

THE ROLE OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS IN THE STATE LANGUAGE IN LEGAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract: This article analyzes the use of personal pronouns in official documents drafted in the state language and their role in legal discourse. The semantic and pragmatic features of personal pronouns are examined in terms of defining the legal status of the subject, distributing responsibility, and reinforcing communicative orientation within legal texts. Pronouns such as “we,” “I,” and “they” are shown to fulfill important linguo-pragmatic functions that ensure clarity, conciseness, and persuasiveness of legal documents. Moreover, the normative and standardized use of pronouns is emphasized as a key factor in increasing the legal and social effectiveness of official communication in the state language.

Keywords: Regulatory documents, legal texts, pronouns, subject, pragmatics, paradigm, prototypical subject, pragmatic variability, communicative clarity.

The conduct of official proceedings in the state language is one of the defining features of a modern legal state. The use of the state language in legal documents, court decisions, and normative texts reflects not only the practical implementation of language policy but also ensures the formation of legal discourse on a national and cultural basis. The application of the state language in legal discourse guarantees the uniform interpretation of legal norms, equal communication among citizens, and the development of legal consciousness within the framework of the national language. From a linguo-pragmatic perspective, the use of the state language serves to make legal communication precise, fluent, and standardized. Since legal texts are typically normative in nature, they must be free of synonymy, polysemy, or stylistic ambiguity. Therefore, legal discourse in the state language is based on semantic clarity, syntactic consistency, and terminological uniformity. For example, the use of such units as “we,” “citizens,” “the state,” and “public authorities” in laws and regulations not only defines the legal status of the subject but also conveys the pragmatic content of legal relations. Furthermore, in the process of official proceedings in the state language, linguo-pragmatic factors manifest themselves in such aspects as address orientation, legal effectiveness, communicative precision, and the strengthening of the normative force of documents. The role of the state language in legal discourse is to present legal norms that regulate social relations in a general and comprehensible form.

In Uzbek legal discourse, the modes of representing the subject are directly connected with the communicative functions of legal speech. Through direct, indirect, hidden, or institutional subjects, purposes such as legality, objectivity, obligation, and formality are achieved, which sharply distinguishes legal discourse from other styles. In linguistics, personal pronouns are traditionally regarded as egocentric words belonging to the pragmatic paradigm [Benveniste,

1974; Paducheva, 1985; Kravchenko, 1995; Bloh, 1998, et al.]. Among them, only the pronoun I is considered the center of the egocentric system — the starting point of reference. According to L.M. Kovaleva, it represents the “prototypical subject — the subject in the first person singular” [Kovaleva, 2008, p. 68], linking everything to the speaker’s perspective during the process of “appropriating” language [Serebrennikova, 1997, p. 55]. E. Benveniste also regards it as the focal point for the manifestation of subjectivity within language [Benveniste, 1974]. While postmodern theorists speak of the “death of the subject” and consequently the disappearance of the “I,” the anthropocentric paradigm places the human being at the center and considers the link with the “I” as an integral property of subjectivity. The pronoun I is employed to express one’s self, essence, and individuality [BTSRY, 2000, p. 1530]. Other forms of subject reference, as noted by O.L. Bodyagina, lead to the “depersonalization of expression” [Bodyagina, 2003, pp. 13–15].

There are diverse scholarly views on the semantics of the pronoun I. Its ability to indicate the subject has led some researchers to treat it as a means of individualization (E.M. Volf, V. Fleischer, and others). According to E.M. Volf, personal pronouns, along with proper names, function as individualizing markers, although they fulfill this function only with the support of additional information from the context or communicative situation [Volf, 1974, p. 24].

By contrast, O.N. Seliverstova, relying on E. Benveniste, argues that the pronoun I, unlike proper names, does not possess permanent characteristics and thus cannot serve as an individualizing device. She defines it as a referential marker pointing to the speaker, i.e., to the participant of the event in an identical, not individualized, manner [Seliverstova, 1988, pp. 26–36]. Similarly, T.N. Semenova emphasizes that personal pronouns in texts function as “pragmatic variables reflecting the relative features of referents in their interaction with the speaker” [Semenova, 2001, p. 20].

For example: “I, Hasanov Ubaydullo xxx, have fully read the text of this will” (sample will). When used together with a proper name, pronouns such as I acquire individualizing semantics, and the statement is evaluated as a legal act. Proper names serve as a connecting link between person and information: “To mention a name is to evoke in the mind an image of the person” [Nikonov, 1988, p. 33]. If the name (directly or indirectly) is not indicated, the statement becomes impersonal and is not attributed to a concrete individual: “I bequeath my property to the following persons” (sample will). In such cases, the pronoun I directly refers to the subject — the testator — and portrays him/her as a unique individual. In legal discourse, this pronoun may also convey additional information: for instance, in wills, I does not merely express individuality but also implies that the testator is over 18 years of age and legally capable of making such decisions. Thus, the pronoun I cannot be reduced to a “void” sign or a mere substitute for a name, as it does not possess stable denotative reference; rather, it indicates “what the speaker relates his/her utterance to” [Peshkovskiy, 1956, p. 163]. Its meaning is determined by deixis and the principles of reflecting the referent’s characteristics. It expresses the ontological essence of the speaking subject, presenting him/her as a unique individual, a being who interprets both the world and the self through language [Anthropological Linguistics, 2003, pp. 58–60; Benveniste, 1974, pp. 285–300]. Moreover, the pronoun I is often used to

subjectivize statements, attributing them with a personal rather than absolute truth. As P.A. Florensky observed: “When we speak of I, you, he, etc., it is either because onomasiological predication is performed or because we are shifting from objectivity to subjectivity, that is, into psychology.”

When combined with predicates of modality (such as concern or conviction), the pronoun I individualizes the utterance as a subjective opinion. L-type statements, as noted by Miloserdova, best satisfy the need for self-expression [Miloserdova, 1991, p. 123] and carry a tone of self-affirmation [Kon, 1978, p. 134]. In this subjectivizing function, I is used with epistemic and volitional predicates, allowing the speaker to position himself/herself as a reasoning, doubting, or intentional individual. These predicates imbue the text with subjectivity (doubt, assumption, conclusion) and highlight the subject’s stance toward the proposed situation. This subjectivity manifests only in the first person [Benveniste, 1974, p. 298]. Example: “I believe that a person convicted of attempted crime should be classified as a serious offender instead of being assigned a special grave category” (Appeal to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan regarding Article 15 of the Criminal Code being declared unconstitutional).

According to Kovaleva, the predicate think following the pronoun I denotes a cognitive process and carries the modality of possibility [Kovaleva, 2008, p. 250]. It determines the evaluative stance of the subject, grounded in personal knowledge and experience, and functions as a means of individualization alongside proper names. Proper names (first names, surnames, etc.) function as identifiers that mark the subject’s uniqueness and designate him/her as a distinct entity. They serve as prototypical markers of the subject in discourse. Unlike common nouns, proper names are not directly tied to concepts; their primary meaning lies in their referential relation to a concrete entity. As N.D. Arutyunova observed, the meaning of a proper name is “like a contour on a mirror through which the referent can be glimpsed” [Arutyunova, 1977, p. 190]. For example: “Statement of the heir refusing inheritance (M.S. Qodirqulovna).” Many scholars stress that proper names do not carry independent meaning. This view goes back to the English philosopher and logician J.S. Mill, who claimed that proper names lack meaning because they have no connotation, i.e., they do not denote stable concepts [Mill, 1900, p. 27]. Consequently, V. Bröndal, A. Gardiner, B. Russell, and others referred to proper names as “empty,” “asemantic” words, or “labels.” In Russian linguistics, this view was partly supported by A.A. Reformatskiy, O.S. Akhmanova, N.D. Arutyunova, among others. According to Arutyunova, it is precisely because proper names are semantically “empty” that they perform the function of identification most effectively: “The weaker the lexical meaning of such words, the stronger their connection with extralinguistic reality” [Arutyunova, 1979, p. 323]. Thus, proper names, unlike pronouns such as I, are the most effective means of distinguishing individuals, as they reveal a personalized image of the subject. In legal discourse, the omission of the subject’s name may result in depersonalization of the information, which may be acceptable in laws but undesirable in wills, contracts, and similar legal genres.

Conclusion

In conclusion, personal pronouns play an important linguistic and pragmatic role in the texts of official documents in the state language. Their use contributes to conciseness, logical consistency, and comprehensibility for the addressee. In particular, personal pronouns in legal discourse fulfill functions such as defining the subject's legal status, distributing responsibility, or expressing collectivity. For instance, the pronoun we emphasizes solidarity and shared responsibility through the expression of collective subjectivity, whereas he or they denote the legal positions of other participants. Pragmatically, pronouns increase the persuasiveness of documents, enhance address orientation, and highlight the social significance of legal relations. Conversely, their incorrect or ambiguous use may compromise the legal clarity of texts. Therefore, special attention must be paid to the normative and standardized application of pronouns in the process of conducting official proceedings in the state language. Overall, investigating the pragmatic potential of pronouns in legal discourse contributes to the semantic precision and communicative effectiveness of legal documents and strengthens the authority of the state language in legal practice.

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