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PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF EXPRESSIVENESS IN PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE: A FRAMEWORK FOR CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Professional discourse restricts overt emotionality, and earlier scholarship inferred from this that it is inexpressive. The inference holds only if expressiveness is equated with affect; once the category is defined by the effect produced upon the addressee, institutional constraints restrict one class of exponents rather than the category itself. Proceeding from this premise and drawing on twenty-two works in pragmatics and discourse analysis representing the Anglo-American, Russian, and Uzbek traditions, the study establishes a functional taxonomy of expressiveness in professional communication. Five functions are identified — intensifying, evaluative, persuasive, regulatory, and discourse-organizing — each associated with an identifiable class of exponents. Expressive means are further shown to modify the illocutionary force of speech acts, with declarations constituting the single systematic exception. A two-tier model that separates universal pragmatic mechanisms from culture-specific norms of realization is proposed as the basis for contrastive English–Uzbek analysis.

Keywords: pragmatics; expressiveness; professional discourse; illocutionary force; implicature; politeness strategies; discourse markers; contrastive pragmatics.

1. Introduction

Professional communication is governed by norms that restrict the overt expression of emotion: academic, legal, administrative, and business registers require the speaker to appear impersonal, and markers of affect are correspondingly rare in these registers. Earlier scholarship concluded that such registers are devoid of expressiveness. That conclusion holds only under one definition of the category. If expressiveness is understood as the linguistic expression of emotion, a register that suppresses emotional exponents is indeed inexpressive; if it is understood as intensification directed at the recipient — the definition advanced by Telia (1986) and Shakhovsky (1987), and supported by Galperin's (1981) admission of logical alongside emotional intensification — then institutional constraints affect the means available, not the category. Galkina-Fedoruk (1958) states the asymmetry that settles the matter: emotional elements are invariably expressive, but expressiveness may exist without emotional coloring.

What follows is an empirical expectation: registers that suppress emotional exponents should show a redistribution of expressive means rather than their absence. Testing this expectation requires an instrument that does not yet exist, since the pragmatic literature was developed to explain how meaning is communicated in general, not to classify the functions that intensified language performs under institutional constraints. Three research questions are therefore addressed. RQ1: Which pragmatic functions does expressiveness perform in professional discourse, and with which classes of exponents is each associated? RQ2: In what way do expressive means affect the

illocutionary force of speech acts? RQ3: On what basis can the universal and the culturally specific components of pragmatic expressiveness be distinguished for contrastive purposes?

2. Literature Review

Pragmatics and its principal frameworks

The term was introduced by Morris (1938), who defined pragmatics as "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters". Levinson (1983) characterizes the field as "the study of language usage"; Yule (1996) as "the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)", noting that "only pragmatics allows humans into the analysis"; Thomas (1995) as "meaning in interaction"; and Mey (2001) as the study of language use "as determined by the conditions of society". The divergence is one of emphasis — cognitive, interactional, social — within a shared commitment to the triad of language, context, and communicative intention. Mey's social orientation is particularly relevant here, since institutional registers are precisely those in which the conditions of society are codified as norms of speaking.

Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principle, according to which speakers make their contribution "such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange", while observing the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. An apparent violation prompts the addressee to derive a conversational implicature rather than to infer speaker error, and irony is thereby explained as a systematic flouting of Quality.

Table 1. Grice's conversational maxims and the effects of their flouting

Maxim	What it requires	Example of flouting	Pragmatic effect
Quantity	Say enough, but not too much	*— Did you finish the report? — I came to work today.*	Implies the report is not done
Quality	Say only what you believe to be true	*What lovely weather! (said during a storm)*	Creates irony; communicates the opposite
Relation	Be relevant to the topic	*Nice weather we are having. (said to change the subject)*	Signals a wish to avoid the topic
Manner	Be clear; avoid ambiguity	*He made certain voluntary contributions.*	Implies that something is being concealed

Source: compiled by the author based on Grice (1975).

Leech (1983) supplements this framework with the Politeness Principle, arguing that indirectness serves not only informativeness but also the maintenance of social relations. Sperber and Wilson (1986) replace the maxims with a single Principle of Relevance: an utterance is processed on the expectation of the greatest contextual effect for the least processing effort. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) establish that utterances perform actions and carry illocutionary force, with indirect speech acts — as Yule (1996) observes — "generally associated with greater politeness in English than direct speech acts"; Yule further distinguishes five classes of speech act, employed in Section 4.2 below. Brown and Levinson (1987) integrate these strands through the concept of face, showing

that the mitigation of face-threatening acts depends on social distance, relative power, and degree of imposition. Schiffrin (1987), finally, defines discourse markers as units that regulate the speaker–listener relation, and Fraser (1999) emphasizes that pragmatic markers guide interpretation rather than contribute propositional content.

The Russian and Uzbek traditions

Arutyunova (1988) holds that every utterance is oriented toward the addressee and that communication presupposes an effect on him; Paducheva (1985) argues that the conditions of communication determine the meaning of an utterance and that implicit meaning is constitutive of it; Karasik (2002) analyzes institutional discourse as a reflection of social roles, providing the framework within which professional registers can be treated as a distinct object. Among Uzbek scholars, Safarov (2008) emphasizes the decisive role of the speaker's communicative goal, and Hakimov (2001) maintains that the full meaning of communication is grasped only through context. Within ethnosociopragmatics, Safarov further observes that every nation's speech communication possesses its own distinctive pragmatic characteristics — a qualification whose methodological consequence is developed in Section 4.3.

Research gap

The frameworks surveyed explain how meaning is inferred, how acts are performed, and how face is managed. Still, none was designed to classify the functions of intensified language, nor does any address the condition of professional discourse, in which the exponents ordinarily associated with expressiveness are normatively suppressed. Two gaps therefore remain: no functional taxonomy links the pragmatic functions of expressiveness to identifiable classes of exponents, and the relationship between expressive intensification and illocutionary force has not been systematically stated.

3. Methodology

The material comprises twenty-two scholarly works in pragmatics, discourse analysis, and stylistics, published between 1938 and 2002, representing the Anglo-American (13 sources), Russian (7), and Uzbek (2) traditions. Each source had to introduce or substantially reformulate a category relevant to analysis — implicature, relevance, illocutionary force, face, discourse marker, expressiveness — or address the conditions of institutional communication directly. Illustrative utterances are constructed model examples typical of academic, business, and administrative registers; they demonstrate mechanisms and do not make claims about frequency or distribution.

Three methods are applied. Comparative-conceptual analysis establishes the relations among the frameworks surveyed, along the parameters of the assumed unit of analysis and the type of effect explained. Functional classification derives the taxonomy, admitting a function only when it is attested in at least two independent sources and can be associated with an identifiable class of exponents. Componential analysis of speech acts examines how expressive means modify illocutionary force by comparing neutral and intensified realizations of acts belonging to each of Yule's five classes. The study is conceptual; the taxonomy is a hypothesis-generating instrument rather than a description of attested usage.

4. Results and Discussion

Five pragmatic functions of expressiveness

Five functions satisfy both admission criteria. The intensifying function increases an utterance's communicative salience: Galperin's definition identifies the mechanism, and Relevance Theory explains its effect. The evaluative function conveys the speaker's stance and, in institutional registers, is typically realized without emotional lexis. The persuasive function shapes the addressee's opinion or behavior, with intensified expressions functioning as directives to evaluative interpretation rather than as neutral descriptions. The regulatory function maintains interpersonal balance, politeness, and institutional authority. The discourse-organizing function structures the interaction and signals how the following segment is to be taken.

Table 2. Pragmatic functions of expressiveness in professional discourse

Function	Pragmatic effect	Typical exponents	Illustrative example
Intensifying	Increases communicative salience and relevance	Intensifying adverbs; gradation; repetition	*The project was extraordinarily successful*
Evaluative	Conveys the speaker's stance	Evaluative adjectives; modal-evaluative constructions	*It is crucial to emphasize…*
Persuasive	Shapes the addressee's opinion and behavior	Ideologically loaded lexis; rhetorical emphasis	*We strongly recommend…*
Regulatory	Maintains politeness, authority and interpersonal balance	Mitigators; hedges; intensified apologies	*That proposal is somewhat problematic*
Discourse-organising	Structures discourse; signals interpretation	Discourse and pragmatic markers	*Frankly, this strategy is ineffective*

Source: compiled by the author.

Two properties of this taxonomy warrant comment. The functions are not mutually exclusive: we strongly recommend that the intensifier be simultaneously intensifying, evaluative, persuasive, and regulatory, since the construction projects institutional authority while its indirect form mitigates imposition. The taxonomy classifies functions rather than units, so empirical application must allow for multiple codings. The regulatory function, moreover, is bidirectional in a way the others are not: in I'm terribly sorry for the inconvenience, the intensifier heightens the sincerity of the apology and thus its face-redressive value, whereas in That proposal is somewhat problematic, the hedge preserves the addressee's positive face while retaining the negative evaluation. An account of expressiveness restricted to intensification therefore cannot adequately describe professional discourse, since hedging is an expressive strategy in exactly the sense defined here.

The discourse-organizing function deserves particular emphasis here. Markers such as frankly, of course, and actually carry little propositional content. Yet they issue interpretive instructions: frankly claims evaluative candor before criticism, of course presents a proposition as beyond dispute, and actually signals correction of an assumption attributed to the addressee. Being stylistically unmarked, they pass the filter that excludes emotional lexis, making them the expected locus of expressiveness in registers traditionally described as inexpressive.

Expressiveness and illocutionary force

A comparison of neutral and intensified realizations across Yule's five classes of speech act shows that expressive means do not accompany illocution but operate upon it.

Table 3. Expressive modification of illocutionary force

Speech act class	Neutral realisation	Expressively modified realization	Effect on illocutionary force
Directives	*Send the report tomorrow.*	*Please send the report as soon as possible; it is extremely important.*	Urgency and persuasive pressure increased.
Commissives	*I will send the report by Monday.*	*I will personally ensure that the report reaches you by Monday.*	Commitment strengthened; accountability made explicit.
Expressives	*I am sorry for the delay.*	*I am terribly sorry for the delay.*	Sincerity heightened; face-redressive value increased.
Representatives	*This method is reliable.*	*Of course, this method remains the most reliable.*	Epistemic authority asserted; dissent pre-empted
Declarations	*Your contract is hereby terminated.*	— *(resists expressive modification)*	Force fixed institutionally, not by formulation

Source: compiled by the author based on Searle (1969) and Yule (1996).

The final row records a systematic exception. Declarations derive their force not from how they are worded but from the speaker's institutional authority and the satisfaction of felicity conditions; intensifying such an utterance adds emphasis without altering the act performed, since the addition of an intensifier neither more nor less terminates a contract. Expressive modification therefore operates on four of the five classes, and the exception is principled: the classes susceptible to modification are those whose force depends on the formulation chosen, while the class that resists it is the one whose force is conferred from outside the utterance.

Universal mechanisms and culture-specific norms

The three traditions surveyed above were developed largely independently, yet they converge on the triad of language, context, and communicative intention. This convergence supports the claim that the mechanisms concerned — inference, illocutionary force, and face management — are properties of communication rather than artifacts of a single descriptive apparatus. Safarov's ethnosociopragmatic observation locates cultural variation at a different level: if the mechanisms are shared, what varies are the norms governing their realization — the threshold at which an act is treated as face-threatening, the strategies conventionally preferred for redressing it, and the exponents by which those strategies are expressed.

This two-tier structure provides the basis for comparison that contrastive analysis requires and yields testable predictions. English and Uzbek professional discourse should not differ in whether face-threatening acts are mitigated, since mitigation follows from the mechanism; they should differ in the degree of imposition at which mitigation becomes obligatory, in the preference for negative- as opposed to positive-politeness strategies, and in the conventionalized exponents available for each function in Table 2. The taxonomy is thus comparable across languages at the level of functions, while cross-linguistic differences are to be sought in the exponent column.

5. Conclusion

Five pragmatic functions of expressiveness in professional discourse were established — intensifying, evaluative, persuasive, regulatory, and discourse-organizing — each associated with an identifiable class of exponents (RQ1). The functions are not mutually exclusive, which requires multiple coding in empirical applications, and the regulatory function is bidirectional. Discourse and pragmatic markers emerge as the characteristic locus of expressiveness in this register because they are stylistically unmarked and therefore pass the filter that excludes emotional lexis.

Expressive means were shown to modify the illocutionary force of speech acts rather than merely accompany them, with declarations constituting a systematic exception whose force is conferred institutionally (RQ2). A two-tier model that distinguishes universal pragmatic mechanisms from culture-specific realization norms was proposed as the basis for comparison in contrastive work (RQ3). The framework is conceptual and awaits verification; the immediate task is to apply it to comparable corpora of English and Uzbek professional discourse, where the predicted differences in mitigation thresholds, strategy preferences, and conventionalized exponents can be tested directly.

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