

Corpus-Based Comparative Analysis of Speech Acts in Uzbek, English, Russian

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the theoretical development and cross-linguistic realization of speech acts from a pragmatic perspective. It first outlines the fundamental assumptions underlying speech act theory and traces its subsequent development within linguistic & pragmatic research. The study then explores how the concept of speech acts has been developed, refined, & applied across different linguistic traditions, with particular attention to Uzbek, Russian, and English. By focusing on the role of speech acts in communicative performance, the research investigates how speakers employ different types of speech acts to achieve specific communicative intentions in particular contexts. It further considers the interaction between pragmatic meaning, contextual factors, and grammatical structures in the realization & interpretation of speech acts. The empirical part of the study draws on a corpus of thirty official and semi-official written dialogic interactions (ten per language) conducted via social media and messengers, in which 197 speech acts were manually coded according to J. Searle's taxonomy and analyzed by means of frequency analysis & the chi-square test. In all three languages the distribution of speech act types proved statistically non-random ($p < 0.001$): directive acts predominate in Uzbek (36.9%), whereas expressive acts prevail in Russian (40.0%) and English (46.3%), which reflects language-specific pragmatic & linguocultural norms of official written communication.

Keywords: Speech acts, pragmatics, illocutionary acts, communicative intention, cross-linguistic analysis, Uzbek language, Russian language, English language

1. INTRODUCTION

Like any other systematic field of study, every linguistic term reflects the theoretical presuppositions of language users. In an attempt to explain the relationship between the terms “speech act” and “pragmatics,” one can conclude that speech acts are a set of language performance acts such as asking questions, giving orders, apologizing, thanking, requesting, etc. Pragmatics, in its turn, is closely associated with how these linguistic actions convey meaning in a particular context, depending on the speaker’s intention, the situational context, and the way the utterance affects the hearer.

During the evolution of speech act theory, the gradual differentiation of performance acts in speech laid the foundation stone. Pioneering this work, J. L. Austin viewed these performances not exclusively as grammatical structures, but as forms intended to convey a specific meaning in a particular language context (Austin 1962). The subsequent classification of these acts as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary was of great importance in the development of speech act theory. This conceptual framework was later elaborated by John R. Searle, who proposed a thorough classification of speech acts (Searle 1969, 1976).

The aim of the present study is twofold: first, to trace the theoretical development of speech act theory with particular attention to its reception in Uzbek linguistics; and second, to compare, on empirical grounds, the distribution of speech act types in official written dialogic communication in Uzbek, Russian, and English. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) how are the five illocutionary types of Searle’s taxonomy distributed in official written dialogues in the three languages, and (2) which pragmatic and linguocultural factors account for the observed cross-linguistic differences?

2. SPEECH ACT STUDIES IN UZBEK LINGUISTICS

In Uzbek linguistics, the studies conducted by M. Hakimov and Sh. Safarov on speech activity, speech acts, and communicative

strategies are of particular significance. Their works address such topical issues as linguopragmatics, the relationship between language and thought, speech etiquette, and national patterns of communication, thereby providing an in-depth account of the linguocultural nature of speech behaviour in the Uzbek language. In his research, M. Hakimov analyzes speech activity in close relation to the unity of language and thought, communicative needs, and linguocultural values. In his scholarly works, speech processes are treated not merely as linguistic phenomena, but as forms of social, cultural, and communicative activity. He also explains how speech motivation and illocutionary intentions are formed in human cognition (Hakimov 2001, 2006). From this perspective, Hakimov's studies contributed to the interpretation of speech acts in Uzbek not only as structural or semantic units, but also as pragmatic phenomena directed toward the achievement of specific communicative goals.

Sh. Safarov's work *Pragmalingvistika* is also of particular scholarly importance in the development of linguopragmatics and speech act studies in Uzbek linguistics. In this work, pragmalinguistic units are examined in terms of their dependence on context, goal-oriented character, and close relationship with social situations. Particular attention is paid to the linguocultural motivations of speech acts within the framework of social status, interpersonal distance, and communicative strategies. Safarov also provides contextual analyses of such speech acts in Uzbek as apology, address, refusal, positive and negative evaluation, and request (Safarov 2008). His approach demonstrates that the interpretation of speech acts is determined not only by grammatical form but also by communicative intention, contextual circumstances, and culturally established norms of interaction.

In addition, the study conducted by N. Mustafayeva reveals methodological links between speech acts and Bloom's taxonomy, presenting speech acts as an effective means of developing communicative competence in the educational process (Mustafayeva 2025). This research is of both theoretical and practical significance for linguists and language educators concerned with the methodology of teaching speech acts.

N. Mahmudov, in turn, examines culturally specific models of expressive speech acts in Uzbek society, including apologizing, expressing gratitude, and congratulating. He demonstrates that the realization of such speech acts is closely related to the social status of interlocutors and the interpersonal distance between participants in communication (Mahmudov 2001, 2013). This approach makes it possible to regard speech acts as linguistic manifestations of national speech culture and social relations.

E. Begmatov interprets speech acts as constituent elements of discourse and emphasizes that, in identifying a speech act, context and functional purpose are more important than grammatical form. He also discusses the pragmatic functions of speech acts and their adaptation to specific communicative situations in actual discourse (Begmatov 1998, 2004). Such an approach enables speech acts to be studied not merely within the boundaries of individual sentences or grammatical structures, but as functional components of broader discourse and communicative interaction.

The relationship between speech acts and communicative strategies is more explicitly addressed in the works of D. Lutfullayeva. She interprets speech acts as one of the principal means through which communicative strategies are realized. In this regard, the strategic selection of a particular type of speech act by a speaker in order to achieve a specific communicative goal is viewed as a conscious communicative process (Lutfullayeva 2011, 2016). Thus, a speech act functions not only as the expression of a communicative intention, but also as a strategic instrument employed by the speaker to achieve a predetermined communicative objective.

This strategic-pragmatic perspective is further developed in G. Hakimova's studies of politeness. She analyzes speech acts in relation to politeness strategies and reveals the ways in which the use of direct and indirect speech acts depends on social distance and the status of the interlocutors. Her studies also address the linguocultural variability of speech acts and their significance in intercultural communication (Hakimova 2014, 2021). This demonstrates that the same communicative intention may be

realized through different linguistic forms depending on the social and cultural context.

More broadly, Uzbek linguistic scholarship has extensively examined the ways in which linguistic units are used to express different communicative purposes, the variety of forms through which they are realized in speech, and their dependence on such factors as age, gender, social status, and other sociolinguistic variables. The grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, sociopragmatic, and cultural characteristics of speech acts in Uzbek sentence structures have been widely discussed in the works of T. Allayorov, Z. Karimova, S. Mo‘minov, M. Hakimov, M. Xujamkulova, D. Lutfullayeva, M. Mamadaliyeva, G‘. Mirsanov, M. Mukarramov, D. Nabiyeva, A. Nurmonov, A. Nurmaxanova, Z. Pardayev, and I. Rasulov (Allayorov 2020; Hakimov 1993; Karimova 2021; Lutfullayeva 1997, 2006; Mahmudov 1984; Mamadaliyeva 1998; Mirsanov n.d.; Mo‘minov 2001; Mukarramov 1985; Nabiyeva 1998; Nurmaxanova 1964; Nurmonov 1986, 1995; Nurmonov & Hakimov, 2000, 2001; Pardayev 2012; Rasulov 1970, 1971). Their studies cover such issues as imperative and interrogative constructions, sociopragmatic features, communicative behaviour, textual pragmatics, the communicative-pragmatic structure of simple sentences, propositional structure, connotative meaning, semantic-syntactic asymmetry, presupposition, and pragmatic evaluation.

Taken together, these studies indicate that the development of speech act research in Uzbek linguistics has proceeded through several interrelated scholarly directions. Earlier investigations focused primarily on the semantic, syntactic, and functional properties of sentences, whereas subsequent studies increasingly incorporated communicative-pragmatic, sociopragmatic, discourse-based, and linguocultural approaches. As a result, speech acts have gradually come to be interpreted not merely in terms of the relationship between grammatical form and semantic content, but as complex pragmatic phenomena determined by the speaker’s communicative intention, illocutionary purpose, communicative strategy, social status, interpersonal distance, and national-cultural norms. This

development demonstrates that speech act theory in Uzbek linguistics has evolved within the broader paradigm of pragmalinguistic research and has acquired an increasingly systematic and multidimensional character.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The empirical material of the study comprises official and semi-official written dialogic interactions conducted via social media and messengers in Uzbek, Russian, and English. Ten dialogic interactions were selected for each language. Within these dialogues, 65 speech acts were identified in the Uzbek subcorpus, 65 in the Russian subcorpus, and 67 in the English subcorpus (197 in total). The dialogic utterance served as the unit of analysis; all examples are reproduced verbatim, with the original (including colloquial) orthography preserved, and are accompanied by English glosses.

Each utterance was manually coded on the basis of speech act theory and assigned to one of the five categories of Searle's classification – assertives, directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives (Searle 1976). Two complementary statistical procedures were applied. Relative frequency – the ratio of the number of occurrences of a particular category (n) to the total number of speech acts (N) – demonstrates the proportional share of each speech act category, whereas the chi-square (χ^2) goodness-of-fit test, computed against the assumption of an equal distribution of the five categories ($E = N/5$; $df = 4$), determines whether the observed distribution is random or statistically significant.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. *Speech acts in official Uzbek language social media correspondence*

At the first stage, the Uzbek subcorpus was analyzed. Table 1 presents the distribution of speech act types identified in the ten Uzbek dialogues.

Table 1. *Distribution of speech act types in official Uzbek-language written dialogues (N = 65)*

Speech act type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Directive	24	36.9%
Expressive	18	27.7%
Assertive	15	23.1%
Commissive	6	9.2%
Declarative	2	3.1%
Total	65	100%

The results of the statistical analysis conducted on the basis of official and semi-official written dialogues demonstrate that directive acts predominate among speech acts in Uzbek (36.9%), followed by expressive (27.7%) and assertive (23.1%) acts. This indicates that orienting the interlocutor toward a particular action, maintaining the ethical and interactive balance of communication, and transmitting information constitute the leading pragmatic functions in official written communication in Uzbek. The very low frequency of declarative acts (3.1%) indicates the limited role of institutional authority in official written dialogues.

If all speech acts are assumed to be equally distributed, the expected frequency is $E = 13$ for each category. Using the χ^2 formula, the calculation produced the following results: $\chi^2 = 24.62$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.001$. The observed distribution is therefore not random. Relative frequency was subsequently employed to calculate the frequency with which different speech acts occur in discourse. The formula is based on the relationship between n – the number of occurrences of a particular category (for example, directive = 24) – and N – the total number of speech acts (65).

According to the results of the analysis, directive speech acts are the most actively employed type in Uzbek dialogues. These acts are mainly realized in the form of requests, inquiries, and requests for assistance. For example:

- *Sizdan bitta narsa niiltimosqilsambo 'ladimi?*
“May I ask you for something?”
- *O'tgan yilgi hisobotlaring iznitashlabbera olasizmi?*
“Could you send your reports from last year?”

- *Telegram lariniber olasizmi?*
“Could you give me their Telegram contacts?”
- *Shuni bosh qattanber olasizmi?*
“Could you provide this again?”
- *Shuni merit qilibto ‘g ‘irlabber olasizmi?*
“Could you correct this according to the merit requirements?”

These examples demonstrate that directive acts in Uzbek are frequently expressed in indirect and mitigated forms. Grammatical constructions such as *-olasizmi* (“could you”) and *-qilsambo ‘ladimi* (“may I”) reduce the degree of directness and soften the communicative force of the utterance.

Assertive acts also occupy a substantial place in Uzbek dialogues (23.1%). Through assertive acts, the speaker provides information, confirms a particular situation, or reports a state of affairs. For example:

- *Ha, biz o ‘zimiz ga tayyorlashimiz kerak edi.*
“Yes, we were supposed to prepare it ourselves.”
- *Mani darslarim 12 dan kechgacha.*
“My classes are from 12 until the evening.”
- *Seminar ga borvomman.*
“I am going to the seminar.”
- *Ha ishdaman.*
“Yes, I am at work.”
- *Buni so ‘radim.*
“I asked about this.”
- *Bu yangi ro ‘yxatmandagi talabalar izniimtixonga kirishi.*
“This is the new list of your students who are to take the examination.”

These examples demonstrate that assertive acts primarily perform the functions of transmitting information, explaining a situation, and establishing the communicative background. Expressive acts (27.7%), in turn, are represented predominantly by etiquette formulas of greeting, gratitude, and interpersonal attention, which serve to maintain politeness and the interactional balance of official correspondence.

4.2. *Speech acts in official Russian language social media correspondence*

At the next stage of the study, Russian was selected for analysis. Ten official written dialogic interactions were examined, and the total number of speech acts identified in the ten dialogues amounted to 65. Each dialogic utterance was manually coded on the basis of speech act theory and assigned to one of the five categories according to Searle's classification (Searle, 1976). Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2. *Distribution of speech act types in official Russian-language written dialogues (N = 65)*

Speech act type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Expressive	26	40.0%
Directive	20	30.8%
Assertive	12	18.5%
Commissive	5	7.7%
Declarative	2	3.1%
Total	65	100%

The statistical analysis of the corpus of official and semi-official Russian written dialogues (N = 65) demonstrated that the distribution of speech acts was not random: $\chi^2 = 31.08$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.001$. The considerable predominance of expressive (40.0%) and directive (30.8%) acts empirically confirms that Russian official written discourse combines pronounced interpersonal-etiquette functions with the management of the communicative process through requests and instructions. Relative frequency was subsequently used to calculate how frequently particular speech acts occur in discourse; in this calculation, n denotes the number of occurrences of a particular category, while N represents the total number of speech acts (65).

In Russian dialogues, expressive and directive speech acts were found to predominate. In particular, the following expressive units are frequently employed:

- *Как дела?*
“How are you?”

- *Спасибо большое.*
“Thank you very much.”
- *Эх как мне найти теперь учителя.*
“Oh, how am I supposed to find a teacher now?”
- *Было бы классно если помогли.*
“It would be great if you could help.”
- *Спасибо.*
“Thank you.”

At the same time, directive acts are also present:

- *Можно у вас попросить?*
“May I ask you for something?”
- *Обратите к отделу и подайте тот отчет.*
“Contact the department and submit that report.”
- *Вы смогли спросить у знакомых?*
“Were you able to ask your acquaintances?”
- *Пойдет такой?*
“Will this one do?”
- *Что случилось?*
“What happened?”

An important characteristic of speech acts in Russian is that they are often enriched by an emotional-expressive component. This indicates the interactive and emotionally expressive nature of Russian communicative culture.

4.3. *Speech acts in official English language social media correspondence*

At the subsequent stage of the research, ten official written dialogic interactions in English were selected and analyzed. The total number of speech acts identified in the ten English dialogues amounted to 67, and each dialogic utterance was manually coded according to the same procedure. Table 3 presents the distribution.

If all speech acts are assumed to be equally distributed, the expected frequency for the χ^2 test is $E = 13.4$ for each category. The computation yields $\chi^2 = 41.13$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.001$. The results of the chi-square test therefore demonstrate that the distribution of speech acts in official English dialogic correspondence is not

random. Expressive acts constitute the largest share (46.3%), while directive acts occupy the second position (26.9%). Relative frequency was subsequently employed to determine the frequency of speech acts in discourse; in the formula, n represents the frequency of a particular category, whereas N represents the total number of speech acts (67).

Table 3. *Distribution of speech act types in official English-language written dialogues (N = 67)*

Speech act type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Expressive	31	46.3%
Directive	18	26.9%
Assertive	12	17.9%
Commissive	4	6.0%
Declarative	2	3.0%
Total	67	100%

Although expressive acts predominate quantitatively, the directive acts attested in the English subcorpus are particularly characteristic of business and official communication and are oriented toward clearly defined communicative objectives. In contrast to Uzbek, they are generally expressed in relatively direct forms. The following examples illustrate this tendency:

- Can you send me the specification?
- Please check.
- Please send us the image.
- Do you have details?
- Please share CAS number.

At the same time, assertive and commissive acts can also be observed:

- This is our quotation. – assertive
- We would give best price. –commissive
- I will reply tomorrow. – commissive

This pattern of English-language communication can be interpreted within the framework of Edward T. Hall's theory of

high-context and low-context communication (Hall 1976). The theory was initially developed in 1976 and was subsequently elaborated within the field of intercultural communication. English is generally associated with low-context communication, in which meaning is primarily conveyed explicitly through the linguistic content of the utterance itself. As a result, communicative intentions – directive ones in particular – tend to be expressed in a more direct and explicit manner.

4.4. *Frequency of speech act types across languages*

Table 4 presents a comparative analysis of the distribution of speech acts in Uzbek, Russian, and English dialogic written communication based on J. Searle's classification, with the results expressed in terms of frequency (N) and percentage (%) (Searle 1976). The findings reveal clear statistical and pragmatic differences in the use of speech acts across the three languages.

Table 4. *Frequency of speech act types across Uzbek, Russian, and English*

Speech act type	Uzbek (N, %)	Russian (N, %)	English (N, %)
Expressive	18 (27.7%)	26 (40.0%)	31 (46.3%)
Directive	24 (36.9%)	20 (30.8%)	18 (26.9%)
Assertive	15 (23.1%)	12 (18.5%)	12 (17.9%)
Commissive	6 (9.2%)	5 (7.7%)	4 (6.0%)
Declarative	2 (3.1%)	2 (3.1%)	2 (3.0%)
Total	65 (100%)	65 (100%)	67 (100%)

As can be seen from the table, expressive acts predominate in English (46.3%) and Russian (40.0%), whereas their proportion is comparatively lower in Uzbek (27.7%). This indicates that etiquette formulas, expressions of interpersonal attitude, and the emotional-interactive component occupy a central position in official written communication in English and Russian.

Directive acts, in turn, have the highest proportion in Uzbek (36.9%), followed by Russian (30.8%) and English (26.9%). Requests, instructions, and organizational guidance thus play a substantial role in all three languages; however, they are realized differently: in Uzbek, directives tend to be expressed through

indirect and mitigated forms, whereas in English they are typically formulated directly and explicitly.

Assertive acts have the highest proportion in Uzbek (23.1%). This result indicates that explaining a situation, providing information, and clarifying circumstances occupy an important pragmatic position in Uzbek written communication. Assertive acts occur less frequently in Russian (18.5%) and English (17.9%), where they more often perform an auxiliary function supporting expressive and directive acts.

Commissive acts are relatively infrequent in all three languages (Uzbek – 9.2%; Russian – 7.7%; English – 6.0%). This suggests that acts involving promises or the undertaking of commitments occur less frequently in official written dialogues, in which information-oriented and directive communication generally predominates.

Declarative acts display very low frequencies in all three languages (approximately 3%). This reflects the fact that speech acts capable of immediately changing a legal or social state through institutional authority occur rarely in dialogic written communication. This result confirms that declarative acts are more characteristic of specialized official documents and normative texts.

Overall, the data presented in the table demonstrate that the distribution of speech acts across Uzbek, Russian, and English is not identical. These differences are not merely accidental but are associated with language-specific pragmatic and linguocultural norms. An expressive-oriented pragmatic model predominates in official written correspondence in English and Russian, whereas Uzbek demonstrates a directive–assertive model in which requests are systematically mitigated and information transmission plays a prominent role. These findings provide empirical evidence that the selection of speech acts in dialogic written discourse is closely connected with cultural norms and communicative strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study has traced the development of speech act theory from its foundations in the works of J. L. Austin and J. R.

Searle to its reception and elaboration in Uzbek linguistics, where speech acts have come to be interpreted as complex pragmatic phenomena determined by communicative intention, illocutionary purpose, communicative strategy, social status, interpersonal distance, and national-cultural norms.

The empirical analysis of 197 speech acts drawn from official and semi-official written dialogues in Uzbek, Russian, and English demonstrated that in all three languages the distribution of speech act types is statistically non-random (Uzbek: $\chi^2 = 24.62$; Russian: $\chi^2 = 31.08$; English: $\chi^2 = 41.13$; $df = 4$; $p < 0.001$ in each case). Directive acts predominate in Uzbek official correspondence (36.9%) and are systematically realized in indirect, mitigated forms, whereas expressive acts prevail in Russian (40.0%) and English (46.3%), reflecting the prominence of etiquette and the emotional-interactive component in these communicative cultures. Assertive acts occupy the strongest position in Uzbek (23.1%), while commissive and declarative acts are infrequent across all three languages.

Certain limitations of the study should be acknowledged: the corpus is confined to thirty written dialogic interactions within the official and semi-official register, and the findings therefore characterize this particular genre of computer-mediated communication. Extending the corpus, incorporating spoken interaction, and examining politeness strategies and indirectness in greater depth constitute promising directions for further research. Nevertheless, the results obtained provide empirical support for the view that the selection and realization of speech acts are shaped by language-specific pragmatic norms and linguocultural values.

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