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THE EXPRESSION OF INSULT IN SPEECH ACTS

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This article describes the concept in modern linguistics, highlighting its close connection to thinking and the reflection of culture within language. It states that speech must be analyzed through interaction and discourse, building upon Austin's Speech Act Theory which distinguishes between the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary. The primary focus is the illocutionary linguocultural concept of "insult" defined as a negative speech act intended to degrade an addressee's social status through verbal aggression. The study proposes a discourse realization model for insult, categorizing instances into three types – invective, stratagem, and perverse – based on the moral justification and public evaluation of the addresser and addressee.

Introduction. In modern linguistics, there are various approaches to studying and interpreting the concept. A concept is closely connected with thinking and, at the same time, with the reflection of culture in language. Through language, people express their thoughts and intentions. However, expression has not always been a unit of communication. Speech, as a process, can only be studied through interaction—when communication between the speaker and listener involves discourse (exchange of opinions) and responses corresponding to questions [5;15].

Speech acts always have an effect on the addressee, often regardless of the speaker's intentions. The concept of self-respect acquires national and cultural specificity due to the action of the ethnic and moral code.

The means of analyzing the cognitive and cultural information is natural language, which materially embodies mental structures in its signs. Natural language is also the bearer of the unique features of the national mentality and a mechanism that ensures the continuity of the cultural memory of the people, where the actual ethnocultural specificity of the concept can be identified by mapping the corresponding lexical and phraseological groups, comparing value judgments arising from behavioral stereotypes recorded in the meanings of words, set expressions, and precedent texts.

Strategies of insulting or damaging self-esteem, social self-identification characterize insult from the point of view of the interaction of the norms of acceptable national-cultural behavior and the principles of compliance with the communicative code of the individual. Therefore, an insult is a spectrum of culturally specific socio-pragmatic actions that have a clear communicative task. It is fulfilled through the choice of ethnocultural speech means that have a special meaning within a particular linguistic culture. Thus an insult arises due to a discrepancy between the norms of national and cultural behavior, which allows the use of prohibited techniques in speech from the point of view of the norms of the individual's communicative code.

The pragmatics of speech develops according to the laws of interaction of linguistic means with speech efficiency, which in turn is limited by the requirements of social control formulated in the communicative code of the individual.

The concept is an ideal mental essence, embodied in language, scattered in the content of lexical units, paremiological fund, in a system of stable comparisons, capable of being translated into various systems of images, knowledge and behavioral stereotypes.

Materials and methods. In 1950, the English scholar John Austin developed the theory of speech acts. According to this theory, a unit of communication is not merely a statement but a speech act performed according to generally accepted principles and behavioral norms, involving questions, explanations, descriptions, and other expressions. Austin identified three levels of language use: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts [6].

- The locutionary act refers to producing sounds, using words, and connecting them grammatically, as well as uttering a phrase with meaning.
- The illocutionary act expresses the communicative purpose of the utterance—why it is being said.

- The perlocutionary act is the combination of linguistic means intended to produce a desired effect on the addressee.

The use of “insult” in a speech situation arises from the speaker’s intent. The illocutionary goal of an insult is to perform an act that is socially significant but negative from the perspective of public moral values. The Russian scholar G. V. Kusov defined “insult” as an illocutionary linguocultural concept, describing it as “an illocutionary speech act in which the addressee’s social status is degraded through verbal aggression that morally affects their intellectual activity.”[3,11]

Revealing the specific features of illocutionary concepts in speech enriches cognitive linguistics with new insights into speech behavior. Speech behavior consists of speech acts that occur under social and psychological conditions governing the use of language in communication. The extralinguistic analysis of speech acts makes it possible to account for the influence of objective and subjective factors on speech behavior and to determine the reasons for choosing particular communicative strategies. Speech behavior, as the manifestation of verbal activity, is communicatively significant and psychologically, socially, and contextually motivated[1,62].

The multi-component structure of illocutionary concepts can be identified through the linguistic means that realize them. A concept, as a unit of social consciousness, is preserved in the memory of a people and passed down from generation to generation.

Speech genres are used in communicative acts. Communicative behavior may occur in different situations depending on the conditions, goals, and other factors of communication. All speech genres can take part in the communicative act. Communication is an interactive process reflecting all types of interpersonal relations. Conflict situations are often characterized by the frequent use of insults. A speech genre marked by aggressive language is called invective speech - harsh, emotionally charged speech directed against someone. Invective language is emotionally evaluative and realized through the speaker’s stock of invective expressions.

Result and discussion. According to V. G. Kusov, the discourse realization model of the illocutionary concept “insult” can be schematized as follows, based on the communicative behavior of the addresser (speaker) and addressee (listener):

1. Invective – The addresser is evaluated negatively for violating a social taboo (–), while the addressee is evaluated positively, since they did not deserve the insult and public opinion supports them.

2. Stratagem – The addresser is evaluated positively, as the insult is justified (“the end justifies the means”), while the addressee appears as a guilty victim who deserves the punishment.

3. Pervasive – The addresser is evaluated negatively because they covertly act against the addressee, emphasizing only their negative traits and manipulating public opinion. The addressee is also evaluated negatively as a result [3,24].

The invective, by its function, does not harm a person’s social status but provokes public disapproval due to its inconsistency with moral norms.

For instance, in the famous Uzbek film “Chinor ostidagi duel” (The Duel under the Plane Tree), the character Nortoy challenges the village chairman to a duel for insulting his father by calling him “crippled,” since his father did not deserve such an insult. In this example, the chairman acts as the addresser, and Nortoy’s father as the addressee. The villagers, upon hearing the insult, side with Nortoy and his father, expressing disapproval of the chairman’s words.

Similar invective insults are also found in online discourse. For example, during a live concert, the People’s Artist of Uzbekistan Yulduz Usmonova used the proverb “Pulni pul topadi, ahmoq ketmon chopadi” (Money makes money, a fool digs with a hoe) which caused public controversy because it was interpreted as an insult to farmers. Many responded, “If not for the farmers who dig with hoes, the people would starve”[7]. Later, the singer clarified that her words were not aimed at farmers but meant that one should not remain idle.

When determining the legal definition of “insult,” important factors include what social values it harms, the type of public relations affected, to whom or what the insult is directed, and what means were used to commit it.

Invective expressions can be classified as follows:

1. Physical defects: cho’loq, kalta, g’ilay; lame, short, cross-eyed, blind, bald, deaf, hunchbacked, big-eared, squinty-eyed, etc.
2. Diseases: moxov, pes, sil; tubercular, syphilitic, coronavirus-infected; scaly (a person with pediculosis).
3. Religious belief: kofir, murtad; infidel, apostate, unbeliever, godless.
4. Skin color: sariq, qora; yellow, black.
5. Ethnic origin: derogatory names such as Sart, Kashgari, Andi, Tatar, Tajik, yellow bastard (for Chinese people), etc.
6. Race: gypsy; negro.

7. Gender: gondon (from condom), hezalak, tungi kapalak; English: lance, cunt parcel, poke, cuntable, sissie.

8. Sexual orientation: kissing fish (lesbian), cuntable (sexually attractive woman).

In English texts, ethnic invectives are common, targeting race or origin. Such usage violates the social norm of respecting human dignity and is prohibited as a form of racial or sexual discrimination. In the United States, such offenses are known as “hate crimes”, where the term “hate” denotes bias against people or groups based on race, color, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, or disability [8]. Similarly, in the UK, under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 33: Racially Aggravated Offences, racial discrimination is considered a criminal act, and verbal insults are equated with harassment [9].

For example, in Suzanne McCabe’s *The Little Rock Nine*:

Crowd: Lynch her! Lynch her!

Elizabeth: If I can just get back to that bench...

Crowd: We’re not going to let you in our school!

Reporter: Are you aware the governor told the National Guard not to let you Negro students into the building?[12]

Here, the reporter (addresser) uses the term “Negro” to address Elizabeth (a black girl), which constitutes a racial insult.

In Uzbekistan, such expressions are also legally punishable. Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees equality before the law regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, or social status, and Article 26 prohibits torture, violence, or any degrading treatment. Uzbekistan also joined the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) by parliamentary decision in 1995 [11]

A stratagem is a sequence of actions aimed at achieving a hidden goal, taking into account a person’s psychology and the specifics of a situation. This concept has existed in Chinese culture for over three thousand years and has been linguistically studied by S. V. Sidorkov. Stratagems are not unique to Chinese—they are linguistic universals with distinctive features, though their equivalents do not always exist across languages [4,3]

The value dimension of a linguistic personality is one of the key indicators of a society’s maturity. Moral norms evolved later than utilitarian ones. In archaic thought, an enemy did not deserve mercy—such behavior was socially condemned. Stratagems were created as guides for confronting adversaries. A stratagem justifies the speaker’s actions, as it is morally driven: the insulted addressee receives what they deserve. Proverbs are among the linguistic tools expressing stratagems.

When people form their opinions or act, they compare themselves with members of their group and adopt their values and behaviors. They negatively evaluate actions that violate these norms. For instance, calling someone lazy or traitor may unfairly damage their reputation, even if undeserved. Such misleading or manipulative communication, aimed at discrediting a person's social image, is called communicative perversion, from the Latin *perverto* — “to destroy, to corrupt.” For example, in Kh. Tukhtaboyev's “Sariq devning o'limi” (The Death of the Yellow Giant):

[Majlisda] O'rtoq Xoliqov so'z olib:

– Militsiya ishini muhokamaga tashlash – bu dushmanning ishi, bu, albatta, o'rtoq Otajonovdan chiqqan bo'lsa kerak! – dedi.

Salimjon akam:

– Bo'lmasa o'zimizni o'zimiz maqtab yuraverishimiz kerak ekan-da, – deb qo'ydi.
O'rtoq Xoliqov:

– Siz o'zi ish qilishdan ko'ra ko'proq maqtanishni yaxshi ko'rarkansiz! – degan edi,
Salimjon akam:

– Kasaba qo'mitasi va yoshlar tashkiloti bilan maslahatlashib qilyapmiz bu ishni, – dedi.

Mayor Xoliqov butunlay qizishib o'zini yo'qotib qo'ydi:

– Siz tashkilotlar orqasiga berkinib, zararli fikrlaringizni targ'ib qilib kelyapsiz!

Salimjon akam negadir qizishib, stolni mushtlab turib ketish o'rniga, “obbo, sen-ey, tiling buncha zaharli bo'lmasa!” deb qo'ya qoldi [13].

[[At the meeting] Comrade Kholikov took the floor and said: “Bringing the work of the Militia up for discussion – that's the enemy's work, and it must have come from Comrade Otajonov!”

Salimjon: “So, we should just go around praising ourselves, then.”

Comrade Kholikov said: “You seem to like boasting more than doing work!”

To which Salimjon replied: “We are doing this in consultation with the trade union committee and the youth organization.”

Major Kholikov completely flared up and lost control of himself: “You're hiding behind organizations and spreading your harmful ideas!”

Instead of flaring up himself, hitting the table, and getting up, Salimjon just said, “Oh, you... why is your tongue so venomous!”

Before analyzing the text, let's recall the scheme of the perverse once again. According to the scheme the addresser is negatively evaluated, because by acting secretly, he secretly

turns the public opinion against the addressee. The addressee is also evaluated negatively under the influence of the expressed opinion. In the given passage, the addresser major Kholikov, addressee – Salimjon. The major Kholikov lowers the social status of Salimjon by saying that he likes to brag and promotes harmful ideas, that is, this type of communication is called the communicative perversion.

Revealing the speech nature of illocutionary concepts introduces into linguocognitology new knowledge about speech behavior, which represents a set of speech acts, determined from the intralingual side by the patterns of language use in speech, and extra linguistically by the social and psychological conditions for the implementation of language activity.

Conclusion. The research of the concept in modern linguistics links to thinking and the reflection of culture in language, emphasizing that communication is best understood through interaction and discourse [14]. The core framework is Austin's speech act theory, which defines the unit of communication as a speech act with three levels, that is the locutionary, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary. The concept of "insult" is defined as a negative illocutionary speech act that verbally degrades the addressee's social status. This phenomenon is analyzed through three discourse models called invective, stratagem and perverse. They categorize insults based on whether the addresser's intent is seen as justified or manipulative, and how the addresser and addressee are evaluated by public opinion. The use of invective language, especially involving ethnic or racial slurs, is shown to violate social norms and is subject to legal punishment in many countries, highlighting the intersection of linguistic behavior, social values and legal acts.

As a cultural phenomenon, the most important feature of discourse is its value markers. Within collective linguistic consciousness, an unwritten moral code exists, revealing cultural value dominants through special analytical methods — ethical, utilitarian, and aesthetic.

The discourse realization of the "insult" concept encompasses areas of speech activity and the legal assessment of speech acts, serving specific pragmatic purposes. Summarizing the above, the discourse realization of the concept "insult" is most frequently observed in religious, everyday and legal discourses.

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