PRAGMATIC REALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT "SINCERITY" IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE DISCOURSE

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Abstract. *The article explores the pragmatic realization of the linguocultural concept "sincerity" in English communicative discourse. While sincerity is traditionally associated with moral or psychological states, this study treats it as an interactionally constructed phenomenon emerging through discourse practices and pragmatic inference. Drawing on classical speech act theory, conversational implicature, politeness theory, and discourse marker research, as well as recent studies, the article demonstrates that sincerity is not lexically encoded but inferred from contextualized speaker behavior. Special attention is given to sincerity in speech acts such as apologies, refusals, and promises, and to the role of stance adverbials and pragmatic markers. The findings confirm that sincerity in English functions as a context-sensitive stance shaped by accountability, face management, and interpersonal alignment.*

Keywords: *sincerity, pragmatics, speech acts, discourse markers, stance, politeness, English discourse*

Introduction. Sincerity is a key evaluative category in human interaction, closely linked to trust, credibility, and moral accountability. In English communicative discourse, speakers are routinely assessed not only on the informational content of their utterances but also on whether they are perceived as sincere. From a linguocultural perspective, sincerity constitutes a socially significant concept associated with honesty, openness, and emotional authenticity. However, despite its centrality, sincerity is rarely communicated through explicit lexical means alone. Instead, it is inferred through pragmatic choices, discourse positioning, and interactional context.

Earlier semantic approaches often equated sincerity with specific lexical items such as sincere or honestly. Yet contemporary pragmatic research increasingly demonstrates that sincerity cannot be reduced to lexical meaning. Recent discourse-oriented studies show that sincerity judgments are highly variable and context-dependent, particularly in interactionally sensitive speech acts such as apologies and refusals. This shift in focus reflects a broader trend in pragmatics toward viewing meaning as emergent and interactionally negotiated rather than encoded.

The present study aims to examine how the linguocultural concept "sincerity" is pragmatically realized in English communicative discourse by integrating classical pragmatic theory with recent empirical research. The article seeks to show that sincerity functions as an interactional stance effect shaped by inferential reasoning, politeness constraints, and discourse-pragmatic signaling.

Materials and methods. The study adopts a qualitative, theory-driven pragmatic approach. The analysis is based on the synthesis and interpretation of established theoretical models and recent empirical findings reported in the literature. Four interrelated frameworks form the methodological basis of the study.

First, speech act theory, as developed by John R. Searle, provides the conceptual foundation for understanding sincerity as a felicity condition. Searle's model emphasizes that for certain illocutionary acts—most notably expressives and commissives—the presence of a genuine psychological state is a prerequisite for successful performance.

Second, the inferential dimension of sincerity is examined through the theory of conversational implicature proposed by H. Paul Grice. Grice's cooperative principle explains how hearers derive speaker intentions beyond literal meaning, a process central to sincerity interpretation.

Third, politeness theory, formulated by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, is used to analyze how sincerity is moderated by face considerations and social norms.

Finally, discourse-pragmatic marker theory, represented by Deborah Schiffrin and Bruce Fraser, provides tools for interpreting sincerity-related expressions as procedural elements guiding interaction.

The analysis focuses on sincerity-relevant linguistic resources in English, including stance adverbials (honestly, sincerely), honesty phrases (to be honest), and commitment constructions (I promise, I swear), interpreted within their discourse and interactional contexts.

Results. The analysis shows that sincerity in English discourse is realized through a cluster of pragmatic strategies rather than through direct semantic encoding. One key area where sincerity becomes interactionally salient is the realization of speech acts.

In commissive acts such as promises and guarantees, sincerity is reinforced through explicit commitment devices that raise the interpersonal cost of non-fulfillment. Expressions such as "I promise" and "I swear" function as public accountability mechanisms, signaling the speaker's readiness to be held responsible for future actions. This finding aligns with Searle's view that sincerity conditions are socially ratified through commitment rather than introspection.

In expressive acts, particularly apologies, sincerity plays a decisive role in pragmatic success. Classical research by Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Elite Olshtain established that apologies are evaluated not only by their structural components but also by perceived genuineness. Recent empirical work strengthens this claim. For

example, Michael Haugh and Wei-Ling M. Chang demonstrate that perceptions of apology sincerity are highly variable and context-sensitive, with interlocutors differing significantly in how they interpret intensifiers and expressions of regret. Their findings confirm that sincerity is not an inherent property of apology formulas but an interpretive outcome shaped by expectations, relational history, and interactional norms.

Another significant result concerns the role of pragmatic markers and stance adverbials in signaling sincerity. Sentence-initial uses of expressions such as honestly or to be honest frequently precede potentially face-threatening acts, including refusals and disagreements. Recent studies on stance adverbials in spoken English, such as Elena Castello, show that these markers function to position the speaker epistemically and interpersonally rather than to modify propositional content. Their pragmatic role lies in framing the utterance as candid or personally accountable.

At the same time, the analysis reveals the ambivalent pragmatic effect of sincerity markers. While they often enhance credibility, they may also trigger suspicion when overused. Research on ostensible versus genuine refusals by Ying Su illustrates how speakers may display apparent sincerity while strategically avoiding commitment. These findings highlight that sincerity markers can be exploited pragmatically, reinforcing the need for inferential interpretation.

Discussion. The results support the view that sincerity in English discourse is best understood as an interactional stance rather than a fixed semantic attribute. Classical speech act theory explains why sincerity is a prerequisite for certain illocutionary acts, but recent pragmatic research shows that sincerity is always subject to interpretation and negotiation.

Gricean implicature provides a useful explanatory framework for understanding why sincerity markers can produce opposite effects in different contexts. Marked emphasis on honesty may strengthen trust when contextual cues support it, but it may also prompt skepticism when speakers have apparent strategic interests. This inferential variability has been empirically confirmed in recent pragmatic studies of refusals and apologies.

Politeness theory further explains why sincerity is frequently mitigated in English discourse. Studies on refusals and invitation responses by Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig and Ying Su show that speakers often balance sincerity with face-saving strategies, producing utterances that are interactionally appropriate but not fully transparent. This supports the claim that English communicative norms prioritize relational harmony alongside honesty.

From a discourse-pragmatic perspective, sincerity emerges as a procedural effect achieved through stance positioning, alignment, and accountability management. Discourse markers and stance adverbials guide hearer interpretation by signaling how

the utterance should be understood within the interaction, reinforcing the idea that sincerity is enacted rather than stated.

Conclusion. The present study demonstrates that the linguocultural concept "sincerity" in English communicative discourse is realized primarily through pragmatic mechanisms. Integrating classical theories with recent Scopus-indexed research, the analysis shows that sincerity is not directly encoded in lexical meaning but emerges as a context-sensitive stance shaped by speech act performance, inferential reasoning, politeness constraints, and discourse-pragmatic signaling.

These findings have important implications for linguocultural and semantic research. They suggest that the semantic components of sincerity—such as honesty, emotional authenticity, and responsibility—become empirically observable only through their pragmatic realization in discourse. Consequently, pragmatic analysis is indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of sincerity as a linguocultural concept in English.

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