect linguistic forms in order to minimize imposition and preserve social harmony. In English-speaking contexts, direct requests such as "Give me your book" or "Help me with this task" may be interpreted as impolite, especially among interlocutors with equal social status or limited familiarity. Therefore, English speakers generally prefer softened and interrogative forms, such as "Could I borrow your book?", "Can you help me with this?", or "Would you mind lending me your notes?"

A similar tendency can be observed in Uzbek everyday communication, where politeness is often expressed through interrogative structures, modal forms, and honorific elements. Instead of issuing direct commands, speakers typically formulate requests in mitigated ways, such as "Kitobingizni olib tursam bo'ladimi?" (May I borrow your book?) or "Yordam bera olasizmi?" (Can you help me?). Such structures reduce directness and convey respect toward the interlocutor. This indirectness is particularly important in Uzbek culture, where communicative behavior is strongly influenced by norms of politeness, hierarchy, and social harmony.

Nevertheless, direct requests are not entirely absent from everyday discourse. Their occurrence is generally conditioned by factors such as urgency, power asymmetry, or high familiarity. For instance, in parent-child interactions, direct imperatives such as "Bring me water" or "Close the door" are socially acceptable due to the unequal status relationship. Similarly, close friends or family members may use more direct forms without negative pragmatic consequences, as shared



intimacy reduces the need for elaborate politeness strategies.

Apologies constitute another important category of speech acts in everyday communication. Their primary pragmatic function is to restore social balance following a violation of social norms, inconvenience, or perceived offense. English speakers frequently employ formulaic expressions such as "Sorry," "I'm really sorry," "Excuse me," or "I apologize." These expressions vary in intensity depending on the severity of the offense and the formality of the context.

In Uzbek discourse, apologies are similarly common but often carry stronger emotional and relational components. Expressions such as "Kechirasiz," "Uzr so'rayman," and "Meni afv eting" not only acknowledge fault but may also signal humility and deference. Compared to English, Uzbek apologies often include expanded forms emphasizing personal responsibility, for example, "Kechirasiz, sizni kutdirib qo'ydim" (Sorry for making you wait) or "Noqulaylik uchun uzr" (Apologies for the inconvenience). This tendency reflects the collectivist orientation of Uzbek culture, where maintaining harmonious interpersonal relations is highly valued.

Gratitude expressions also occupy a central place in everyday discourse. As expressive speech acts, they function to acknowledge benefit received and reinforce positive social relationships. In English, gratitude is typically expressed through formulas such as "Thanks," "Thank you very much," "Thanks a lot," or "I really appreciate your help." These expressions vary according to degree of formality and emotional intensity.

Uzbek speakers similarly employ expressions such as "Rahmat," "Katta rahmat," and "Minnatdorman." However, gratitude in Uzbek discourse is often accompanied by stronger interpersonal warmth or blessings, especially in communication with elders or respected individuals. Additional expressions may include culturally marked formulas emphasizing sincerity or indebtedness.

Equally significant are response strategies to gratitude expressions. In English-speaking contexts, responses such as "You're welcome," "No problem," "Anytime," or "My pleasure" are conventional and expected. Their function is to downplay the favor and maintain conversational smoothness. In Uzbek, common responses include "Arzimaydi," "Hechqisi yo'q," and "Mayli," which similarly minimize the effort involved and reinforce modesty. The use of these

responses reflects culturally embedded norms regarding reciprocity and humility.

Refusals are among the most pragmatically sensitive speech acts in everyday discourse because they inherently threaten the interlocutor's positive face by rejecting a request, offer, or invitation. Consequently, refusals are rarely expressed directly in informal interaction. English speakers often prefer indirect strategies such as "I'd love to, but I'm busy," "Maybe another time," or "I'm afraid I can't." These expressions soften rejection by including justification, regret, or positive politeness.

In Uzbek communication, refusal strategies tend to be even more indirect and ambiguous. Rather than explicitly rejecting an offer or request, speakers may use expressions such as "Ko'ramiz" (We'll see), "Nasib qilsa" (If fate allows), or "Vaqt bo'lsa" (If there is time). While these utterances may appear non-committal or even positive on the surface, their pragmatic function often serves as an indirect refusal. Such strategies allow speakers to avoid direct confrontation and preserve interpersonal harmony.

Everyday discourse demonstrates that speech act realization is deeply shaped by contextual, relational, and cultural factors. Although similar speech act categories exist across languages, their linguistic realization and pragmatic interpretation differ considerably. In both English and Uzbek, speakers strategically employ indirectness, mitigation, formulaicity, and culturally appropriate expressions to achieve communicative goals while maintaining social balance. These observations highlight the importance of pragmatic competence in everyday communication and provide a foundation for understanding how speech acts function across broader discourse types.

Academic discourse is formal, specialized, and institutionally constrained. Unlike everyday communication, it prioritizes precision, objectivity, and politeness through mitigation. One of the most distinctive features of academic discourse is hedging. Rather than making absolute claims, scholars soften assertions through modal verbs and tentative expressions. Instead of writing "This theory is false," academic writers prefer "This theory may require reconsideration" or "The findings suggest an alternative interpretation."

Requests in academic contexts are highly formalized. For example, a student writing to a professor is unlikely to say "Check my article." Instead, they use expressions such as "Could you kindly review my manuscript?" or "I would appreciate your feedback."



Criticism is also carefully managed. Direct criticism may be perceived as confrontational. Therefore, scholars often employ mitigated formulations like "This study could benefit from a larger sample size" or "Further clarification may be necessary."

Apologies in academic discourse are formulaic and professional. Common examples include "We apologize for the oversight" or "The author regrets the omission."

Academic speech acts are thus characterized by formality, indirectness, and institutional politeness. Institutional discourse encompasses communication in legal, medical, educational, governmental, and administrative settings. It is shaped by asymmetrical power relations and role-based expectations.

Directives are highly frequent in institutional contexts because authority legitimizes directness. Doctors may say "Take this medication twice daily." Teachers commonly state "Submit your assignment by Friday." Administrative staff issue directives such as "Please complete the form."

Declarations are especially prominent in institutional discourse. Authorized speakers can alter social reality through language. Examples include "You are admitted," "The application has been approved," and "The defendant is acquitted."

Institutional refusals are generally formal and impersonal. Instead of bluntly saying "No," institutions prefer formulations such as "Unfortunately, your request cannot be accommodated" or "Due to insufficient documentation, the application has been declined."

In Uzbek institutional settings, similar formulaic patterns exist: "Arizangiz rad etildi," "Siz ishga qabul qilindingiz," or "Hujjatlar qayta topshirilishi lozim."

Institutional discourse minimizes emotional expressiveness and prioritizes clarity, legitimacy, and procedural correctness.

Media discourse includes journalism, advertising, political speeches, television broadcasts, and digital communication. Its primary goal is often persuasion, influence, and audience engagement.

Headlines frequently function as indirect speech acts. A newspaper headline such as "Government Faces New Economic Challenges" is not merely informative but also designed to attract attention. Advertising discourse relies heavily on directives and commissives. Expressions like "Try the new collection," "Discover your perfect skincare routine," or "Experience premium quality" function as persuasive invitations.

Political discourse frequently employs commissives. Politicians make promises such as "We will

reduce inflation" or "Our administration guarantees reform." Social media introduces hybrid speech acts that combine private and public communication. Common examples include congratulatory posts, public apologies, invitations, and declarations such as "Officially graduated" or "Excited to announce my new position."

The brevity and multimodality of media discourse often intensify illocutionary force. Intercultural communication frequently involves pragmatic transfer, whereby speakers apply norms from their native language to a foreign language context. One common error concerns directness. Uzbek learners of English may produce requests such as "Give me your pen," which are grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate. Native English speakers expect mitigated forms such as "Could I borrow your pen?" Another issue is excessive formality. Learners may produce unnatural utterances like "I humbly request your esteemed assistance," which sound overly ceremonial in ordinary English interaction. Indirectness can also cause misunderstanding. An English speaker saying "It's getting late" may intend to signal a desire to leave. A listener unfamiliar with indirect pragmatic norms may interpret the statement literally. Refusals are especially problematic. Uzbek indirect refusals such as "Ko'ramiz" or "Nasib qilsa" may be misunderstood by English speakers as genuine possibilities rather than polite refusals.

Gratitude responses can similarly create pragmatic awkwardness. Silence after receiving thanks may be acceptable in some contexts but uncomfortable in English interaction. Such errors demonstrate that successful intercultural communication depends not only on lexical or grammatical competence but also on pragmatic awareness.

Speech acts represent a crucial intersection of language, culture, and communication. Their realization differs significantly across discourse types, reflecting communicative goals, participant roles, institutional constraints, and sociocultural expectations.

Everyday discourse prioritizes interpersonal harmony and flexibility, academic discourse values caution and mitigation, institutional discourse emphasizes authority and procedural clarity, while media discourse focuses on persuasion and audience influence. Intercultural communication introduces additional complexity, as speech acts are deeply embedded in cultural norms. Communicative failure often occurs not because speakers lack vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, but because they misapply pragmatic conventions.



Therefore, language education should incorporate explicit instruction in speech acts, discourse conventions, and intercultural pragmatics. Developing pragmatic competence is essential for achieving effective and appropriate communication in multilingual and multicultural environments.

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