
PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF THE INFINITIVE IN ENGLISH LITERARY TEXT

Oblokulova Mastura Mizrobovna
Teacher of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

Abstract

This article examines the pragmatic functions of the infinitive in English literary text. It analyzes the ability of infinitive constructions to express authorial intention, emotivity, modality, evaluation, and persuasive impact. Based on examples from works of English literature (J. Austen, C. Dickens, V. Woolf, E. Hemingway), their role in organizing narration and forming the subjective-modal plane is revealed. The research results demonstrate that the infinitive in a literary text performs not only a grammatical but also a pragmatic function, realizing the author's communicative strategies and contributing to the expression of cognitive-evaluative meaning.

Keywords: Infinitive; pragmatics; literary text; intentionality; modality; communicative function; English language.

Introduction

The pragmatic approach to language analysis is focused on identifying the relationship between linguistic structures and their communicative functions. The infinitive, traditionally regarded as a non-finite form of the verb, performs not only a syntactic but also a pragmatic role in literary text, expressing intentions, emotions, evaluations and implicit meanings.

The relevance of this research is determined by the growing interest of modern linguistics in the cognitive-pragmatic aspects of text. In fiction, infinitive constructions often become a means of speech compression, emotional impact and the structure of a character's inner speech.

The aim of this article is to determine the pragmatic functions of the infinitive in English literary text. To achieve the aim, the following objectives are set:

1. to define the pragmatic status of the infinitive within the system of verbal forms;
2. to classify its functions in literary discourse;
3. to analyse the contexts of infinitive constructions used by English authors of the 19th – 20th centuries.

In English, the infinitive is a non-finite verb form that combines properties of both a verb and a noun. It expresses an action in an abstract form and does not indicate tense, person or number. From the perspective of functional grammar (Halliday, 1994; Comrie, 1976), the infinitive can implement various communicative purposes: indicating purpose (He came to help), cause (He was shocked to hear it), result or evaluation (It was nice to meet you).

Pragmatics considers the infinitive as a carrier of intentionality, that is, the ability to convey the volitional orientation of the subject (Leech, 1983; Searle, 1969). In the text this is manifested in the expression of urging, desire, necessity or emotional reaction.

Infinitive constructions may perform emotive-evaluative functions (To see her smile again was happiness itself), persuasive functions (To be honest, I never liked him), and cognitive functions that express the inner reflections of characters (To live, to think, to feel – that was all she wanted).

Considering the semantic and pragmatic potential of the infinitive, it can be noted that the English infinitive possesses a wide pragmatic range. Its forms -simple, perfect, progressive and passive - allow the expression of temporal and aspectual relations, which influence the pragmatic interpretation of utterance.

The main pragmatic functions of the infinitive include:

1. Intentional function – reflects the subject's intention (He decided to leave).
2. Emotive function – conveys emotional reaction (To lose him now was unbearable).
3. Evaluative function – expresses the speaker's subjective attitude (It was foolish to ignore her advice).
4. Persuasive function – strengthens the author's influence on the reader, often found in authorial remarks (To be frank, she hated the place).
5. Expressive function – used for rhetorical emphasis, especially in repeated sequences (To dream, to fight, to hope again).

Thus, in literary text the infinitive goes beyond its grammatical form, becoming a tool of authorial pragmatics.

While examining the pragmatic functions of the infinitive in English literary text, we note that the infinitive serves as a means of expressing purpose and intention in the text. In literary text, the infinitive often marks the character's goal and volitional direction. For example, in Jane Austen: She wished to please, to be admired, to be loved (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*).

Here the infinitive creates a sequence of desires, forming the heroine's intentional plane. The construction to be loved conveys psychological motivation, reflecting the character's inner values.

The infinitive and emotional evaluation. The infinitive can express emotional states, performing an emotive function: To see him suffer was more than she could bear (Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*).

The infinitive phrase "to see him suffer" functions as an emotional trigger, revealing the observer's inner condition. The infinitive here not only names an action but also conveys empathy.

The infinitive in the structure of narrative modality. In Virginia Woolf's prose, infinitives frequently create the effect of an inner monologue, revealing streams of consciousness: To be, to exist, to feel the world turning - that was her life (Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*).

The repetition of infinitives performs a pragmatic function of intensification and internal self-expression of the character.

Persuasive and discursive functions of the infinitive. Infinitive constructions are also used by the author to express evaluation or axiological commentary. For example: To tell the truth, he was not the man she thought he was (Ernest Hemingway).

The formula to tell the truth serves as a pragmatic introductory expression that reinforces the credibility of the statement and regulates the relationship between author and reader.

Analysis of literary examples.

The systematization of examples from English literature allows us to distinguish several tendencies:

Pragmatic Function	Example	Source
Intentional	He came to save her life.	J. Austen
Emotive	To lose him now was unbearable.	Ch. Dickens

Evaluative	It was wrong to judge her so harshly.	V. Woolf
Persuasive	To be honest, I didn't care.	E. Hemingway
Expressive	To live, to think, to fight again!	W. Shakespeare

Thus, infinitive constructions are an important means of textual pragmatics, fulfilling the functions of expressing motivation, evaluation, emotional reaction and authorial position.

The infinitive in English literary text represents a multidimensional means of implementing pragmatic strategies. Its functional flexibility allows the combination of cognitive, emotional and evaluative meanings, which makes it a significant element of literary expression.

In literary text, the infinitive contributes to the formation of the author's intention, the organization of inner speech, and the expression of emotive and evaluative attitudes. It serves as a tool of pragmatic influence on the reader, creating an effect of subjectivity and involvement in the narrative.

References

1. Виноградов В. В. Русский язык: Грамматическое учение о слове. – М.: Наука, 1972. -720 с. - С. 312–338.
2. Комиссаров В. Н. Теория перевода (лингвистические аспекты). – М.: Высшая школа, 1980. -253 с. - С. 142–159.
3. Хлебникова Н. А. Сопоставительная грамматика русского и английского языков. - СПб.: Филол. фак. СПбГУ, 2010. - 214 с. - С. 101-134.
4. Comrie B. Aspect: An Introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems. - Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976. - 134 p. – P. 23-45.
5. Halliday M. A. K. An Introduction to functional grammar. -2nd ed. - London: Arnold, 1994. - 384 p. - P. 196 -221.
6. Leech G. N. Principles of Pragmatics. - London: Longman, 1983. - 250 p. - P. 115-142.
7. Searle J. R. Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. - Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969. -203 p. - P. 34-61.
8. Woolf V. Mrs Dalloway. - London: Hogarth Press, 1925. - 296 p. - P. 87-120.
9. Austen J. Pride and Prejudice. - London: Penguin Books, 2003. - 432 p.-P. 44-76.
10. Dickens Ch. Bleak House. - London: Chapman and Hall, 1853. -624 p. – P. 142-164.
11. Hemingway E. The sun also rises. - New York: Scribner, 1926. -251 p. -P. 88-110.