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FUNCTIONAL-PRAGMATIC CLASSIFICATION OF PRAGMALINGUISTIC MEANS IN THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study develops a functional-pragmatic classification of pragmalinguistic means in the Uzbek language and considers its relevance to teaching Uzbek as a foreign language. The analysis argues that linguistic forms should be classified not only by their formal grammatical properties but also by the communicative-pragmatic meanings they realize in specific speech situations. Drawing on speech act theory and Uzbek pragmalinguistic scholarship, the paper distinguishes five principal groups: directive, expressive, assertive, commissive, and declarative means. Particular attention is given to sociopragmatic factors, including age, social status, kinship, respect, communicative distance, and degree of formality, because these factors modify illocutionary force and influence the appropriateness of linguistic choices. The study also emphasizes the multifunctionality of pragmatic units, showing that a single lexical or grammatical form may perform different communicative functions depending on context. A four-component model-communicative purpose, illocutionary function, context, and sociopragmatic factor-is therefore proposed as the principal basis for classification. This model provides a systematic account of Uzbek pragmatic phenomena, explains culturally specific patterns of indirectness and politeness, and offers a theoretical foundation for developing learners' pragmatic, interlingual, and sociopragmatic competence in Uzbek as a second or foreign language. It also establishes a basis for future corpus-based quantitative and functional research.

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pragmalinguistics, speech acts, communicative function, sociopragmatics, illocutionary force, Uzbek language.

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Introduction

Since the second half of the twentieth century, linguistics has increasingly focused on language not merely as an internal structural system, but as a phenomenon inseparably connected with human communicative activity. Within this anthropocentric and communicative-functional paradigm, the emergence of pragmatics made it possible to investigate the use of linguistic units in real communicative situations, the speaker's communicative intention, and the effect directed toward the hearer. Pragmalinguistics is regarded as the field that studies the linguistic dimensions of this process (Levinson, 1983).

A major feature of pragmatic research is that the meaning of a linguistic unit is not limited to its lexical or grammatical content. The communicative value of a linguistic unit emerges through the interaction of the communicative situation, the speaker's intention, the hearer's knowledge and experience,

the social relations among the participants in speech, and the context. Safarov (2008) identifies, among the central issues of pragmatic research, the selection and use of linguistic units in the process of communication and their effect on the participants in communication.

The works of Hakimov (2001, 2013), Safarov (2008), and other researchers have provided an important theoretical foundation for the development of the pragmatic approach in Uzbek linguistics. In particular, within Uzbek pragmalinguistics, issues such as the speech act, communicative purpose, presupposition, the speaking subject, and pragmatic meaning have become established as objects of research.

Recent studies likewise examine pragmatic phenomena in Uzbek in relation to the speaker as an individual, the speaker's communicative purpose, and speech activity. Shokirova (2026) emphasizes the importance, in pragmalinguistic analysis, of the goal-directed nature of linguistic units, the relationship between speaker and hearer, presupposition, and speech acts.

However, the functional-pragmatic classification of pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek has not yet been sufficiently elaborated as an integrated system. Although existing studies have analyzed individual speech acts, pragmatic units, or particular phenomena, the problem of systematizing them according to a unified functional criterion remains relevant.

From this perspective, the aim of the present article is to identify the functional nature of pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek and to classify them on the basis of communicative purpose and illocutionary function. Within the pragmalinguistic approach, Shokirova (2026) specifically identifies the speaker as an individual, the speaker's communicative purpose, and speech activity as distinct objects of investigation.

The concept of a pragmalinguistic means is one of the central categories of this theoretical approach. It would be incorrect to equate it solely with a particular grammatical form or lexical unit. A pragmalinguistic means is a set of linguistic resources that serves to realize a communicative purpose and generates additional functional-pragmatic meaning in a particular speech situation. Such means may be manifested at the morphological, syntactic, lexical, phraseological, and prosodic levels. Pragmatic meaning, therefore, is not the product of a single level of language; rather, it is formed through the functional activity of units from different linguistic levels in the communicative process (Safarov, 2008; Shokirova, 2026).

In determining the functional properties of pragmalinguistic means, the category of communicative purpose is of primary importance. A speaker carries out any speech activity on the basis of a particular communicative intention. Communicative purposes such as informing, asking a question, requesting, prompting, advising, warning, evaluating, apologizing, or expressing gratitude motivate the selection of different linguistic means. From this perspective, it is more appropriate to define the essence of a pragmalinguistic means through the communicative function it performs rather than through its formal properties (Ashurova & G‘afforova, 2025).

A pragmalinguistic means may be defined as a linguistic unit that serves to realize a particular communicative purpose and produces additional pragmatic meaning in a speech situation. The pragmatic properties of such units are determined not only by their formal structure, but also by their purpose of use and communicative function.

Accordingly, a pragmalinguistic means is not restricted to an individual word or grammatical form. It may be realized as a lexical unit, grammatical construction, syntactic structure, form of address, modal unit, evaluative unit, or another linguistic resource. What is essential is that the unit actualize a particular pragmatic function in a communicative situation.

At this point, the distinction between pragmatic meaning and semantic meaning is important. Semantic meaning expresses the content of a linguistic unit within the language system, whereas pragmatic meaning is associated with the unit's actual meaning in a particular communicative situation. Thus:

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Semantic content -> “What does it mean?”

Pragmatic content -> “For what purpose, to whom, in what situation, and with what effect is it uttered?”

This distinction constitutes the theoretical basis for the functional classification of pragmalinguistic means.

This issue is closely connected with speech act theory. According to the theory of speech acts formulated by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), the use of linguistic units involves not only expressing a certain content but also performing a communicative action. The locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions of a speech act make it possible to determine the relationship among the content of a linguistic unit, its communicative purpose, and its effect on the hearer. On this basis, pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek may likewise be classified according to their illocutionary orientation and communicative function.

The classical classification of speech acts developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) is based primarily on universal logical-semantic criteria. In Uzbek pragmalinguistics, however, in contrast to Western theory, sociopragmatic factors - age, social status, kinship relations, the category of respect, and communicative distance - play a decisive role in modifying illocutionary force. For example, directive or expressive acts in Uzbek are often realized not through a bare grammatical imperative (the imperative mood), but through indirect forms, including the request particle -chi, possessive and honorific forms (siz, -ing), and nationally and culturally specific communicative formulae such as uzr (“sorry”), oldindan rahmat (“thank you in advance”), and oldingizda qarzdorman (“I am indebted to you”). The proposed four-component criterion differs from classical universal theories precisely because it takes these national-cultural features into account.

Within a functional-pragmatic classification, directive means first constitute a separate group. Their general pragmatic function is to direct the hearer toward performing or refraining from a particular action (Levinson, 1983). Nevertheless, within directive units, communicative purposes such as command, request, advice, recommendation, suggestion, and asking for permission are differentiated from one another. These distinctions are determined not only by grammatical form, but also by illocutionary force, social relations, and the communicative situation. For this reason, directive means may be divided into internal subgroups on the basis of gradations of illocutionary purpose rather than treated as a single undifferentiated functional group.

A second major group consists of expressive-pragmatic means. They serve to express the speaker's subjective attitude toward a particular event, person, or communicative situation (Ashurova & G‘afforova, 2025). Communicative acts such as expressing gratitude, apologizing, congratulating, expressing regret, approving, and expressing dissatisfaction are considered within this group. The pragmatic characteristic of expressive units lies in the fact that, rather than merely transmitting objective information, they introduce the speaker's evaluative and emotional stance into communicative activity. As a result, the same denotative content may produce different communicative effects when expressed through different expressive means.

The third group consists of commissive pragmalinguistic means. Their principal function is to express commitment, promise, intention, or responsibility with respect to the speaker's future action. The pragmatic nature of commissiveness lies in the fact that, in the course of speech, the speaker not only conveys information but also communicatively defines his or her own future conduct. Such units therefore establish the speaker's communicative commitment in addition to conveying propositional content.

Assertive pragmalinguistic means also occupy an important place in Uzbek. They perform functions such as providing information about events, expressing an opinion, affirming, denying, hypothesizing, and evaluating. The pragmatic value of assertive units is not determined solely by their function of transmitting information. The speaker's attitude toward the information, degree of confidence, evaluation, and position in relation to the hearer likewise shape the pragmatic content of these units. From

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this perspective, modal units, evaluative units, and certain parenthetical constructions may be regarded as resources with assertive-pragmatic potential.

Another important characteristic of pragmalinguistic means is multifunctionality. A single linguistic unit may perform different communicative functions in different speech situations. This indicates that pragmatic function is not rigidly tied to linguistic form. Consequently, the principle of "one form - one pragmatic meaning" does not fully reflect the complex nature of pragmalinguistic phenomena. Rather, pragmatic function emerges at the intersection of linguistic form, communicative purpose, context, and the interpersonal relations of the participants in speech.

From this perspective, the contextual factor has particular methodological significance in the functional-pragmatic classification of pragmalinguistic means. Context functions as the factor that actualizes a particular communicative meaning from among the potential pragmatic possibilities of a linguistic unit (Levinson, 1983). The communicative function of a unit may change while its formal structure remains unchanged. Pragmatic analysis therefore requires the linguistic unit to be considered not in isolation, but within the system of the speech situation and communicative relations.

Sociopragmatic factors also play an important role in the formation of pragmatic meaning. The social status and age of the speaker and hearer, their relationship, communicative distance, degree of formality, and membership in a particular cultural environment influence the selection of linguistic means. These factors are especially important in explaining the pragmatic characteristics of communicative acts such as forms of address, expressions of respect, requests, advice, and refusals in Uzbek. Shokirova (2026) likewise emphasizes the importance of the speaker-hearer relationship, communicative purpose, and national-cultural factors in shaping pragmatic meaning in Uzbek communication.

The functional system of pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek may be described on the basis of the interaction between the linguopragmatic and sociopragmatic levels. Whereas the linguopragmatic level determines the potential of a linguistic means to express a communicative purpose, the sociopragmatic level determines the communicative conditions under which that means is appropriate or inappropriate. Pragmatic competence, therefore, is defined not only by knowledge of linguistic units, but also by the ability to select and interpret them in accordance with the communicative situation (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

On the basis of these theoretical considerations, pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek may be represented within the following general system:

1. Directive means - prompting, command, request, advice, recommendation, suggestion, asking for permission;
2. Expressive means - gratitude, apology, congratulation, regret, approval, dissatisfaction;
3. Assertive means - report, affirmation, denial, opinion, evaluation, supposition;
4. Commissive means - promise, commitment, intention, guarantee;
5. Declarative means - units that bring about a particular social or communicative state through a speech act (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

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Table 1

Functional-Pragmatic Classification of Pragmalinguistic Means in Uzbek

Pragmalinguistic Group	Primary Communicative Function (Illocutionary Function)	Speech Examples and Contextual Expressions	Sociopragmatic / Theoretical Basis
1. Directive means	Directing the hearer to perform or refrain from a particular action.	"Ukajon, derazani yopib qo'yolmaysizmi?" ("Dear younger brother / young man, could you close the window?"; a request formulated as an interrogative.)	Differences in age and status and Uzbek andisha (social tact/consideration), which mitigates the intended effect.
2. Expressive means	Expressing the speaker's subjective-emotional attitude toward an event, person, or situation.	"Sizni bu yutuq bilan chin dildan qutlayman, barakalla!" ("I sincerely congratulate you on this achievement - well done!"); "Ming bor uzr." ("A thousand apologies.")	Emotional evaluation; intensifiers strengthen the speaker's stance.
3. Assertive means	Providing information about events, expressing an opinion, affirming, or denying.	"Shubhasiz, bu yilgi qish ancha sovuq keladi." ("Undoubtedly, this winter will be considerably colder."); "Meningcha, bu loyiha o'zini oqlamaydi." ("In my view, this project will not prove worthwhile.")	Modal words and parenthetical constructions indicate the degree of certainty.
4. Commissive means	Expressing commitment, promise, or intention concerning the speaker's future action.	"Xavotir olmang, ertaga soat beshgacha hisobotni topshiraman, kafolat beraman." ("Do not worry; I will submit the report by five o'clock tomorrow - I guarantee it.")	Performative verbs and the assumption of social responsibility.
5. Declarative means	Bringing about a particular social, legal, or official state through a speech act.	"Majlisni ochiq deb e'lon qilaman." ("I declare the meeting open."); "Siz lavozimingizdan ozod etildingiz." ("You are relieved of your position.")	Reliance on special authority conferred on the speaker by a social institution.

If the table is subjected to sociopragmatic analysis, directive means are seen to be aimed at prompting the hearer to perform a particular action. For example, in the sentence "Ukam, bir pasga shu hujjatlarni qarab yuborsangiz-chi" ("My dear younger brother / young man, could you take a quick look at these documents?"), although the grammatical construction can function as a command or request, the particle -chi and the honorific meaning associated with siz and the suffix -ingiz mitigate the illocutionary force, turning the utterance into a softened act of advice/request appropriate to a formal-friendly communicative distance. Even when the hearer is younger and lower in status than the speaker, the broader Uzbek sociopragmatic norm of showing respect, including toward elders and colleagues, influences the choice of directive means.

Expressive means convey the speaker's subjective-emotional attitude toward an event, person, or situation. For example, in "Voy, o'rgildim, rahmat, joningiz sog' bo'lsin!" (approximately, "Oh, my dear, thank you; may you be well!") or "Kechirasiz, bezovta qilganim uchun ming bor uzr." ("Excuse me; a thousand apologies for disturbing you."), expressivity in Uzbek communication does not merely convey emotion; it also serves to strengthen social bonds. National-cultural expressives such as o'rgildim, a culturally marked term of affection, fully actualize the pragmatic meanings of positive evaluation and gratitude primarily in family and everyday domestic contexts.

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Assertive means provide information about events, express opinions, and perform acts of affirmation or denial. For example, in “To‘g‘risini aytsam, bu masala o‘ylaganimizdan ham murakkabroq chiqdiyov.” (“To tell the truth, this issue turned out to be even more complicated than we thought.”), the parenthetical expression “To‘g‘risini aytsam” (“to tell the truth”) and the modal suffix -yov modulate the perceived reliability of the information and indicate the speaker's subjective attitude toward the proposition as well as a cautious stance.

Commissive means express commitment, promise, or intention concerning the speaker's future conduct. For example, in “Xavotir olmang, bu ishni o‘z bo‘ynimga olaman, so‘z beraman.” (“Do not worry; I will take responsibility for this matter. I give you my word.”), commissiveness is realized not only by the verb va’da bermoq (“to promise”), but also by performative constructions such as so‘z beraman (“I give my word”) and zimmamga olaman (“I take it upon myself”), through which the speaker firmly guarantees future responsibility at a legal and ethical level.

Declarative means bring about a particular social, legal, or official state through a speech act. Examples include “Yig‘ilishni ochiq deb e’lon qilaman” (“I declare the meeting open”) and “Sizni ishdan bo‘shatdim.” (“I have dismissed you from your job.”). Such speech acts produce an actual pragmatic result only when uttered by a person possessing the relevant social status or authority within an appropriate official context.

However, it is more appropriate to interpret this classification not as a rigidly bounded system but as a functional-pragmatic field. In real speech, a single communicative unit may simultaneously perform several pragmatic functions or move from one functional group to another. This demonstrates the dynamic and context-dependent nature of pragmatic categories.

Failure to take sociopragmatic factors into account in real communication leads to pragmatic failure. For example, when a younger person addresses an older person, or a lower-ranking employee addresses a superior, the use of a direct imperative such as “Buni tezda qilib ber” (“Do this for me immediately”) may be grammatically correct but nevertheless constitutes a violation of sociopragmatic norms. The proposed model of communicative purpose + illocutionary function + context + sociopragmatic factor makes it possible to prevent precisely such pragmatic errors and to determine the extent to which a linguistic unit is appropriate to a given situation.

Thus, it is insufficient to construct a functional-pragmatic classification of pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek solely on the basis of grammatical forms. Such a classification must encompass criteria including communicative purpose, illocutionary function, context, sociopragmatic factors, and communicative effect directed toward the hearer. This approach not only reveals the systematic nature of pragmalinguistic units, but also provides a theoretical foundation for a deeper description of the communicative potential of Uzbek. Classifying pragmalinguistic means in Uzbek into assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative groups may serve as an effective theoretical model for systematizing their communicative functions. However, these groups are not rigidly bounded categories: in real communication, a single linguistic means may realize different pragmatic functions depending on context.

Preliminary observations based on materials from literary works and spontaneous spoken discourse indicate that expressive and directive pragmalinguistic means occur more frequently in Uzbek communicative culture than assertive and commissive means. In particular, pragmatic units associated with initiating interaction, mitigating utterances, and showing respect constitute a substantial proportion of the overall flow of speech. This supports the view that Uzbek has a highly cohesive sociopragmatic character in which sociocultural distance and respect are closely regulated.

In contemporary linguistics, the study of pragmalinguistic means cannot be limited solely to sociopragmatic and functional criteria; it also requires these means to be investigated in relation to their cognitive basis - the system of linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge in the human mind. The selection of any pragmalinguistic means is, after all, a product of the subject's cognitive memory and worldview.

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Because Uzbek communicative culture belongs to the group of high-context cultures, indirect pragmalinguistic means in the language predominate over direct forms. Sociopragmatic parameters such as the age, social status, and kinship relations of the participants in communication modify the illocutionary force of speech acts and generate highly subtle pragmatic meanings.

For this reason, the article proposes the unity of communicative purpose + illocutionary function + context + sociopragmatic factor as the principal criterion for classifying pragmalinguistic means. This approach moves the study of pragmatic phenomena in Uzbek beyond mere description toward an explanation of their functional mechanisms. It can also contribute to the development of learners' interlingual and sociopragmatic competencies in the teaching of Uzbek as a second or foreign language.

In future research, this model may serve as a theoretical and methodological foundation for the quantitative and functional study of pragmatic units in Uzbek on the basis of corpus materials, as well as for the development of pragmatic competence in teaching Uzbek as a foreign language.

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