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PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF THE IMPERATIVE SPEECH ACT

Nematova Muhlisa Ilhomjon qizi

Independent research Fergana State University, Senior Teacher at the Tashkent Academic Lyceum No. 1 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

mushiabbasova99@gmail.com

+998990095963

Abstract

This article explores the pragmatic features of the imperative speech act within the widely applied theory of speech acts in linguistics. As a subtype of directive acts, the imperative speech act is analyzed in terms of its illocutionary force and its dependence on social roles, context, and the hierarchy between speech participants. Special attention is given to its semantic and functional forms, direct and indirect expression methods, and its formation under sociocultural influence, with particular emphasis on its manifestation in the Uzbek language as a linguistic phenomenon.

Keywords: Imperative act, speech act theory, illocutionary force, directive act, pragmatics, context, speech strategy.

Introduction

The formation and development of speech act theory are directly associated with linguists such as J.L. Austin and J. Searle. According to this theory, speech is interpreted not only within the boundaries of grammar and semantics but also as an action—a socially and psychologically driven process aimed at achieving a certain purpose. One of these speech acts is the imperative act, which is widely used in social communication and represents both direct and indirect speech actions.

The imperative act is one of the most dynamic and complex forms of directive acts. When analyzing its pragmatic features, it is essential to consider not only its

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grammatical structures but also the context, social relations, status differences among participants, and cultural norms.

Main Part

Research on imperative speech acts typically focuses on their positively oriented forms, such as direct instructions, commands, requests, and suggestions. However, negatively intended utterances expressed in the form of commands—particularly curses—have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention. In fact, curses are a type of imperative act from a grammatical and pragmatic perspective. These are utterances in which the speaker, often in informal and emotional contexts, expresses a wish for harm to befall another. For example: "Get out, Zaynab, get out!" he also said, "Curse a woman like you!" ("Chiq, Zaynab, chiq! - dedi ul ham, - la'nat sendek xoting'a!"). (A.Qodiriy. O'tkan kunlar). In this example, the utterances appear in imperative form, yet semantically express a negative intention. When Otabek utters a curse, the verb "let it be" is elliptical. In linguistics, such cases may fall under expressive directives—imperatives that arise in emotional states.

Curses are closely tied not only to linguistic means but also to cultural and social-relational principles. They often emerge in contexts of conflict and represent pragmatic acts that violate norms of speech etiquette. Moreover, curses are sometimes found in the form of aphorisms within oral folk literature (e.g., proverbs, maledictions), functioning as folkloric-pragmatic units. This allows them to be analyzed as cultural codes as well. Thus, although grammatically imperative, these utterances are pragmatically directive acts grounded in negative emotion and the wish to inflict harm. Such negative functional manifestations confirm the multidimensional nature of the imperative act. When studied in the context of cultural life, speech act theory intersects with psychology. The psychological state of the speaker and listener (e.g., desire, regret, intention, fear) affects how speech acts are performed. For instance, whether a statement is perceived as a command or a request depends on the speaker's intent and the listener's emotional state. The theory is also linked to sociology, exploring the social functions of language. Through speech acts, one can identify social systems and distinctions in roles and status. The social context of language use and

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interpersonal relations shape how speech acts are performed and received. The distinctions between formal and informal language use demonstrate that in formal speech, commands are constructed differently, whereas in informal contexts, variation is linked to social status and mutual respect. Anthropology studies the social and cultural transformations of language, and speech acts can vary significantly across cultures and societies. Speech acts help to identify cross-cultural variability, as the social functions and reception of speech differ from one community to another. In some cultures, giving commands, asking questions, or making requests may be more formal or rigid than in others.

Conclusion and Discussion

The imperative act is a crucial tool in verbal communication. Its pragmatic features are shaped by social and cultural context, relationships among participants, emotional conditions, and communicative intent. Direct and indirect strategies, the degree of illocutionary force, and alignment with cultural norms illustrate the interconnection between language and society. In Uzbek, the use of imperative acts reflects a sociopragmatic balance rooted in mutual respect, politeness, and cultural norms.

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