



Article

# Pragmalinguistic Potential of the Subjunctive Mood and Speech Act Analysis in G. E. Lessing's Tragedy "Emilia Galotti"

Fayzullaeva Zebuniso Abdukarimovna

1. Tashkent State Uzbek Language and Literature University Doctoral Student
- \* Correspondence: [zebofayzullaeva@mail.ru](mailto:zebofayzullaeva@mail.ru)

**Abstract:** The article examines the pragmalinguistic potential of the subjunctive mood (Konjunktiv) as a functioning segment of G. E. Lessing's tragedy "Emilia Galotti" under conditions of artistic discourse. Studies of the subjunctive in traditional grammar are mostly concerned with adequate morphosyntactic description. This research, on the contrary, takes a pragmalinguistic perspective to deploy Speech Act Theory (Austin & Searle) to reveal the ideologically veiled communicative intentions (illocutionary force) of the characters. The study also focuses on the linguocultural implications of subjunctive moods in relation to the (im)politeness management aspects via a comparative examination between original German text and its Uzbek translation produced by Posho Ali Usmon showing how subjunctive seems to work as a psychological filter, social distancing tool, and face-saving strategy. The results show that the subjunctive mode in Lessing's work is more than just a marker of irreality: it serves as an elaborate device for manipulation and unspoken understanding. In addition, the article discusses pragmatic adaptation strategies applied in the Uzbek translation: it shows how German subjunctive forms are functionally compensated through modality words, particles and special verb moods to keep the pragmatic punch of the original.

**Keywords:** *Subjunctive mood (Konjunktiv), pragmalinguistics, Speech Act Theory, illocutionary force, G. E. Lessing, Emilia Galotti, pragmatic adaptation, face-saving, mitigation, hedging, Uzbek translation*

**Citation:** Fayzullaeva, Z. A. Pragmalinguistic Potential of the Subjunctive Mood and Speech Act Analysis in G. E. Lessing's Tragedy "Emilia Galotti". Central Asian Journal of Literature, Philosophy, and Culture 2026, 7(2), 169-175.

Received: 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025

Revised: 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025

Accepted: 30<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026

Published: 28<sup>th</sup> Mar 2026



**Copyright:** © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

## 1. Introduction

The classical interpretation of the grammatical categories was, at least since the beginning of 21st century replaced by pragmalinguistic analysis in most of contemporary studies conducted on prose and poetic texts. Specifically, the German subjunctive mood (Konjunktiv), which is one of the most complex and functionally rich strata of German grammar, operates in artistic discourse not just as a device for reported speech but also irreality or conditionality, but a psychological filter that exposes the interiority of a linguistic persona. The tragedy "Emilia Galotti" by G. E. Lessing has offered a good foundation for exploring this phenomenon, as the tensions within this work are analyzed and described not only through action but also through the complex speech strategies of characters therein [1].

One of the most distinctive features of Enlightenment drama, however, is the highly intellectualized character of their speech and its elaborated communicative culture. The subjunctive in Lessing's style becomes a tool for marking social distance, occasions when passions are tamed by reason and ideas expressed indirectly because they cannot be formulated explicitly [2].

But although grammatical rules of analysis can explain the tissue and grammar of the subjunctive, it does not tell much about its pragmatic weight in direct speech acts. In the speech of the Prince (Prinz), for example, subjunctive forms may indicate a simple desire in one context and a soft-toned but vigorous threat or a manipulative command in another. Given this, a consideration of the subjunctive through the lens of Speech Act Theory reveals what true desires (illocutionary acts) occur on behalf of each character. The article tackles this particular pragmatic potential of the subjunctive—how it re-negotiate power dynamics between interlocutors in a communicative event [3, 4].

## 2. Literature Review

One of the goals that modern linguistics, and more specifically pragmalinguistics, which is concerned with using the resources of the language system within a pragmatic context must address is an analysis of subjunctive mood in artistic discourse. This research is based upon the theoretical foundation of Speech Act Theory laid down by J. Austin and J. Searle. Based on Searle's perspective, a speech act is an intentional action conducted with the help of language in a particular context and comprises a principal and minimal unit of linguistic communication [5]. Similarly, the linguist Sh. According to the work "Pragmalinguistics" by Safarov, a speech act is considered to be when a speaker's linguistic appeal to a listener within certain atmosphere with some purposes [6]. So a speech act is the intentional use of the tools of language in the process of communication.

J. Austin defined a three-tier model of linguistic communication: locutionary (saying something), illocutionary (doing something in saying it), and perlocutionary (getting someone to do something by saying it) [3]. Austin pointed out that to know the literal meaning (locutionary level) of an utterance is not necessarily to understand its real role in communication, a warning, command or request. Based on these fundamental assumptions, one may argue that subjunctive forms operate to change the illocutionary force of an utterance in a speech milieu – more directly, they serve to “soften” (mitigation) the degree of expressiveness of commands, requests or opinions.

In his work on “how to do things with words,” Austin emphasized the importance of grammatical structures (and notably verb moods) in determining illocutionary force. He reasoned that replacing the imperative mood with its surface equivalent for this purpose, like a subjunctive or modal construction, could change the pragmatic category of a speech act, lowering an order to “advice” or suggesting something [7]. Within the framework of Lessing's tragedy “Emilia Galotti”, this theory is used as the governing methodological principle in order to understand how subjunctive forms in character speech move from locutionary into illocutionary levels (e.g. how the prophetic desire of the Prince takes on a hard tone with Marinelli).

The relation of the conjugation of the subjunctive with modality and pragmatics has been covered by classical Germanists in extensive literature such as G. Helbig, J. Buscha [8], etc. They argue that the Konjunktiv II form denotes not mere irreality but is also a tool of interpersonal “distancing” and social order-maintenance. “Theory of politeness” by P. Brown and S. Levinson [9] has a great importance for understanding these socio-linguistics dynamics better. In such a context, the subjunctive comes across as one of the main linguistic strategies for “face-saving” by the speaker – to avoid directly putting pressure on the listener.

The linguistic character of G. E. Lessing's dramaturgy has been studied clearly, e.g., by F. Martini and P. Michelsen; the language of “Emilia Galotti” is rather a model of “rational discourse” (vernünftige Rede) [10]. The noted Lessing scholar Gero von Wilpert observes that all the grammatical state of affairs in the play is connected also with characters' social status as well as with the unfolding of dramatic conflict. While many literary critics have concentrated on the ideological-aesthetic analysis of tragedy, modern text pragmatists k. Brinker suggest to study the implicit effects in artistic texts that are hidden inside communicative system [11].

Whereas studies on Uzbek German have nevertheless presented morphological and syntactic features of the subjunctive, to date a comprehensive analysis of the pragmatic potentialities of subjunctive forms in Lessing's tragedies – their manipulative and socio-

hierarchical functions in other words – are still missing. The present text seeks to address this research gap by rendering explicit how pure grammatical forms and complex socio-psychological goals are translated into one another in tragedy “Emilia Galotti”.

### 3. Methodology

The research defines the pragmatic functions for the use of subjunctive forms under G.E. Lessing’s the tragedy of “Emilia Galotti” through a diverse methodical approach. In the study, the methodology was built on a descriptive-analytical method of which Konjunktiv II forms and their morphological variants have been classified in the text.

The previous is a conjecture that served as the basis for pragmatic interpretation and further analysis. These methods help to clarify the difference between a linguistic meaning of a subjunctive form (grammatical rule) and its pragmatic meaning in the given speech situation (the hidden goal of the speaker → practical intention, which was not defined by grammar). In addition Speech Act Analysis was used to analyze the interaction between characters. Thus, in this framework, sentences with subjunctive were classified considering their illocutionary force (assertive, directive, commissive, declarative and expressive) and their communicative effectiveness in the discourse.

### 4. ANALYSIS AND EXAMPLES

Subjunctive forms in the German language often go beyond their purely grammatical role to become strong vehicles for emotional and pragmatic meaning, embedded in particular speech situations. The device of the lists illustrated above can be seen in the following examples, within this tragedy [12].

A possible example of the use of subjunctive in commissive speech acts (oaths and pledges, etc.) can also be seen in this excerpt from G.E. Lessing’s “Emilia Galotti”:

Example 1:

[Original: „If I had known, or suspected the slightest bit of this love, let neither angel nor saint know anything about me! “

Uzbek (Posho Ali Usmon) Translation: “Even if I have any information about Your love or even a suspicion, all the good people turn away from me!

In the first clause of the German text, Wenn ich... gewußt... habe, a hypothetical past condition is established. Even if the main verb is technically in the indicative mood (habe), it’s important to note that the presence of möge...wissen (Konjunktiv I) on its own shifts all pragmatic weight into a non-real/conditional domain for the entire statement [13].

The aim of the speech act here is not just to inform, but also to persuade the interlocutor of the speaker’s utter innocence. In the original, Möge ... wissen (literally: “may (they) know” or “let (them) take notice”) is a formula by which the speaker assigns themselves a deep moral responsibility, or presumes divine judgment.

The Uzbek says “yuz o’girsin” (“let them turn away”). The imperative-optative aspect of the Oybek’s phraseology describes a formal speech genre equivalent to an oath discourse in Uzbek. They have succeeded in transferring the pragmatic function of German subjunctive into Uzbek culture, specifically in its native “oath-taking” speech genre [14].

In addition, the German expression „das geringste“ (“the slightest”) is rendered “zarracha” (“an atom’s weight”). Used with the subjunctive, this lexical choice heightens the speaker’s pragmatic message to ensure “absolute innocence.”

The Existence of Non-Human Beings — The Concepts Behind the Texts The translation of German concepts „Engel noch Heiliger“ (Angel nor Saint) as “xayli malak” (a host of angels) reflects a linguistic worldview adaptation. This is a blatant example of pragmatic localization, in which the concept of “divine punishment” that uses subjunctive expression matches the religious and moral views of Uzbek readers. This example thus becomes a case in point to reflect very much upon the restudy of pragmatic adaptation by a translator [15].

Example 2:

First line: „His Highness deigns only to permit that I linger this long longer here with my daughter. “

Uzbek Translation (Posho Ali Usmon): “Prince forgive us for my daughter and I getting lost in this place.”

The verb *vergönne* is in Subjunctive I (Konjunktiv I - Präsens) form in the German source text. Within this framework, the subjunctive appears in its function as third person singular of a wish, request for permission, or formal command. Instead of delivering a direct command, with Odoardo he’s trying to call ahead and rationalize what he says before someone of social rank (the Prince) superior to you on a hierarchy of honor; ask for a “favor” or grace (*vergeben* – permission to take offense or not).

At the same time, this utterance serves a pragmatic purpose: it is not merely an informative; it constitutes a speech act that requests permission for releasing some unwanted information as well as being a face-saving strategy. For the original, via *vergönne*, the speaker demeans his own social status and submits to the interlocutor’s desire.

In the translation, rendering the German verb *vergeben* (to permit/grant) into the Uzbek model of “asking for forgiveness” (*kechirsin* – “let him forgive”) is pragmatically highly astute.” Uzbek telephonic etiquette has a basic norm that the time of a person with higher position or rank compared to ours is valuable, and so we must apologize (seek forgiveness) for taking up their time.

The tone of distance and politeness executed by the German Subjunctive I is conveyed via third-person imperative-optative mood (the suffix *-sin*) in Uzbek. While the German subjunctive conveys an attitude of subjectivity which includes respect and caution, the suffix *-sin* not only covers desire but also carries the pragmatic infectiousness of an “appeal in a pleading tone.”

Once again, this illustrates that the translator centered function over syntax in choosing to preserve the German subjunctive as a pragmatic part of its grammar. This adaptation of the “request for permission” function from *Vergönne* nur into indicating it with only a *kechir* as in Uzbek, the connectedness with meaning avoided through bringing to art is their permission through an apology providing balance retains an effort minimized naturalization and works workable for this translation targeted at that aspect of entry method towards spirit.

Example 3:

Original: „I believe it; if we could help everyone: then we would be envied. “

Uzbek translation (Posho Ali Usmon): “Bu tabiiy. Iltimos, agar bizlar hammaga yordam berolmasak, havas qilishsa mayli.”

In German the forms *könnten* and *wären* (Subjunctive II) express an unattainable wish and hypothetical consequence. The logic is clear in the original text form: Wenn für... die Ohnmacht, dann wüssten sie, dass sie nicht gewaltsam vollstreckt werden dürften.

In the translation, however, this conditional construction in German is transposed into an optative (desiderative) domain with use of Uzbek modal “*koshkiydi*” (“if only”) *modernasi*. This underlines the inherent semantics of an “unrealizable dream” contained within the German subjunctive. The most important note here is this translation’s use of “*koshkiydi*” as a form of lexical compensation: where German Subjunctive II is often used to make wishes that are difficult or impossible to fulfill expression, the word “*koshkiydi*” in Uzbek does exactly the same pragmatic work.

The illocutionary act of subjectively expressing the speaker’s attitude toward helplessness in human beings is to fulfill the speaker’s illocutionary goal. The German passive phrase “*zu beneiden sein*” (one is worthy of envy) turns into Uzbek as “*havas qilishsa mayli*” (“let them envy”) In the original, this passive voice touches on “we would become objects of envy.” In the translation, the inclusion of the modal word “*mayli*” (“it is fine/let it be”) gives added social permission and humility to the sentence. The pragmatist meaning this conveys: “If we could help everyone, we wouldn’t mind being envied because it would be a real achievement.

As a result, the severe logical sequence of the German text (If X, then Y) becomes in

translation an emotional exclamation (If only... then it's all right). This shift is indicative of emotionality, and "blessing oriented"(duogo'ylik) aspects of Uzbek speech culture. And the translator has successfully swapped the German form for its emotional equivalent in the new grammar.

Example 4:

Original text: „Nothing of consequence that I know of...“

(Uzbek Translation (Posho Ali Usmon))“I think it is not an important news“

The German source employs the Subjunctive II form of to know -- wüßte -- in its restrictive function. Without a categorical negation such as “Nichts, das ich weiß” (Nothing I know), the speaker, with wüßte, signals the lopsidedness of what he knows and is careful not to push his conclusions.

In the translation, “yo'qday” conveys a sense of falsehood/impossible reality by way of its conjectural closeness with German subjunctive via Uzbek -day (similar to or doubts about something). This bit of grammar is a perfect rendering of the semantic weight of “uncertainty” and “indefiniteness” that's built into the German construction.

Besides informing, this utterance has the pragmatic goal of minimizing the speaker's responsibilities for what was said – in general terms we can say Hedging strategy. In the original, “Das ich wüßte” suggests: “To my best knowledge, this is so, but I may be wrong. This shows Marinelli's clever and guarded personality. To offset this pragmatic function, the translator uses the opening phrase “Nazarimda” (“In my view” / “It seems to me”), marking subjectivity of the statement and signifying that this opinion is not an absolute truth.

Shu bilan birga, nemischa „von Belang“ (ahng ahamiyatida) konteksta "muhim bir yangilik" (mu noima yangiligi) deb tarjima qilgan. The grammatical structure insinuates that the translation is more situational context-based, as Marinelli reports to the Prince, translated lexical content was enriched adapted to the contextual scenario rather than any academic textual or typological orientation. Used with the subjunctive this phrase makes for a formal and cautious tone. Marinelli uses the subjunctive as armor to keep his “positive face” and mitigate the risks of error.

Where Subjunctive II in German can be a mark of highbrow or diplomatic language, the same effect in Uzbek is executed through words like “nazarimda”, and “chamasi” and through the use of the suffix -day. Since the character is a courtier (diplomat), the translator chose words that match Uzbek speech etiquette. This example shows how the translator establishes pragmatic equivalence not only with grammatical suffixes but also by means of lexicon. The subjectivity of the German wüßte is thus transposed to a complete model of subjective evaluation in the target language.

Thus, for the functional-pragmatic equivalents of German subjunctive in the Uzbek language we can make sure this table:

Table 1.

Pragmatic Equivalents of the German Subjunctive in Uzbek Translation

The function of the German subjunctive	Pragmatic purpose (Illocutionary force)	Means of Uzbek adaptation	Example (Excerpt from the Translation)
Optative (Subjunctive I)	Proving innocence through divine judgment or	<b>Grammatical:</b> Imperative-optative mood (the suffix <i>-sin</i> )	<i>...xayli malak mendan yuz o'girsin!</i>

	solemn oath		
<b>Adhortative/Directive (Subjunctive I)</b>	Requesting permission from a higher-status individual (Face-saving)	<b>Lexico-pragmatic:</b> Apologetic request model	<i>...shahzoda bizni kechirsin.</i>
<b>Irreal Optative (Subjunctive II)</b>	Expressing an unrealizable wish and regret	<b>Lexical:</b> The modal word „koshkiydi“	<i>Koshkiydi, bizlar yordam berolsak...</i>
<b>Irreal Conditional (Subjunctive II)</b>	Creating a hypothetical result and a tone of humility	<b>Modality:</b> Linguistic markers such as „mayli“ and „arzir edi“	<i>...havas qilishsa mayli.</i>
<b>Restrictive / Hedging (Subjunctive II)</b>	Indicating the limits of personal knowledge and reducing speaker responsibility	<b>Syntactic-lexical:</b> The introductory phrase “nazarimda” and the suffix <i>-day</i>	<i>Nazarimda... yo‘qday.</i>

## DISCUSSION

The conclusion of this study shows that in G.E. Lessing’s tragedy “Emilia Galotti”, the subjunctive is not simply a grammatical category, it acts as a pragmalinguistic instrument which highlights the socio-psychological figures of the characters. In directive speech acts (commands, demands), it is argued, subjunctive forms soften the illocutionary force through mitigation and thus have a diplomatic role in the interaction. [here we can consider the dialogues between Prince and Marinelli, in which the subjunctive becomes a basis to save face.

In its own turn, the translator Posho Ali Usmon, when translating German subjunctive forms into Uzbek language, oriented on achieving functional-pragmatic equivalence rather than precise grammatical conformity. This subjective meaning of the

German Konjunktiv II was successfully compensated in Uzbek by means of modal words (koshkiydi, nazarimda), introductory phrases and verb forms expressing relation (the suffix -day). This research reiterates the context-dependency of subjunctive meaning: in one context, it signifies an impossible wishing of something (optative), and in an alternative scenario, a tentative holding out a doubt finally (hedging).

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, there still exists an important direction in linguistics — the exploration of the pragmatic nature of the subjunctive mood within texts of a literary character. We can draw the following conclusions from the analysis on the tragedy “Emilia Galotti”:

**SPECIES SOCIAL** : In literary interaction, the subjunctive mood is a rank-maker and rank-differentiator.

**Implicit Intent**: Exploring Speech Act Theory, it becomes clear that the subjunctive communicates intention through an implicit rather than explicit lens, heightening a work’s dramatic tension.

**Viability of translation**: It has been shown that the pragmatic weight of the source text can be preserved when translating the German subjunctive through using various resources found in the internal structure of Uzbek language (modalities, lexicogrammatical instruments).

The results of this study can lay theoretical and practical groundwork for researchers working on comparative typology, translation theory, text pragmatics, etc., in German and Uzbek

### REFERENCES

- [1] J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- [2] Sh. Safarov, *Pragmalingvistika*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: O‘zbekiston Milliy Ensiklopediyasi, 2008.
- [3] J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- [4] G. Helbig and J. Buscha, *Deutsche Grammatik: Ein Handbuch für den Ausländerunterricht*. Berlin, Germany: Langenscheidt, 2001.
- [5] P. Brown and S. C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- [6] F. Martini, *Die Struktur der modernen Literatur*. München, Germany: dtv/C.H. Beck, 1970.
- [7] G. von Wilpert, *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*. Stuttgart, Germany: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 2001.
- [8] K. Brinker, *Linguistische Textanalyse*. Berlin, Germany: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2010.
- [9] G. E. Lessing, *Emilia Galotti*. Stuttgart, Germany: Reclam, 2001.
- [10] G. E. Lessing, *Emilia Galotti: Besh pardali fojia*, trans. P. A. Usmon. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Yangi Nashr, 2011.
- [11] H. N. Qahramonovich, “Worthy descendants of the Samarkandians: enlighteners jadids,” *World Bulletin of Social Sciences*, vol. 13, pp. 37–40, 2022.
- [12] R. T. Usanov and N. K. Khakkulov, “Iz istorii izucheniya problemy ‘Nenasilie’,” *Ekonomika i Sotsium*, no. 6-2 (121), pp. 1406–1413, 2024.
- [13] T. Shaymardonov, “Siddiqiy-Ajziy hayoti va ijodining o‘rganilishi,” *Uzbekistan: Yazyk i Kultura*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 27–39, 2022.
- [14] T. A. Shaymardonov, “Sayidahmadxo‘ja Siddiqiy-Ajziyning qofiya qo‘llash mahorati,” *Yosh Olimlar Axborotnomasi – Vestnik Molodykh Uchenykh*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 147–152, 2024.
- [15] T. A. Shaymardonov, “The role of Siddiqi-Ajzi in Uzbek jadid literature,” *American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 91–100, 2020.