# "THE ROLE OF PRAGMATICS IN SPEECH INTERPRETATION: FROM SPEECH ACT THEORY TO COMMUNICATION PRACTICE"

*English Teacher:*

*Akimbekova Kuralay Zhakenovna,*

*School-Lyceum No. 15, Astana*

As a student of linguistics and translation studies, I have long been fascinated by how people understand each other—not just through words, but through intentions, tone, and shared cultural knowledge. Language, in my view, is not merely a vehicle for conveying facts; it is a tool for doing things, for building relationships, for influencing others, and for negotiating meaning.

The discipline of pragmatics provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how language operates in real communicative settings. Unlike syntax or semantics, which deal with structure and literal meaning, pragmatics is concerned with what speakers mean, how they mean it, and how listeners interpret it.

One of the most influential theoretical approaches in pragmatics is the Speech Act Theory, which redefined the way we understand everyday language. In this paper, I aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice by illustrating how pragmatic principles apply to various spheres of life—from daily conversation and translation to intercultural communication and technology.

## 2. Speech Act Theory: A Foundation of Pragmatic Meaning

In his seminal work How to Do Things with Words (1962), John L. Austin proposed that language is not only used to describe reality, but also to perform actions. For example, when someone says "I apologize," they are not describing an apology—they are performing it.

Austin distinguished three levels of meaning in an utterance:

•Locutionary act: the act of producing a meaningful utterance (e.g., "It's cold here.")

•Illocutionary act: the intended function or force of the utterance (e.g., a request to close the window)

•Perlocutionary act: the effect the utterance has on the listener (e.g., the listener feels guilty and closes the window)

Later, John R. Searle built upon Austin's theory, offering a classification of speech acts into five types:

1.Assertives (e.g., "The Earth is round.")

2.Directives (e.g., "Please open the door.")

3.Commissives (e.g., "I promise to help.")

4.Expressives (e.g., "I'm sorry.")

5.Declarations (e.g., "You are fired.")

Understanding these categories helps us decode what speakers actually do when they speak, and this becomes crucial in fields like translation, teaching, and human communication in general.

### 3. Interpreting Meaning: Context, Implicature, and Inference

In my academic journey, I have come to realize that context is key to interpretation. The same sentence can have entirely different meanings depending on the situation, speaker, tone, and relationship between interlocutors.

In 1975, H.P. Grice introduced the concept of implicature—meaning that is implied rather than directly stated. For example, when someone says "Some of the guests have arrived," we often infer that not all of them have arrived. Grice's Cooperative Principle and his maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, Manner) show how we rely on shared assumptions to interpret meaning.

I've also explored the role of presupposition (implicit assumptions) and deixis (context-dependent expressions like "this," "here," or "you") in shaping how we understand utterances. These elements are deeply tied to the pragmatic layer of language, often unnoticed but crucial.

For instance, the simple question "Can you pass the salt?" is not about ability but functions as a polite request. Without pragmatic knowledge, a literal interpretation would seem illogical or even humorous.

### 4. From Theory to Practice: Applications of Pragmatics

### 4.1. Intercultural Communication

As someone studying both linguistics and translation, I am especially interested in how pragmatics operates across cultures. Cultural norms greatly influence how people use and interpret language. In some cultures, direct speech is valued; in others, indirectness is a sign of respect.

A phrase like "I'll think about it" may be a polite refusal in one culture, while in another it could signal genuine consideration. Misunderstandings arise when interlocutors interpret utterances through the lens of their own culture. Pragmatics thus becomes essential for effective intercultural communication.

### 4.2. Translation and Interpreting

In translation studies, we often discuss semantic equivalence, but true equivalence also requires pragmatic transfer. When translating humor, irony, idioms, or culturally specific expressions, literal translation often fails. The translator must grasp the speaker's intention, cultural background, and the effect of the original message on its audience.

For example, the English expression "He kicked the bucket" (meaning "he died") cannot be translated literally into another language without losing its pragmatic force. Instead, a culturally equivalent idiom or euphemism must be used.

### 4.3. Pragmatics in Technology

Modern technologies like virtual assistants, chatbots, and AI translation tools increasingly require pragmatic awareness. Machines must learn to interpret illocutionary force and adapt to contextual cues. This is an area I find particularly exciting, as it demonstrates the real-world value of linguistic theory.

For instance, if a user says "I'm starving," a pragmatic system should recognize this as a request for food suggestions—not a health emergency. Bridging the gap between human and machine understanding relies heavily on pragmatic modeling.

## 5. Challenges and Further Perspectives

Despite its explanatory power, pragmatics also faces challenges. Human communication is inherently ambiguous. The same utterance can carry multiple intentions, and context is often fluid. Additionally, many pragmatic signals are non-verbal—tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures—which are hard to formalize in linguistic theory or AI models.

Looking ahead, I believe there is great potential in:

•Corpus-based pragmatics: using large collections of real language data to study pragmatic patterns;

•Neuropragmatics: exploring how the brain processes intention and context;

•Pragmatic teaching in language education: helping learners not just speak correctly, but communicate appropriately.

## 6. Conclusion

To conclude, I firmly believe that pragmatics is the heart of real communication. Without it, we are left with grammatical structures and lexical meanings that tell only part of the story. From Speech Act Theory to modern communication practices, pragmatics teaches us that language is a social action, shaped by intention, context, and culture.

Whether we are translating a literary text, conducting a cross-cultural dialogue, or designing an AI chatbot, we are essentially interpreting human intention. And it is through pragmatics that we are best equipped to do so.

## REFERENCES

Остин, Дж. Л. Как совершать действия при помощи слов / Дж. Л. Остин. — М.: Прогресс, 1986. — 288 с.

(Оригинал: Austin, J.L. How to Do Things with Words. — Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.)

Сёрль, Дж. Речевые акты: Эссе по философии языка / Дж. Сёрль ; пер. с англ. Т. Е. Савина. — М.: URSS, 2000. — 256 с.

(Оригинал: Searle, J.R. Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.)

Грайс, Г. П. Логика и разговор // Синтаксис и семантика. Т. 3 / под ред. П. Коула и Дж. Моргана. — Нью-Йорк: Academic Press, 1975. — С. 41–58.

(Оригинал: Grice, H.P. Logic and Conversation. In: Syntax and Semantics, vol. 3, 1975.)

Левинсон, С. К. Прагматика / С. К. Левинсон ; пер. с англ. А. Д. Шмелева. — М.: Прогресс, 2000. — 432 с.

(Оригинал: Levinson, S.C. Pragmatics. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.)

Томас, Дж. Значение во взаимодействии: Введение в прагматику / Дж. Томас ; пер. с англ. — М.: Изд-во ЛКИ, 2004. — 320 с.

(Оригинал: Thomas, J. Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics. — London: Longman, 1995.)

Юль, Дж. Прагматика / Дж. Юль ; пер. с англ. А. Д. Шмелева. — М.: Изд-во Весь Мир, 2003. — 224 с.

(Оригинал: Yule, G. Pragmatics. — Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.)

Turaeva, S. M., Djuraeva, M. B., Ernazarova, M. N., & Jabborova, E. R. (2022). The Role of Instructive and Psychological Principles in Foreign Pedagogy. *Journal Of Positive School Psychology*, 9478-9486.

Turaeva, S. (2021). Cognitive factors in language learning: transfer, interference, overgeneralization. *Журнал иностранных языков и лингвистики*, *4*(9).

Mukhtorovna, T. S. (2023). Uzbekistan Plans to Promote Social Work for the Welfare of Vulnerable Children and Families.

Turaeva, Shoira Muxtarovna. (2022). LANGUAGE, LEARNING AND TEACHING. *Development and innovations in science,* 1-4.

Turaeva, Shoira Muxtorovna. (2022). IMPORTANCE OF DIDACTIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TEXTBOOK. *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological Journal,* 343-352.

Turaeva, DI. (2021). SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL FOUNATIONS OF THE LINGVOKOGNITIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL. International Journal of World Languages.

Mukhtorovna, Turaeva Shoira; Munira, Mamatqulova. (2021). *POLISH SCIENCE JOURNAL,* 354.

Mukhtorovna, T. S. (2021). Hakimova Muhoyyo Mukhtor qizi, Mamatqulova Munira Uzbekistan Plans to Promote Social Work for the Welfare of Vulnerable Children and Families. *Pindus Journal of Culture, Literature, and ELT (PJCLE)*, *10*.

Mukhtorovna, T. S. Anthropopragmatic study of phraseological units in uzbek and english languages. *Mental Enlightenment Scientific-Methodological*, *2022*(6).

Тураева, Ш. (2025). SOME THEORETICAL ISSUES IN THE COMMUNICATIVE LINGUISTICS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. *Международный мультидисциплинарный журнал исследований и разработок*, *1*(2), 62-66.