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Psycholinguistic and Linguopragmatic Mechanisms of Confession Elicitation

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the psycholinguistic and linguopragmatic features of communicative influence aimed at eliciting a confession and detecting hidden information in criminal discourse. The empirical material consists of selected dialogic situations from the television series The Valley of the Wolves *(*Kurtlar Vadisi*) and Tohir Malik's literary work* Farewell, Childhood *(*Alvido, bolalik*). The analysis focuses on question–answer sequences, provocative information, presupposition, implicature, communicative strategies, emotional responses, and subsequent behaviour. The findings indicate that the elicitation of hidden information does not necessarily result in an explicit confession. In some cases, communicative influence becomes observable through an unexpected action, an attempt to verify information, or a change in interpersonal relations. Accordingly, such phenomena should be interpreted in forensic linguistic analysis as a combination of linguistic and pragmatic features rather than as direct proof of factual guilt. The study contributes to the discussion of psycholinguistic and linguopragmatic mechanisms underlying confession elicitation and indirect information disclosure in criminal discourse.*

Keywords: Forensic linguistics, criminal discourse, confession elicitation, hidden information, psycholinguistics, linguopragmatics, interrogation discourse, provocation, presupposition, implicature

INTRODUCTION

Confession elicitation from offenders constitutes a complex scientific and practical problem at the intersection of contemporary psychology, pragmatics, criminology, and linguistics. In judicial and investigative proceedings, an offender's verbal behavior, psychological defense mechanisms, and pragmatic strategies may serve as important diagnostic indicators for distinguishing truthful statements from deceptive ones. At the same time, the psycholinguistic competence of the professional seeking to elicit a confession – whether an investigator, prosecutor, defense attorney, or operational officer – as well as the ability to select appropriate linguistic forms and employ effective pragmatic techniques, may significantly influence the course and outcome of the interaction.

From the perspective of Uzbek linguistics, the psycholinguistic and linguopragmatic mechanisms underlying interrogation and communicative strategies aimed at eliciting a confession in literary discourse warrant particular scholarly attention. In the interrogation process, the speech of a suspect or accused person functions not merely as a means of transmitting information but as a phenomenon closely associated with cognitive processes, emotional states, communicative intentions, social relations, and institutional conditions. Accordingly, the study of confession elicitation should not be restricted to identifying the content of the confession; it also requires consideration of the communicative context in which it occurs, the sequential organization of questions and responses, and the pragmatic influences that contribute to its emergence. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the psycholinguistic and linguopragmatic factors that influence the formation of confession in criminal discourse and to analyze the specific ways in which these factors are manifested in literary discourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The psychological basis of confession elicitation is primarily associated with the factors that influence an individual during

interrogation. G. H. Gudjonsson's research provides an extensive account of interrogative suggestibility, that is, an individual's susceptibility to suggestion and pressure during interrogation, as well as compliance. He demonstrates that psychological vulnerability to interrogative pressure may, in certain circumstances, contribute to statements that are inconsistent with an individual's prior knowledge or beliefs and may, in extreme cases, result in false confessions [3, 4]. Similarly, S. M. Kassin and G. H. Gudjonsson examine confession not simply as an admission of guilt but as a phenomenon shaped by the social and psychological influences operating within the interrogation process [6]. In an experimental study, M. B. Russano, C. A. Meissner, F. M. Narchet, and S. M. Kassin investigated the effects of "minimization" – a communicative approach that downplays the seriousness of the offense or the suspect's culpability while implying leniency – on confession outcomes. Their findings indicate that such strategies can increase the likelihood of both true and false confessions [11]. This finding underscores the importance of examining interrogation strategies as factors that may shape suspects' verbal behavior. At the same time, a confession cannot be regarded uncritically as conclusive evidence of guilt, since empirical research has documented various forms of false confession [3,11].

Alongside psychological factors, linguistic features play a significant role in the process of confession elicitation. R.W. Shuy approaches confession, interrogation, and deception from a forensic-linguistic perspective, examining the linguistic forms and communicative strategies employed during police questioning. His analysis draws particular attention to question formulation, lexical choice, grammatical constructions, the content of responses, and their relationship to the broader communicative context [12]. Such an approach makes it possible to examine not only what a suspect states but also how and under what communicative conditions particular statements are produced.

M. Mason examines police interrogation from the perspectives of institutional interaction and conversation analysis, distinguishing between its preparatory and

argumentation stages. He argues that interrogation is not merely an exchange of information but a form of institutional discourse in which investigators formulate questions in accordance with specific objectives and shape the direction of suspects' responses [9]. G. David & J. Trainum, in turn, emphasize the collaborative construction of confession narratives through interaction between investigators and suspects. From this perspective, a confession narrative may be examined not simply as an independently produced account by the suspect but as the outcome of an interactional process involving both participants [1].

The influence exerted during interrogation is not necessarily expressed explicitly. Investigators may communicate particular intentions beyond the literal meaning of an utterance through pragmatic implicature or implied meaning. Consequently, linguopragmatic analysis should consider such phenomena as presupposition, implicature, indirect speech acts, modal expressions, and communicative intent [2].

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates theoretical principles from psycholinguistics, linguopragmatics, and forensic linguistics. The research corpus consists of crime-related dialogues from the television series *Kurtlar Vadisi* and communicative situations involving interrogation, surveillance, and crime investigation in Tohir Malik's novel *Alvido… bolalik*.

The materials were selected according to three principal criteria. First, the selected situations had to involve a crime or information intentionally withheld from other participants. Second, they had to contain a deliberate attempt to obtain, verify, or disclose such information. Third, the effects of this influence had to be identifiable in the character's response, emotional reaction, or subsequent behavior.

The unit of analysis was not an isolated word but a contextually complete question-and-answer exchange, a sequence of communicative turns, and the pragmatic actions associated with them. This approach enables confession

elicitation to be examined not as an isolated utterance but within the broader dialogic and institutional context in which it occurs.

The study employed five complementary methods.

1. **Discourse analysis** was used to identify the structural and interactional features of interrogation and crime-related dialogues.
2. **Linguopragmatic analysis** focused on presupposition, implicature, indirect speech acts, modal expressions, and communicative strategies.
3. **Psycholinguistic interpretation** examined verbal indicators associated with emotional responses, cognitive dissonance, suggestive influence, and decision-making processes in their contextual environment.
4. **Comparative analysis** was conducted to identify similarities and differences in the strategies employed by different characters and across different communicative situations.
5. **Contextual analysis** considered the meaning of verbal units in relation to the situational circumstances, interpersonal relations between the participants, and the preceding and subsequent turns within the dialogue.

The use of literary material also imposes an important methodological limitation. The findings should not be regarded as a direct empirical model of actual investigative procedures; rather, they concern the representation and discursive modeling of crime-related communicative situations in literary texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that confession elicitation in criminal-procedural interrogation can be examined at three interrelated levels. At the psycholinguistic level, the relevant factors include the suspect's state of stress, the internalization of externally suggested information, potential alterations in memory, compliance under pressure without a corresponding change in personal beliefs, and decision-making processes. At the linguistic level, the analysis focuses on the lexical and syntactic

organization of questions, the formulation of responses, topic management, and turn-taking. At the linguopragmatic level, particular attention is given to presupposition, implicature, indirect speech acts, modal expressions, and strategies through which communicative intentions are conveyed and interaction is shaped.

THE LINGUOPRAGMATIC FUNCTION OF PROVOCATIVE INFORMATION

In several episodes of *Kurtlar Vadisi*, deliberately misleading information is used to provoke suspects, disrupt interpersonal relations, and facilitate the disclosure of concealed information. One such instance occurs when Prosecutor Midhat attempts to obtain a confession from Süleyman Çakır by accusing him and his subordinates of organizing illegal gambling and committing three serious offenses, including murder [*7-Kurtlar Vadisi*, Episode 24-25]. Seeking to undermine Çakır's relationship with Polat, Midhat exploits Çakır's sense of honor and strong attachment to his family. He presents the following fabricated statement as established fact: "An autopsy revealed that your sister had been two months pregnant" [KV-25: 8]. The pragmatic and psycholinguistic functions of this statement can be summarized as follows:

Table 1. *The pragmatic and psycholinguistic functions of prosecutor Midhat's provocative deception*

Function	**Mechanism**	**Psycholinguistic effect**
Emotional shock	Targets Çakır's sense of honor and emotional attachment to his sister.	Disrupts emotional equilibrium and weakens cognitive control [5].
Reinforcing distrust	Creating conflict between Chaqir and Polat	Undermining trust within the group, inducing fragmentation, and thereby manipulating group dynamics.
Manipulative framing	A lie is presented as "reliable information	The truth effect may lead to the acceptance of false information as true
Provocation	Causing Chaqir to sever his relationship with Polat	Triggering an aggressive impulse and inhibiting rational behavior

As a consequence, Çakır finds a way to leave custody for one night and summons Polat to an isolated location, where he punches him without explanation. Midhat's immediate objective – to generate distrust between the two men – is thereby achieved. The two men, who had regarded each other as brothers, engage in a prolonged physical confrontation [KV-26: 44]. Their conflict is eventually resolved when Polat openly exposes the deception:

> Polat: Çakır, did you believe what the prosecutor told you?.. If Derya was pregnant, then either I, Duran Emin, or Seyfo must have killed her...
> Çakır: Can a prosecutor really lie like that?
> Polat: Now look at yourself, and then look at me. If you were in his position, wouldn't you lie? [KV-26, 49].

Çakır's reaction illustrates the psycholinguistic force of strategically presented deceptive information. The statement produces an immediate emotional response, disrupts his assessment of the situation, and contributes to an impulsive behavioral reaction. His surprise also reveals a contradiction in his expectations: despite his criminal environment, he does not initially anticipate deliberate deception from a state representative whom he associates with the administration of justice. The episode therefore demonstrates how a strategically framed false statement can simultaneously affect emotional regulation, interpersonal trust, and subsequent behavior.

Erdal Kömürcü, who has been admitted to a psychiatric hospital to avoid imprisonment, hides Eren, the younger brother of attorney Elif, in an attempt to protect himself, while refusing to admit his guilt. To locate Eren, Polat employs a similar strategy based on deliberately misleading information, stating: "Jonon is pregnant with Eren's child" [KV-17: 41]. The pragmatic dimensions of this strategy can be summarized as follows.

Table 2. *The effectiveness of Polat's strategy*

Aspect	**Description**	**Psycholinguistic Effect**
Provocation	Erdal's primary goal: to prove to his father that he is not infertile	Affective shock – triggering an emotional outburst
Cognitive dissonance	Erdal hopes that Jonon, who has not conceived with his wife, is pregnant by him	Erdal is compelled to verify the truth in order to eliminate doubt
Credibility effect	A lie is presented as truth	Belief resulting from the speaker's credibility
Outcome	Erdal leaves and goes to Eren	False information serves as a means of uncovering the crime

Polat's strategy – using deliberately misleading information to elicit a behavior that can reveal concealed information – may be viewed as a form of psycholinguistic testing. The target's reaction provides indirect evidence concerning his intentions and knowledge. In psychological research, related procedures are commonly discussed in terms of the test lie, in which a strategically constructed false statement is used to observe a person's reaction. This helps explain why, before speaking to Erdal, Polat confidently instructs his men: "Memati, stay at the back entrance. He will come out within two or three hours; do not let him out of your sight" [KV-17]. Thus, the deceptive statement is followed by deliberate observation of Erdal's behavior.

The use of observation to establish concealed information after an interaction is also found in Tohir Malik's *Alvido… bolalik*. Without disclosing his profession or actual purpose, Major Soliyev approaches Asror under the guise of being a "sports coach" and asks him about Salim's whereabouts [8: 163-164). He subsequently orders Asror to be observed, as previously planned [8: 171]. After the lesson, Asror goes directly to Qamariddin's house, where the seriously injured Salim is staying. This technique relies on the observation of behavior and nonverbal cues and makes it possible to identify discrepancies between a person's verbal statements and subsequent conduct.

The two situations – Polat's deceptive provocation of Erdal and Soliyev's observation of Asror – employ different techniques, yet they operate through a comparable psycholinguistic principle. In both cases, subsequent behavior, particularly the individual's choice of destination or course of action, provides information that is inconsistent with the preceding verbal position. Thus, provocative deception and observation under stress may both be understood as strategies that exploit the relationship between verbal control and behavior. Although an individual may deliberately conceal information through speech, increased emotional arousal or cognitive load may affect subsequent behavioral choices and make concealed information more difficult to control. Accordingly, forensic linguistic examination may benefit from considering behavioral and nonverbal evidence alongside verbal statements, while recognizing that such indicators should not be treated as conclusive evidence in isolation.

Table 3. *Comparative analysis of confession-elicitation strategies*

Confession-eliciting agent	**Method used**	**Vulnerability exploited**	**Psycholinguistic mechanism**	**Outcome**
Prosecutor Midhat [KV-24-25]	False information (provocation)	Chaqir's love for his sister	Emotional shock, aggressive impulse, distrust	Conflict between Chaqir and Polat; fragmentation within the group
Polat [KV-17]	False information (provocation) and surveillance	Erdal's pride	Cognitive dissonance, affective shock	The location where Erdal has hidden Eren is revealed
Major Soliyev [AB, 164, 171]	Surveillance	Asror's stress and fear	Stress-induced behavior, nonverbal inconsistency	Asror goes to Salim, revealing the truth

Hossein Rahmani & Mojhgan Chegeni analyze interrogation discourse in Iranian cinema using Gibbons's (2008) typology of

interrogation questions and Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition. Their findings indicate the following [10]:

1. Declarative questions are the most frequently used type, occurring in 42 instances (47.19%), as they exert a relatively high degree of discursive pressure. The study also identifies open questions (20 instances, 22.47%), yes/no questions (16 instances, 17.98%), tag questions (5 instances, 5.61%), alternative questions (4 instances, 4.49%), and projective questions (2 instances, 2.25%).
2. This distribution indicates that interrogators tend to favor question types that increase discursive pressure and enable them to maintain greater control over the interaction.
3. Investigators systematically incorporate presuppositions into their questions. For example: "You put the drugs inside their stomachs so that they would not be found, right?" This question contains existential, lexical, and structural presuppositions.
4. When accused persons recognize the presuppositional structure of a question, they may attempt to avoid confession by rejecting the presupposition embedded in it. According to Rahmani & Chegeni, such resistance may lead investigators to resort to verbal threats as a "last resort."

These features are also illustrated by numerous examples from literary discourse. A similar pattern can be observed in *Kurtlar Vadisi*, particularly in the questioning of individuals suspected of betrayal within criminal groups. Pressure-based questioning aimed at uncovering a crime or concealed information represents a conventional investigative strategy. In the series, the criminal-group leader Shefko is killed before he can disclose the secret. Although Iplikçi Nadim suffers losses and remains distressed by the events, he is unable to identify the actual mastermind behind the crime committed in cooperation with Shefko. Instead, he believes the following false account provided by the actual perpetrator, Tombalacı: "Laz Ziya formed a group. Now he is using it as a pretext to eliminate everyone: Shefko is dead, Tuncay has been shot, and you are next" [KV-19, 32].

Only after Çakır and Polat pressure Iplikçi Nadim to investigate the matter himself by telephone does he learn the truth and recognize once again the extent of Tombalacı's threat.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, eliciting a confession from an offender constitutes a complex psycholinguistic and pragmatic process in which the offender's psychological defense mechanisms, narcissistic traits, emotional vulnerabilities, and nonverbal behavior interact with the psycholinguistic competence of the person conducting the interaction, including appropriate lexical choice and the use of pragmatic and manipulative strategies. The provocative use of deliberately misleading information may disrupt the offender's cognitive-affective balance and prompt behavioral responses that provide information about concealed intentions or knowledge. The deceptive statements employed by Prosecutor Midhat and Polat target specific emotional vulnerabilities and induce reactions that contribute to the disclosure of concealed information. Major Soliyev's observational strategy further demonstrates this principle: behavioral and nonverbal responses occurring under conditions of stress may provide additional information that is not necessarily reflected in an individual's verbal statements.

More broadly, psycholinguistic and linguopragmatic approaches are of considerable theoretical and methodological value for the study of confession elicitation in crime-related discourse. A confession can be understood as a verbal form through which an individual acknowledges, either fully or partially, an event, an action, or their own involvement in it. The content and communicative orientation of such an acknowledgment may be influenced by cognitive processes, emotional states, individual experience, and communicative motives.

Psycholinguistic analysis makes it possible to examine, in their contextual environment, such features of speech production as the coherence and consistency of thought, self-correction, repetition, forms of negation and affirmation, and modal

expressions. A linguopragmatic approach, in turn, makes it possible to identify communicative strategies associated with the full or partial acknowledgment of an action, the interpretation of an event, the acceptance or limitation of responsibility, the justification of one's position, and the concealment of particular information. These analytical dimensions provide a basis for distinguishing direct, indirect, partial, and conditional forms of confession.

From the perspective of forensic linguistic examination, however, the principal task is not to develop or apply mechanisms for eliciting a confession, but to assess the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of speech material presented as a confession. It is therefore essential to distinguish the linguistic presence of a confession from the factual truth of the information it contains. A forensic linguist may determine whether a statement contains a verbal acknowledgment of a particular action or involvement; however, the expert cannot, on linguistic grounds alone, establish whether the acknowledged event actually occurred, whether the individual committed the offense, or whether the statement is psychologically reliable. Such determinations require evidence and expertise extending beyond linguistic analysis. Accordingly, forensic assessment should remain confined to the identifiable linguistic and pragmatic features of the material under examination and should be interpreted in conjunction with the relevant investigative evidence.

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