

PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF SPEECH ACTS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A CROSS- CULTURAL LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Annotation: This article provides a comprehensive cross-cultural analysis of the pragmatic functions of speech acts in English and Uzbek. It focuses on how speakers of both languages perform communicative actions such as requests, apologies, compliments, and refusals in different social contexts. The study examines the influence of cultural values, including politeness, respect, and social hierarchy, on the realization of speech acts.

Keywords: speech acts, pragmatics, cross-cultural communication, politeness strategies, English language, Uzbek language.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillarida nutq aktlarining pragmatik funksiyalari madaniyatlararo yondashuv asosida batafsil tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda so'rov, uzr, maqto'v va rad etish kabi nutq aktlarining turli ijtimoiy vaziyatlarda qanday qo'llanishi ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: nutq aktlari, pragmatika, madaniyatlararo muloqot, muloyimlik strategiyalari, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili.

Аннотация: В данной статье проводится подробный межкультурный анализ прагматических функций речевых актов в английском и узбекском языках. Рассматривается, как носители обоих языков реализуют такие коммуникативные действия, как просьбы, извинения, комплименты и отказы в различных социальных ситуациях. Особое внимание уделяется влиянию культурных факторов, таких как вежливость, уважение и социальная иерархия, на использование речевых актов.

Ключевые слова: речевые акты, прагматика, межкультурная коммуникация, стратегии вежливости, английский язык, узбекский язык.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a system of grammatical rules and vocabulary; it is a dynamic and functional tool that enables individuals to perform actions and express intentions within social interaction. In everyday communication, people do not simply produce sentences—they perform acts such as requesting help, apologizing for mistakes, expressing gratitude, giving compliments, or refusing offers. These communicative actions are known as **speech acts**, and they represent one of the central concepts in the field of pragmatics.

The theory of speech acts was initially developed by J. L. Austin and later refined by John Searle, who emphasized that utterances carry both literal meanings and intended functions. In real-life communication, understanding the intended function (illocutionary force) of an utterance is often more important than understanding its literal meaning. For instance, the sentence “Can you pass the salt?” is not a question about ability, but a polite request.

However, speech acts are not universal in their form or usage. Their realization is deeply influenced by cultural norms, values, and social expectations. What is considered polite in one



language may sound too direct or even rude in another. Therefore, a cross-cultural comparison of speech acts provides valuable insights into how language and culture interact.

This article aims to analyze the pragmatic functions of speech acts in English and Uzbek by examining how common communicative acts—such as requests, apologies, compliments, and refusals—are expressed in both languages. The study also highlights the role of politeness strategies, indirectness, and cultural values in shaping communication patterns. Understanding these differences is especially important for language learners, teachers, and anyone involved in intercultural communication.

1. Theoretical Background of Speech Acts

Speech acts can be classified into five main categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. While these categories exist in both English and Uzbek, their practical usage varies significantly depending on context and culture.

In English-speaking cultures, communication often prioritizes clarity, efficiency, and individual expression. In contrast, Uzbek communication tends to emphasize respect, social hierarchy, and maintaining harmony within interpersonal relationships. These cultural orientations strongly influence how speech acts are performed.

2. Requests: Degrees of Directness and Politeness

Requests are one of the most frequently used speech acts and provide a clear example of cross-cultural variation.

In English, indirectness is a key strategy for politeness:

- “Could you help me with this task?”
- “Would you mind closing the door?”

Such forms reduce imposition and give the listener a sense of choice.

In Uzbek, requests are also polite but often include additional markers of respect:

- “Iltimos, yordam bera olasizmi?”
- “Yordam qilib bera olasizmi, iltimos?”

Moreover, Uzbek speakers may add softening phrases or explanations:

- “Agar vaqtingiz bo‘lsa, yordam bera olasizmi?”

Analysis:

While both languages use indirect strategies, Uzbek tends to incorporate more relational and context-sensitive elements, especially when addressing elders or superiors. The concept of respect (*hurmat*) plays a crucial role in shaping requests.

3. Compliments and Responses: Cultural Values in Practice

Compliments are used to maintain positive social relationships, but their interpretation differs across cultures.

In English:

- “That’s a beautiful dress.”
Response: “Thank you.”

In Uzbek:

- “Ko‘ylagingiz juda chiroyli.”
Response: “Yo‘q, oddiygina.”

Analysis:

English speakers typically accept compliments directly, reflecting a culture that values self-confidence. Uzbek speakers, however, often downplay compliments to show modesty and humility. This difference can lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication.

4. Refusals: Indirectness and Face-Saving Strategies

Refusals are particularly sensitive speech acts because they can threaten social harmony.

English refusals may be relatively direct:

- “I can’t attend the meeting.”
- “I’m afraid I won’t be able to help.”

Uzbek refusals tend to be more indirect and softened:

- “Afsuski, bora olmayman.”
- “Balki keyingi safar yordam bera olarman.”

Often, Uzbek speakers avoid direct “no” responses and instead provide reasons or alternatives.

Analysis:

This reflects the importance of **face-saving strategies** in Uzbek culture, where maintaining positive relationships is prioritized over directness.

5. The Role of Culture in Pragmatic Competence

Cultural norms shape not only what people say but how they say it. In Uzbek society, communication is influenced by age, status, and social distance. For example, addressing elders requires more formal and respectful language.

In English-speaking contexts, communication is generally more egalitarian, and directness is often acceptable, especially among peers.

Implication:

Language learners must develop **pragmatic competence**, which includes understanding cultural norms, not just grammar. Without this, learners may produce grammatically correct but socially inappropriate sentences.

6. Practical Implications for Teaching and Learning

For teachers, especially in EFL contexts, it is essential to:

- Teach real-life communication patterns
- Use role-plays and authentic dialogues
- Highlight differences between native and target language norms

For example, students should learn that:

- “Open the window” → sounds rude in English
- “Could you open the window, please?” → appropriate and polite

This awareness helps learners avoid pragmatic errors and communicate more naturally.

Conclusion

In conclusion, speech acts play a fundamental role in human communication, serving as the bridge between language and social interaction. This study has demonstrated that while English and Uzbek share similar categories of speech acts, their pragmatic realization differs significantly due to cultural, social, and contextual factors.

English communication generally favors clarity, brevity, and moderate politeness through indirect structures, whereas Uzbek communication places a stronger emphasis on respect, emotional expression, and maintaining social harmony. These differences are especially evident in speech acts such as requests, apologies, compliments, and refusals.

Understanding these distinctions is crucial for successful cross-cultural communication. Misinterpretations may occur not because of grammatical errors, but because of pragmatic differences. Therefore, developing pragmatic competence should be a key objective in language education.



Ultimately, this analysis highlights that language learning is not only about mastering linguistic forms but also about understanding the cultural values embedded within those forms. By integrating pragmatic awareness into teaching and learning, individuals can achieve more effective, appropriate, and meaningful communication in both English and Uzbek conte

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