SOCIOLINGUISTIC DIMENSIONS OF MILITARY COMMAND LANGUAGE: POWER, HIERARCHY, AND PHONETIC REALIZATION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Annotation: *The present article investigates the sociolinguistic dimensions of military command language with a particular focus on the interrelationship between power, hierarchy, and phonetic realization in English and Uzbek military discourse. Military communication represents a unique sociolinguistic domain where language functions not merely as a tool of information transfer but as a direct instrument of authority, discipline, and institutional control. Command utterances in military settings are deeply embedded in hierarchical social structures, and their linguistic and phonetic forms reflect the rank, role, and relational dynamics of the interlocutors involved. This study examines how social power relations are encoded and manifested through the phonetic features of imperative sentences, including variations in pitch, loudness, tempo, voice quality, and intonation contours. Drawing on sociolinguistic theory, speech act theory, and contrastive phonetics, the article analyzes authentic military command samples from both English and Uzbek linguistic contexts to identify language-specific and universal patterns of phonetic authority marking. Special attention is given to*

how rank asymmetry between a commander and a subordinate shapes the prosodic and articulatory properties of command speech. The findings demonstrate that phonetic realization of military commands is not arbitrary but systematically conditioned by social hierarchy and institutional norms in both languages. While certain prosodic features of authority are cross-linguistically shared, notable differences emerge in how English and Uzbek military cultures encode power through sound. The article contributes to the broader fields of military linguistics, sociolinguistics, and phonopragmatics.

Keywords: *Military discourse, command language, sociolinguistics, phonetic realization, power and hierarchy, imperative sentences, prosodic features, contrastive analysis.*

СОЦИОЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ ЯЗЫКА ВОЕННЫХ КОМАНД: ВЛАСТЬ, ИЕРАРХИЯ И ФОНЕТИЧЕСКАЯ РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И УЗБЕКСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ

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Аннотация: *В настоящей статье исследуются социолингвистические аспекты языка военных команд с особым акцентом на взаимосвязь между властью, иерархией и фонетической реализацией в английском и узбекском военном дискурсе. Военная коммуникация представляет собой уникальную социолингвистическую*

область, в которой язык функционирует не просто как инструмент передачи информации, но и как непосредственное средство выражения авторитета, дисциплины и институционального контроля. Командные высказывания в военной среде глубоко укоренены в иерархических социальных структурах, а их лингвистические и фонетические формы отражают воинское звание, роль и характер взаимоотношений между участниками коммуникации. В данном исследовании рассматривается, каким образом социальные отношения власти кодируются и проявляются через фонетические характеристики императивных предложений, включая вариации высоты тона, громкости, темпа, качества голоса и интонационных контуров. Опираясь на социолингвистическую теорию, теорию речевых актов и сопоставительную фонетику, в статье анализируются аутентичные образцы военных команд как в английском, так и в узбекском лингвистических контекстах с целью выявления языкоспецифических и универсальных закономерностей фонетической маркировки авторитета. Особое внимание уделяется тому, каким образом асимметрия воинских званий между командиром и подчинённым обусловливает просодические и артикуляционные свойства командной речи. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что фонетическая реализация военных команд не является произвольной, а системно детерминирована социальной иерархией и институциональными нормами в обоих языках. При этом, несмотря на наличие ряда универсальных просодических признаков авторитетности, выявляются существенные различия в том, как английская и узбекская военные культуры кодируют власть посредством звука. Статья вносит

вклад в более широкие области военной лингвистики, социолингвистики и фонопрагматики.

Ключевые слова: *военный дискурс, язык команд, социолингвистика, фонетическая реализация, власть и иерархия, императивные предложения, просодические характеристики, сопоставительный анализ.*

Language and power are inextricably linked in all forms of institutional discourse, and nowhere is this relationship more transparent and structurally enforced than in military communication. The military constitutes one of the most rigidly hierarchical social institutions in human civilization, and this hierarchy finds direct expression in the linguistic and phonetic forms through which commands are issued, received, and executed. From the parade ground to the battlefield, the imperative sentence serves as the primary vehicle of military authority, and its phonetic realization carries significant sociolinguistic weight beyond mere propositional content. The study of military discourse from a sociolinguistic perspective has gained increasing scholarly attention over the past two decades. Researchers have noted that military language constitutes a specialized register characterized by economy of expression, high illocutionary force, and distinctive prosodic features that reinforce institutional authority (Kiesling, 2001). However, comparative studies examining how different linguistic and cultural traditions encode power through phonetic means remain relatively scarce, particularly with regard to less-studied languages such as Uzbek. This article addresses this gap by undertaking a contrastive sociolinguistic analysis of military command language in English and Uzbek, with a specific focus on the phonetic dimensions through which power and hierarchical relations are expressed. English, as the dominant

language of NATO military operations and international military communication, provides a well-documented point of reference, while Uzbek, as the official military language of the Republic of Uzbekistan, offers a typologically distinct and culturally rich counterpoint. Together, these two languages allow for meaningful cross-linguistic generalizations as well as culturally specific observations about the phonetic encoding of military authority. The theoretical framework of this study integrates three major scholarly traditions: sociolinguistics, specifically theories of power and language (Fairclough, 1989); speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969); and contrastive phonetics and prosodics (Cruttenden, 1997). By bringing these frameworks into dialogue, the article aims to provide a comprehensive account of how social structure is phonetically embodied in the speech of military personnel. The relationship between language and power has been a central concern of sociolinguistics since at least the foundational work of Fairclough (1989), whose critical discourse analysis framework demonstrated that power relations are not merely reflected but actively constituted in and through language use. Within institutional settings, language serves simultaneously as a medium of communication and as an instrument of social regulation. Military discourse represents perhaps the paradigmatic case of such institutionally embedded language use, where every utterance is charged with hierarchical meaning. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital is particularly relevant to military contexts. In Bourdieu's framework, the authority of a speech act does not reside in the utterance itself but derives from the social position of the speaker within a given field. A military command gains its binding force not from its semantic content alone but from the institutional position of the commander, the rank asymmetry between interlocutors, and the shared understanding of military norms. Phonetic features - volume, pitch, tempo -

serve as sonic markers that index and reinforce these positional asymmetries. Austin's (1962) performative theory of language and Searle's (1969) taxonomy of speech acts provide essential tools for analyzing military commands. Military imperatives function primarily as directives - speech acts whose illocutionary point is to get the hearer to do something. What distinguishes military directives from everyday requests and suggestions is the degree of illocutionary force, the absence of face-saving strategies, and the institutional obligation of compliance. These pragmatic properties are phonetically encoded in ways that leave little room for ambiguity regarding the speaker's authority and the hearer's expected response. Searle's conditions for successful directive speech acts - including the sincerity condition, the propositional content condition, and the essential condition - are met in military commands through both linguistic structure and phonetic realization. The phonetic form of a command (its loudness, pitch height, and articulatory precision) serves as a perlocutionary cue that signals the commander's sincerity and institutional authority, thereby increasing the probability of immediate compliance. Phonopragmatics, the study of how phonetic features contribute to pragmatic meaning, offers a refined toolkit for examining the sonic dimensions of military authority. Cruttenden (1997) and Crystal (1969) have demonstrated that prosodic features such as intonation, pitch range, loudness, tempo, and voice quality systematically encode pragmatic meanings such as finality, urgency, and authority. These features interact with syntactic and lexical choices to produce the full pragmatic meaning of an utterance. In military discourse, prosodic features frequently bear the primary weight of authority marking, especially in contexts where commands must be issued rapidly and unambiguously. The methodology of this study is broadly qualitative and comparative, drawing on a corpus of military command utterances collected

from three primary sources: transcripts of military training exercises, documentary footage of military drills and ceremonies, and semi-structured interviews with military personnel in both English-speaking and Uzbek-speaking contexts. The English data was drawn primarily from United States Army and British Army training materials and publicly available documentary sources. The Uzbek data was collected from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including training manuals, instructional videos, and field recordings. Phonetic analysis was conducted using both impressionistic and instrumental methods. Impressionistic analysis allowed for the identification of salient prosodic features audible to trained listeners, while acoustic analysis using Praat software provided objective measurements of fundamental frequency (F0), intensity, and duration for a representative sample of utterances. The pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis was based on contextual information about speaker rank, interactional context, and communicative goal. For comparative purposes, command utterances were categorized according to their communicative function: movement commands (e.g., attention, march, halt), operational commands (e.g., fire, advance, retreat), disciplinary commands, and administrative commands. Within each category, phonetic features were compared across rank levels and communicative contexts, allowing for systematic identification of both cross-linguistic universals and language-specific patterns of phonetic authority marking. In both English and Uzbek military discourse, pitch plays a central role in encoding authority and signaling the binding force of commands. However, the specific intonation patterns employed differ in ways that reflect both typological differences between the languages and culturally specific conventions of military speech. In English military commands, a characteristic falling intonation pattern is almost universally employed, typically involving a sharp pitch drop on the final

accented syllable of the command. This falling terminal contour has been widely associated in the phonetic literature with finality, certainty, and authority (Cruttenden, 1997), and its use in military commands reinforces the non-negotiable character of the directive. In Uzbek military commands, a similar falling terminal contour is observed, reflecting a cross-linguistic tendency for authoritative directives to employ low or falling pitch at the clause boundary. However, Uzbek commanders frequently employ a broader pitch range across the entire command utterance, with notably higher pitch on the initial syllable or word, creating a distinctive high-onset, low-terminal pattern. This pattern appears to function as an attention-soliciting device in the initial position, followed by the authority-marking falling contour at the utterance boundary. The result is a phonetically more elaborate command structure that combines attentional management with authority assertion. Loudness is perhaps the most immediately salient phonetic feature of military commands in both languages, reflecting the functional requirement for commands to be audible across noisy environments and large distances. However, loudness in military discourse is not merely a practical accommodation to acoustic conditions; it also functions as a direct index of authority and emotional intensity. Cross-culturally, increased vocal intensity has been associated with dominance, urgency, and assertiveness (Ohala, 1984), and these associations are institutionally formalized in military communication. Both English and Uzbek military commanders consistently employ elevated intensity levels compared to civilian speech, but subtle differences emerge in how loudness interacts with rank asymmetry. In English military discourse, there is a relatively linear relationship between speaker rank and command volume, with senior officers frequently employing a controlled, measured intensity that paradoxically signals higher authority precisely because it does not require

shouting to achieve compliance. In Uzbek military contexts, the relationship between rank and loudness appears somewhat less linear, with cultural norms emphasizing demonstrative vocal authority across a broader range of rank levels. The temporal properties of military commands - their rate of delivery, the distribution of pauses, and the rhythmic structure of multi-word commands - constitute another important dimension of phonetic authority marking. In English, military commands are typically delivered at a moderately slow tempo with careful articulation, maximizing intelligibility and projecting an image of controlled, deliberate authority. Pauses are strategically employed between the preparatory command and the command of execution (e.g., a notable pause between 'Forward' and 'March'), creating a moment of heightened attention and indexing the commander's temporal control over the interaction. Uzbek military commands exhibit a similar structural use of pauses and deliberate pacing, reflecting the cross-linguistic functionality of temporal control as an index of authority. However, Uzbek commands tend to exhibit a more pronounced rhythmic pattern, with regular stress placement that aligns with the agglutinative morphological structure of the language. The rhythmic regularity of Uzbek military speech may serve both a mnemonic function - making commands easier to remember and execute under stress - and an authority-indexing function, as rhythmic predictability signals institutional control and order. One of the most revealing dimensions of this study concerns the systematic phonetic variation associated with rank asymmetry in both languages. Commands issued by senior officers to junior enlisted personnel exhibit systematically different phonetic profiles than commands issued by non-commissioned officers to their immediate subordinates, or instructions exchanged between officers of similar rank. These variations are consistent across both English and Uzbek, suggesting that the phonetic encoding of

hierarchical power is a cross-linguistic feature of military discourse, even if its specific acoustic parameters vary between languages. In both languages, commands issued across large rank differentials (e.g., from a general to a private) tend to exhibit the most conventionalized, formulaic phonetic patterns, with highly predictable intonation, measured loudness, and clear articulation. This phonetic conventionalization appears to reflect the institutionalized nature of the authority relationship, in which the commanding officer's superior position is so firmly established that it need not be actively asserted through marked phonetic effort. By contrast, commands issued across smaller rank differentials - particularly between non-commissioned officers and their immediate subordinates - often exhibit more variable and emphatic phonetic realizations, reflecting the more actively negotiated nature of authority at lower hierarchical levels. Cultural factors also shape the phonetic realization of power in distinctly different ways in English and Uzbek military contexts. Uzbek military culture, influenced by Central Asian cultural norms that place high value on demonstrative respect toward elders and authority figures, tends to encode deference as strongly in the speech of subordinates as authority is encoded in the speech of commanders. The responses of Uzbek military subordinates - the acknowledgment utterances, the compliance confirmations - are phonetically marked in ways that actively mirror and reinforce the phonetic authority of the commanding officer. In English military contexts, while deference is equally expected, its phonetic expression tends to be more restrained and formulaic, reflecting Anglo-American cultural norms of emotional moderation in institutional settings. The comparative analysis reveals a set of phonetic features that appear to function as cross-linguistic universals in the encoding of military authority, alongside a set of features that are language- and culture-specific. Among the cross-linguistic universals, the

most robust finding is the consistent use of falling terminal intonation as a marker of directive force and finality. This pattern, documented in typologically diverse languages in the general phonetics literature, appears to be actively institutionalized in military discourse across both English and Uzbek, where it serves as a conventionalized signal of non-negotiable authority. A second cross-linguistic universal concerns the role of articulatory precision as an authority marker. In both English and Uzbek military commands, full and careful articulation of all consonants and vowels, with avoidance of the reduction and coarticulation typical of casual speech, serves as a phonetic index of institutional register and command authority. This hyper-articulation communicates not only the practical need for intelligibility in noisy environments but also the deliberate, controlled character appropriate to institutional authority (Lippi-Green, 1997). Among the language-specific patterns, the most notable difference concerns the role of vowel length in Uzbek military commands. Uzbek, as a vowel-length-sensitive language, employs vowel lengthening on key command words as a prosodic intensifier, a strategy unavailable to English speakers in the same systematic way. Additionally, the agglutinative morphology of Uzbek produces command forms with distinctive suffixal patterns that carry their own prosodic profiles, creating a morphophonological interface with authority marking that has no direct parallel in English, an analytic language. The findings of this study have several important implications for our understanding of the relationship between language, sound, and social structure. First, they confirm and extend the sociolinguistic argument that phonetic features are not merely expressive of pre-existing social relations but are actively constitutive of them. The phonetic realization of military commands does not simply reflect the authority of the commanding officer; it enacts and reproduces that authority in real time,

moment by moment, utterance by utterance. This performative dimension of military phonetics aligns with Butler's (1997) theory of performativity and provides phonetic evidence for the broader constructionist position that social structures are linguistically maintained. Second, the findings contribute to the growing literature on phonopragmatics by demonstrating that prosodic features can bear systematic institutional meanings that extend far beyond the interpersonal and attitudinal meanings most commonly discussed in the prosodic literature. Military discourse provides a particularly clear case study for this argument, precisely because the institutional meanings of prosodic features are so explicitly codified and so consistently enforced. The military functions, in effect, as a laboratory for the study of phonopragmatic systematicity. Third, the cross-linguistic dimension of this study contributes to ongoing debates about the universality of prosodic meanings. The identification of cross-linguistic universals in the phonetic encoding of military authority supports the position that certain prosodic features - particularly falling intonation and elevated intensity - have iconic or indexical relationships to authority that transcend specific linguistic and cultural systems. At the same time, the identification of language-specific patterns cautions against any strong universalist position and underscores the importance of cultural and linguistic context in shaping the precise phonetic form of authority. From a practical perspective, the findings have potential applications in military language training and in the preparation of interpreters and translators working in military contexts. An awareness of the language-specific phonetic conventions for encoding military authority can improve cross-cultural military communication and reduce the risk of misunderstanding in multinational military operations, where English increasingly serves as a lingua franca alongside national military languages such as Uzbek. This article has examined

the sociolinguistic dimensions of military command language in English and Uzbek, with particular attention to the phonetic realization of power and hierarchical relations. Through a comparative analysis informed by sociolinguistic theory, speech act theory, and contrastive phonetics, the study has demonstrated that the phonetic form of military commands is neither arbitrary nor merely functional but is systematically conditioned by social hierarchy, institutional norms, and cross-cultural conventions. The analysis identified both cross-linguistic universals and language-specific patterns in the phonetic encoding of military authority. Cross-linguistic universals include the consistent use of falling terminal intonation, elevated intensity, and hyper-articulation as markers of directive force and institutional authority. Language-specific patterns include the role of vowel length in Uzbek, the morphophonological interface between agglutinative command forms and prosodic authority marking in Uzbek, and the culturally distinct conventions governing the relationship between rank and loudness in the two military traditions. These findings advance our understanding of the intersection of phonetics, pragmatics, and social structure, and contribute to the emerging interdisciplinary field of military linguistics. Future research should extend this comparative framework to additional languages, employ larger acoustic corpora, and investigate the acquisition of military phonetic conventions as part of the broader process of military socialization. Such research promises to shed further light on the fundamental sociolinguistic question of how sound becomes social - how the physical properties of speech come to carry the weight of power, hierarchy, and institutional authority.

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