

THREATS AND WARNINGS AS SPEECH ACTS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH
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Abstract: This article examines threats and warnings as speech acts in Uzbek and English fiction from a comparative pragmatic perspective. Based on Speech Act Theory, the study analyzes how authors employ these directive and commissive-related acts to express power, influence behavior, and create narrative tension. The findings reveal that threats often reflect social hierarchy and interpersonal conflict, while warnings function as protective or preventive communicative strategies. Although both literary traditions share common pragmatic purposes, Uzbek fiction tends to employ indirect and politeness-oriented forms, whereas English fiction more frequently utilizes direct expressions. The study highlights the influence of cultural norms on speech-act realization.

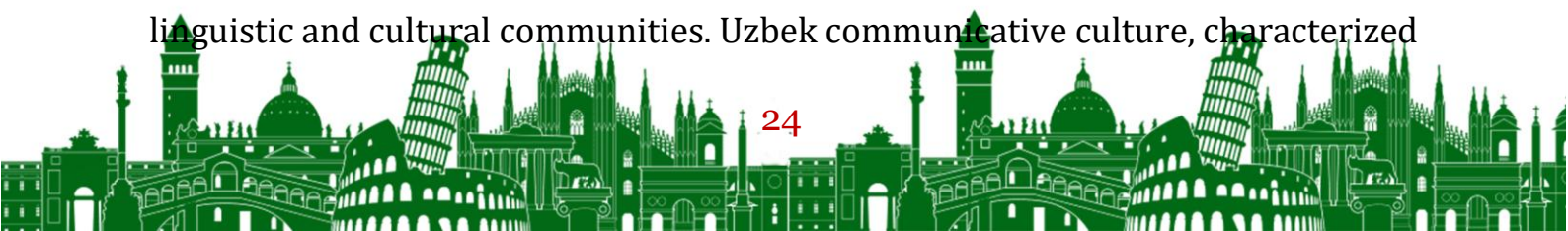
Keywords: threats, warnings, speech acts, pragmatics, fiction, Uzbek literature, English literature, cross-cultural communication.

Introduction

Speech acts constitute a fundamental aspect of human communication, enabling speakers not only to convey information but also to perform actions through language. According to Speech Act Theory, introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969), utterances can function as requests, promises, warnings, threats, and other communicative acts depending on the speaker's intention and the context of interaction. Among these, threats and warnings occupy a unique position because they are closely associated with influencing behavior and anticipating future consequences.

In literary discourse, threats and warnings play an important role in shaping interpersonal relationships, creating conflict, and developing plot dynamics. Authors use these speech acts to reveal power relations, emotional states, and social tensions between characters. While warnings are generally intended to protect the hearer from potential danger or negative outcomes, threats are often employed to intimidate, coerce, or exert control. The distinction between these speech acts is not only pragmatic but also culturally conditioned.

The realization and interpretation of threats and warnings vary across linguistic and cultural communities. Uzbek communicative culture, characterized



by respect for social hierarchy and indirectness, may favor mitigated forms of threatening and warning expressions. English-speaking cultures, on the other hand, often permit more direct forms depending on the social context. Therefore, a comparative analysis of these speech acts in Uzbek and English short stories can provide valuable insights into the interaction between language, culture, and communication. This study aims to examine the pragmatic features and cultural functions of threats and warnings in selected Uzbek and English short stories, highlighting both similarities and differences in their usage.

Literature review

The theoretical foundation for the study of threats and warnings as speech acts originates from Speech Act Theory, first introduced by Austin (1962) in *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin argued that language performs actions in addition to conveying information and distinguished between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. His work established the basis for examining how speakers use language to influence others and achieve communicative goals. Expanding on Austin's ideas, Searle (1969) developed a classification of speech acts that includes assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This framework has been widely applied in pragmatic and literary studies.

Threats and warnings have received considerable attention because of their future-oriented nature and their impact on interpersonal relations. According to Searle (1979), threats can be regarded as commissive speech acts since they commit the speaker to a future action that may negatively affect the hearer if certain conditions are not met. Warnings, in contrast, are generally intended to protect the hearer by informing them of possible danger or undesirable consequences. Although both speech acts refer to future events, they differ in purpose: threats seek to exert pressure or control, while warnings aim to prevent harm.

Researchers such as Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) emphasized the role of politeness and social context in the realization of speech acts. Their studies demonstrated that potentially face-threatening acts, including threats, are often modified through indirectness, mitigation, and politeness strategies. Cross-cultural investigations by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) further revealed that speech acts vary significantly across cultures due to differences in social norms and communicative expectations.

In literary discourse, speech acts are important tools for character development and plot construction. Short (1996) noted that fictional dialogue



reflects real communicative behavior and allows researchers to analyze pragmatic phenomena within cultural contexts. In Uzbek linguistics, scholars such as Safarov (2008) and Nurmonov (2012) have explored pragmatics and discourse, highlighting the influence of respect, hierarchy, and collectivist values on language use. However, comparative studies of threats and warnings in Uzbek and English short stories remain limited, creating a need for further research in this area.

Methods

The article is based on comparative analysis of threats and warnings as speech acts in Uzbek and English fiction. The materials that have been examined are shorts stories. Main differences are chiefly linguistic realization and communicative purposes across the two languages.

Results and discussion

The analysis of selected Uzbek and English short stories revealed that threats and warnings perform important pragmatic and cultural functions within literary discourse. Both speech acts contribute to character development, conflict creation, and the representation of social relationships. However, notable differences were observed in their linguistic realization and communicative purposes across the two literary traditions.

The findings indicate that warnings occur more frequently in situations involving concern for another character's well-being. In both Uzbek and English short stories, warnings are used to prevent danger, advise caution, or draw attention to possible negative consequences. However, Uzbek characters often express warnings indirectly through advice, suggestions, or references to social experience. Such indirectness reflects cultural values emphasizing politeness, respect, and interpersonal harmony. In contrast, English literary characters frequently employ more direct warning strategies, particularly when immediate action is required.

Threats, on the other hand, primarily function as instruments of power and control. In the analyzed English short stories, threats are commonly expressed through explicit statements that clearly indicate negative consequences if the hearer fails to comply with a demand. These direct forms highlight individual agency and personal authority. Uzbek short stories also contain threatening speech acts, but they are often mitigated through contextual cues, figurative language, or references to social status. This tendency reflects the importance of maintaining social relationships and avoiding open confrontation.



The study further revealed that both threats and warnings play a significant role in portraying social hierarchy. Characters occupying positions of authority, such as parents, community leaders, or employers, frequently employ these speech acts to influence the behavior of others. The effectiveness of such utterances depends not only on linguistic form but also on the speaker's social position and the cultural expectations surrounding authority.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that threats and warnings are shaped by both universal communicative purposes and culture-specific norms. While both Uzbek and English short stories use these speech acts to influence behavior and create narrative tension, their realization reflects differing attitudes toward directness, politeness, and social hierarchy. These results highlight the close relationship between language, culture, and literary representation.

Conclusion

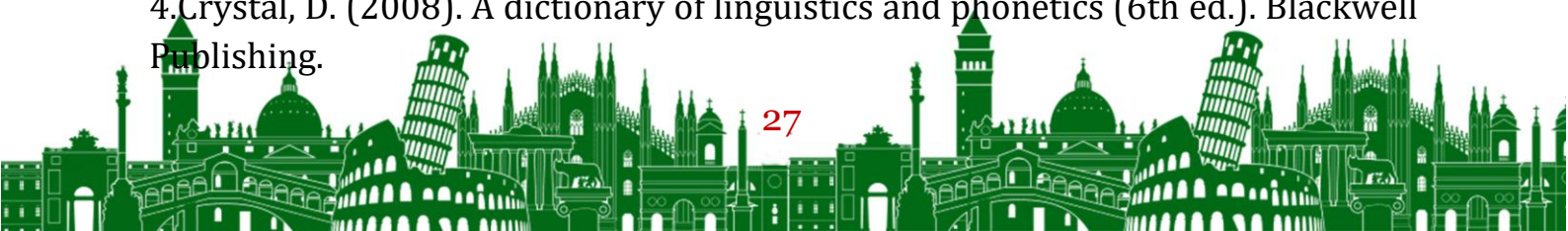
This study has examined threats and warnings as speech acts in Uzbek and English short stories from a comparative pragmatic perspective. The analysis demonstrated that both speech acts play a significant role in literary discourse by shaping character interactions, expressing power relations, and contributing to plot development. While warnings are primarily used to protect the hearer from potential danger, threats function as mechanisms of control, coercion, or influence.

The findings revealed both similarities and differences in the realization of these speech acts across the two literary traditions. English short stories tend to employ more direct forms of threats and warnings, whereas Uzbek short stories often utilize indirect and culturally moderated expressions influenced by politeness norms and respect for social hierarchy. These differences reflect broader cultural values and communicative practices within each society.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of cultural context in interpreting speech acts and demonstrates how literary texts serve as valuable sources for understanding the relationship between language, communication, and culture.

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