

THE STUDY OF CRIMINAL CODE TEXTS IN LEGAL LINGUISTICS

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Rakhmatova Bahora Ibodulla qizi
raxmatovabahorai@gmail.com
Oriental University

Abstract: This article examines the study of criminal code texts within the framework of legal linguistics. The research focuses on identifying the linguistic characteristics of criminal law texts, their communicative and pragmatic nature, and their role in legal discourse. Particular attention is paid to the lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic features of criminal code provisions in English and Uzbek legal systems. The study demonstrates that criminal code texts function as an important linguistic instrument in legal communication, ensuring the precise and systematic expression of legal norms.

Keywords: legal linguistics, legal discourse, criminal code, legal terminology, linguopragmatics

The interaction between language and law has become an important area of contemporary linguistic research. Legal linguistics investigates the role of language in legal communication, focusing on the structure, semantics, and pragmatics of legal texts. Within this field, legislative texts occupy a central position because laws constitute the primary means through which legal norms are codified and communicated. Criminal codes are particularly significant because they regulate socially dangerous behavior and define the corresponding legal consequences. Consequently, the linguistic analysis of criminal code texts provides important insights into how legal norms are formulated and interpreted through language.

Legal discourse represents a specialized institutional form of communication that reflects the relationship between language, power, and social regulation. According to discourse theory, institutional discourse structures social practices and establishes normative frameworks within society [1, p. 23]. In this context, legal discourse functions as a system of communication through which legal institutions define rights, obligations, and prohibitions. Criminal code texts represent a central component of this discourse because they establish the legal definitions of criminal acts and determine the sanctions applied to offenders.

The language of criminal law differs significantly from everyday language. Scholars emphasize that legal language is characterized by a high level of terminological precision, syntactic complexity, and normative clarity [2, p. 56]. These

characteristics are necessary to ensure that legal norms are interpreted consistently within judicial practice. As a result, criminal code texts typically employ standardized lexical units and formal syntactic constructions designed to minimize ambiguity. From a lexical perspective, criminal code texts contain a specialized system of legal terminology. Terms such as *crime*, *liability*, *intent*, *negligence*, and *punishment* represent key conceptual units in criminal law. These terms function as precise legal categories that define particular forms of behavior and responsibility. Linguistic studies of legal terminology indicate that terminological stability is essential for maintaining the coherence of legal systems [3, p. 68].

In addition to specialized terminology, criminal code texts also include common vocabulary that acquires a specific legal meaning within the context of legislation. Words such as *person*, *property*, or *act* belong to general language but function as technical terms in legal discourse. This phenomenon demonstrates the interaction between general vocabulary and specialized legal terminology.

A comparative analysis of English and Uzbek criminal legislation illustrates how similar legal concepts are expressed through different linguistic structures. For example, the English legal provision defining murder may be expressed as follows:

"A person who unlawfully kills another human being with intent commits the offence of murder."

In the Uzbek legal system, a similar concept appears in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

"Qasddan odam o'ldirish - boshqa shaxsni qasddan hayotdan mahrum qilishdir."

Both provisions define the concept of intentional homicide; however, their linguistic structure differs. The English formulation uses a descriptive syntactic pattern that specifies the conditions of the offense, while the Uzbek formulation employs a definitional construction that emphasizes the legal concept of intentional deprivation of life.

Another important feature of criminal code texts is their syntactic structure. Legislative provisions frequently employ complex sentence patterns that describe legal conditions and consequences. These constructions reflect the logical structure of legal norms, which often include a hypothesis, a disposition, and a sanction. Linguistic research demonstrates that legal texts rely heavily on conditional and modal constructions to express normative relations [4, p. 102]. For instance, in English criminal law a provision may state:

"A person who dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it commits theft."

A comparable Uzbek provision may appear in the following form:

"O'zganing mol-mulkini talon-toraj qilish maqsadida yashirin ravishda o'zlashtirish o'g'rilik deb hisoblanadi" (JK, 32-modda) These examples illustrate how

criminal code texts employ formal definitions to specify the legal elements of an offense. In both languages, the provision identifies the subject of the crime, the prohibited action, and the legal qualification of the act.

From a pragmatic perspective, criminal code texts can also be interpreted through the framework of speech act theory. According to J. Austin and J. Searle, utterances can perform actions rather than merely describe reality [5, p. 99]. Legislative provisions function as institutional speech acts because they establish legal norms that regulate social behavior.

For example, the statement: *"A person found guilty of this offence shall be liable to imprisonment."* does not merely describe a possible situation but creates a legal obligation enforced by the judicial system. Similarly, Uzbek legislative texts contain normative constructions that impose legal consequences:

"Mazkur jinoyat uchun shaxs ozodlikdan mahrum qilish bilan jazolanadi." These constructions demonstrate the performative nature of legal language, as they create binding legal norms within the institutional framework of the state. Another important characteristic of criminal code texts is their communicative function. Legal norms must be precise enough for legal professionals while remaining understandable to citizens. Scholars note that achieving a balance between clarity and terminological precision is one of the major challenges of legislative drafting [6, p. 41].

Comparative linguistic studies show that despite differences in language and legal tradition, criminal codes across various legal systems exhibit similar linguistic strategies. These strategies include the use of standardized terminology, formal syntactic patterns, and explicit normative formulations. Such similarities suggest that legal language forms a specialized communicative system that transcends individual languages [7, p. 52].

Furthermore, the linguistic analysis of criminal code texts also contributes to improving legal interpretation. Ambiguities in legislative language can lead to inconsistent judicial decisions. For this reason, legal linguistics plays an important role in examining how linguistic structures influence legal meaning and interpretation [8, p. 17].

In conclusion, the study of criminal code texts within legal linguistics reveals the complex relationship between language and legal regulation. Criminal codes represent a specific type of legal text characterized by specialized terminology, structured syntactic patterns, and strong pragmatic force. Comparative analysis of English and Uzbek criminal legislation demonstrates that although the linguistic forms differ, the communicative and normative functions of criminal law language remain largely universal. The linguistic study of criminal code texts therefore contributes to a better understanding of legal discourse, improves legislative drafting, and enhances the effectiveness of legal communication within society.

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