

INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS IN THE ENGLISH AND ARMENIAN LANGUAGES

The present paper is devoted to the study of indirect speech acts in modern English discourse and across different cultures. An attempt has also been made to understand how these constructions are translated into Russian and Armenian. The basis of a speech act is the speaker's intention to influence the hearer in a desired way and this intention can be manifested or latent. Indirect speech acts are acts that contain the illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act but perform another type of illocutionary act.

Key words: *indirect speech acts, speech act theory, cross-cultural analysis*

One of the founders of Speech Act Theory John R. Searle characterized indirect speech acts by the fact that there is no direct mapping between their linguistic form and illocutionary meaning.

According to Searle's hypothesis in indirect speech acts, the speaker communicates the non-literal as well as the literal meaning to the hearer. /Searle, 1969/

The basis of a speech act is the speaker's intention to influence the hearer in a desired way. The intention can be manifested and latent. According to G. Pocheptsov, latent intentions cannot be linguistically analyzed while manifested intentions can be divided into evident and inferable. The illocutionary intention of indirect speech acts is inferable /Pocheptsov, 1986/.

The illocutionary force of any utterance is detected by an inferential process that goes through the speaker's tone of voice, prosody, context of utterance, the form of the sentence, knowledge of the language being spoken and of the conversational conventions as well as general encyclopedic knowledge.

Searle's classical example of an indirect speech act is the utterance "Can you pass the salt?" Without breaking any linguistic norms, we can regard it as a general question and give a yes/no answer but generally it is interpreted as a request to pass the salt.

Some relatively easy forms of indirection to interpret are whimperatives and hedged performatives /Fraser, 1975/.

Whimperatives are indirect requests of the form Can you...? and Will you...? For example, sentences (1) and (2) would often be understood not as questions about the hearer's ability or willingness to close the door, but as actual requests to do so. /Bach and Harnish, 1979: 174-98/

1. Can you shut the door?
2. Will you shut the door?

The inference from the literal meaning of these expressions and their intended, non-literal meaning does not seem too difficult. In fact, the proposition of the intended meaning, shut the door, is conveyed within the literal expressions themselves.

Hedged performatives have the form of explicit performatives with a modal verb in the main clause. For example, sentences (3), (4) and (5) appear to be a request, a promise and a suggestion respectively.

1. I must ask you to leave.
2. I can promise you I shall be back.
3. I would suggest you try some

Each of these expressions seems to refer to an immediate precondition for performing a speech act. In this case, the explicit speech acts indirectly used are I ask you to leave, I promise you I'll be back, and I suggest you try some, which are all contained within the text of the literal expressions.

Somewhat more difficult to interpret are embedded performatives /Sadock, 1974/.

Embedded performatives contain the proposition to which they refer indirectly, but that proposition may be embedded arbitrarily deep within the literal expression. For example, sentences (1), (2), and (3) indirectly perform the acts of informing, reminding, and congratulating respectively.

1. I regret that I must inform you of your dismissal.
2. May I remind you that your account is overdue?
3. I would like to congratulate you

Thus we can say that indirection is the main way in which the semantic content of a sentence can fail to determine the full force and content of the illocutionary act being performed in using the sentence.

According to Grice and Searle, the implicit meaning of an utterance can always be inferred from its literal meaning. But according to the relevance theory developed by Sperber and Wilson, the process of interpretation of indirect speech acts does not at all differ from the process of interpretation of direct speech acts. Furthermore, it is literal utterances that are often marked and sound less natural than utterances with an indirect meaning.

In interpersonal communication directness is a sign of familiarity and closeness, indirectness is taken as tact or a lack of closeness and usually signals distance and denotes power.

When choosing between a direct and/or indirect speech act the speaker usually takes into consideration the following factors:

- the social distance between the speaker and the hearer
- the power that the hearer has over the speaker
- the degree to which a certain face-threatening act is rated an imposition in a specific culture.

The observation of politeness often results in the speaker's use of indirect speech acts.

Indirect speech acts are frequent when a person of a lower social status addresses a person of a higher social status. Often they contain additional markers of politeness like apologies, etc.

Sociolinguistic research shows that everywhere in the civilized world women tend to use more indirect speech acts than men. Educated people, regardless of their gender, prefer indirect speech acts to direct ones.

Indirect speech acts can serve different communicative intentions on the speaker's part. Thus, a sentence having the syntactic form of a question may express various

illocutionary forces: suggestion, request, reproach, order, invitation, etc.

It is impossible to reach a high level of linguistic competence without understanding the nature of indirect speech acts and knowing typical indirect speech acts of a particular language.

Preconditions on illocutionary acts defined for one language cannot be expected to be universal. Intercultural miscommunication arises from the assumption that the language strategies appropriate to the delivery of the intended meaning in one language can be used with equal efficacy in another language.

In different societies, and in different communities, people speak differently – not only because they speak different languages, but also because their ways of using language are different. These differences reflect different cultural values, which may often lead to a communication failure between individuals and between social groups. By studying different cultural traditions manifesting themselves in different ways of speaking, we can improve our ability to communicate with others more effectively.

The heavy restrictions on the use of the imperative in English and the wide range of interrogative forms in performing acts other than questions constitute striking linguistic reflexes of the Anglo-Saxon socio-cultural attitude. In English, the imperative is mostly used in commands and in orders. Other kinds of directives tend to avoid the imperative or to combine it with an interrogative and/or a conditional form.

In Armenian the use of interrogative forms outside the domain of questions is very limited, and since the interrogative form is not culturally valued as a means of performing directives, there has been, so to speak, no cultural need to develop special interrogative devices for performing speech acts other than questions, and in particular, for performing directives.

Thus, we may say that specific differences between languages in the area of indirect speech acts are motivated, to a considerable degree, by differences in cultural norms and cultural assumptions.

To understand the linguistic and cultural differences mentioned above, we have analyzed some examples of indirect speech acts in English and their translations into Armenian and Russian taken from fiction.

In the example below, we can see that the following speech act is framed like a question but has the illocutionary force of a suggestion. It is interesting that the word ‘said’ in this example is translated into Russian as ‘asked’ which is typical for questions (as the syntactic form of the English variant is that of a question), while the Armenian translator decided to use the word ‘suggest’ which indicates the illocutionary force of the given utterance.

1. ‘What d’you say to a battle of pop to celebrate?’ he said. /Maugham, 1980: 42/
– Как вы смотрите, не открыть ли нам бутылочку шампанского, чтобы отметить это событие? – спросил он. /Мюэм, 1983: 234/
– Ինչ եք ասում, մի շիշ շամպայյանով չնշե՞նք, – առաջարկեց նա: /Մտեմ, 1985: 38/

In the next example in both Armenian and Russian variants the presence of the word ‘please’ reveals the hidden illocutionary force of request, which can hardly be seen on the surface structure of the original English variant.

2. ‘Will you take off your hat?’ /Maugham, 1980: 154/
– Снимите, пожалуйста, шляпу. /Мюэм, 1983: 349/

– Խնդրեմ, հանեցե՛ք ձեր գլխարկը: /Մոմ, 1985: 168/

In the third example, we can see that the Russian variant is closer to the English than the Armenian, where instead of a question we have the syntactic form of a statement, but still the three variants have the illocutionary force of an invitation.

3. ‘I wonder if we could persuade you to come and eat a chop with us?’/Maugham, 1980: 15/

– Может быть, вы не откажетесь поехать с нами перекусить? /Моэм, 1983: 205/

– Հուսով եմ չեք հրաժարվի նախաճաշել մեզ հետ: Մայքլը ձեզ մեքենայով ետ կրերի: /Մոմ, 1985: 5/

We would like to state that while translating works of verbal art many translators try to stick to clichés, expressions and constructions of the original language of the text thus trying to retain the literary style of the author and the work itself. This may result in the use of many constructions and language patterns, which are not so typical of the target language. That is why to analyze the frequency of occurrence of direct and indirect speech acts in communication, (in both Armenian and English) we have also studied two plays with almost the same number of pages written by authors that belong to almost the same historical period. It should also be noted that we have preferred to study plays as their language is closer to everyday conversational language.

The table presented below illustrates the results of our research.

	Direct speech acts	Indirect speech acts
Armenian	35	27
English	14	26

As we can see, in Armenian we can come across direct speech acts more often than in English. This implies that in Armenian directness is considered as a positive cultural value and the use of direct speech acts may often indicate that the interlocutors are on quiet intimate and close relations. In English, on the contrary, the speakers try to be more indirect and not to threaten the hearer’s face. Clearly, one factor responsible for this difference is the principle of “polite pessimism”, characteristic of Anglo-Saxon culture, but absent from Armenian culture.

It follows that bare imperatives in English are interpreted differently than in Armenian, namely the speakers try not to put any restrictions on the interlocutor’s freedom of action.

As a conclusion, we may say that there exists a number of differences between English and other languages (here Armenian and Russian) in the area of speech acts, which are linked with different cultural norms and cultural assumptions and of course the mentality of the given nation. It is shown that English as different from Armenian and Russian, places heavy restrictions on the use of direct speech acts (especially, direct orders, etc.) and makes an intensive use of indirect speech acts. Features of English are shown to be language specific and due to specific cultural norms and cultural traditions. Linguistic differences are shown to be associated with cultural values such as individualism and respect for personal autonomy in the case of English, and cordiality and collectivism in the case of Armenian and Russian.

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Լ. ՄԱՂՈՅԱՆ – *Անուղղակի խոսքային ակտերն անգլերենում և հայերենում.* – Խոսքային ակտի հիմքում խոսակցի վրա ցանկալի ազդեցություն ունենալու մտադրությունն է, որը կարող է լինել ակնհայտ կամ թաքնված: Անուղղակի խոսքային ակտերում խոսողը խոսակցին է հաղորդում ինչպես ուղղակի, այնպես էլ անուղղակի իմաստը՝ հենվելով իրենց ընդհանուր հենքային լեզվական և արտալեզվական գիտելիքների վրա: Սույն հոդվածում փորձ է արվել ուսումնասիրել անուղղակի խոսքային ակտերը ժամանակակից անգլերենում և այլ մշակույթներում, ինչպես նաև ուսումնասիրել, թե ինչպես են այս կառույցները թարգմանվում հայերեն և ռուսերեն:

Բանալի բառեր. անուղղակի խոսքային ակտեր, խոսքային ակտերի տեսություն, միջմշակութային վերլուծություն

Լ. МАДОЯН – *Косвенные речевые акты в армянском и английском.* – В основе речевых актов лежит интенция говорящего воздействовать на адресата желаемым образом. Это интенция может быть как латентой (скрытой), так и явной (очевидной). В косвенных речевых актах говорящий передает адресату как прямой, так и косвенный смысл, опираясь на общие фоновые языковые и неязыковые знания. В данной статье предпринята попытка рассмотрения косвенных речевых актов в современном английском языке и при помощи межкультурного анализа определить, как эти структуры переводятся с английского на русский и армянский.

Ключевые слова: косвенные речевые акты, теория речевых актов, межкультурный анализ