

SOCIOPRAGMATIC FEATURES OF COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERARY DISCOURSE

Qo`chqarova Yoqutxon Ravshanjon qizi

Exact and Social Sciences University

Scientific advisor: Erdanova Zebiniso Abulkasimovna

Abstract. This study examines the sociopragmatic aspects of literary discourse in Uzbek and English, emphasizing the ways in which language reflects social dynamics, cultural values, and norms. The study identifies significant distinctions and parallels in pragmatic expression between a few chosen English and Uzbek literary texts by examining speech acts, politeness techniques, forms of address, and contextual elements. The ideas of Brown and Levinson (1987), Searle (1969), and Hofstede (2001) are cited to support the use of qualitative discourse analysis and comparative pragmatics. The results show that Uzbek literary discourse places more importance on indirectness, group harmony, and hierarchy than English literary discourse, which stresses directness and individual autonomy. The study has ramifications for language instruction, translation, and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: Sociopragmatics, literary discourse, English literature, Uzbek literature, politeness, speech acts, cultural communication, comparative pragmatics

Introduction

With an emphasis on the interaction between linguistic forms and social functions, sociopragmatics studies how social settings affect language use. This viewpoint is essential for comprehending character relationships, story frameworks, and cultural quirks in literary discourse. Because of their different historical and cultural contexts, English and Uzbek literatures provide a wealth of material for sociopragmatic analysis. This study examines the sociopragmatic elements of Uzbek and English literary texts' communication styles, emphasizing both language-specific subtleties and general principles.

Theoretical Foundations of Sociopragmatics

Sociopragmatics, as a subfield of pragmatics, investigates the interplay between language use and the social norms governing communication in a given speech community. While general pragmatics focuses on how context affects meaning, sociopragmatics zooms in on how social structures, relationships, values, and hierarchies shape the way language is used in everyday and literary contexts. It emerged prominently in the late 20th century as scholars began to explore how pragmatic choices are shaped not only by speaker intent, but also by societal expectations, roles, and cultural variables.

Numerous important linguistic and philosophical theories provide the theoretical basis of sociopragmatics. In his 1962 book *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin was among the first to codify the idea of speech in action.

Austin popularized the notion that words are actions in and of themselves, such as warning, welcoming, ordering, or promising, rather than just being means of communicating information. The foundation for speech act theory, which proved essential to sociopragmatics, was established by this.

By dividing speech acts into assertives, directions, commissives, expressives, and declarations, John Searle improved speech act theory and built on Austin's work. In order to ascertain the purpose of a speech act, Searle highlighted the significance of illocutionary force, or what the speaker means. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, adds a layer by posing the question of how that purpose is perceived and understood in a social and cultural context.

For instance, various cultures may have quite diverse interpretations of the same instruction, such as "Close the window." Direct communication is accepted and even desirable in some cultures, but unless it is accompanied by polite signals, it may be viewed as impolite in others. The Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) is relevant here. They put forth the ideas of negative face (the desire to be independent and not forced) and positive face (the desire to be liked and accepted). According to their theory, people use politeness techniques like humor, deference, and indirectness to lessen the impact of face-threatening behaviors.

From a sociopragmatic standpoint, literary texts become a reflection of these interpersonal rituals. Characters, through dialogue and internal monologue, reveal how they navigate their social world. A character who uses formal language in English literature might be showing respect, fear, distance, or status — all interpreted through sociopragmatic lenses. Similarly, a character in Uzbek literature using proverbs or respectful address terms (like “ota”, “aka”, “xonim”) signals alignment with cultural expectations about age, gender, and status.

Speech Acts in Literary Discourse

Speech acts are one of the most fundamental concepts in pragmatics and sociopragmatics, especially when analyzing how language functions in literature. In its most basic sense, a speech act is an action performed via utterance — we do not merely say things; we **do** things with words. Introduced by **J.L. Austin** in his seminal work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), and later developed by **John Searle**, speech act theory has become a foundational lens through which scholars analyze communication both in real life and in fictional or literary texts.

In literature, characters use language not only to convey information but to express desires, make decisions, build or challenge social hierarchies, assert power, show politeness, and more. Literary dialogue is not just aesthetic or stylistic — it is **performative** and **functional**, filled with illocutionary force that contributes to plot progression, character development, and thematic depth.

Types of Speech Acts in Literature

According to Searle's classification, there are five main types of speech acts:

1. **Assertives:** These represent how things are — stating, claiming, reporting, etc.

- “*It is a truth universally acknowledged...*” (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*) is an example of a literary assertive that sets a philosophical tone.

2. **Directives:** Attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something — requesting, commanding, advising.

- In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth’s line “*Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under’t*” is both advice and command.

3. **Commissives:** Commit the speaker to some future action — promising, vowing, offering.

- When Romeo says, “*I take thee at thy word. Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptized*” (*Romeo and Juliet*), he is making a romantic promise.

4. **Expressives:** Express psychological states — apologizing, thanking, congratulating.

- In *King Lear*, Cordelia’s refusal to falsely flatter her father is a subtle expressive act of honesty and love.

5. **Declarations:** Statements that change the world via their utterance — baptizing, firing, pronouncing.

- A classic example is “*I now pronounce you man and wife*”, common in both real-life and fictional weddings.

Each of these categories is deeply relevant in literary settings, where language is consciously crafted by authors to reflect layered meanings.

Politeness Strategies and Face Management

Politeness strategies are an essential component of sociopragmatic theory and have significant implications in literary discourse. These strategies are not merely about being “nice” or “respectful” — they are deeply rooted in how speakers manage social relationships, hierarchy, and interpersonal harmony. One of the most influential theories on politeness was proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in their 1987 work *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*.

In Uzbek literary discourse, politeness is deeply influenced by traditional values such as respect for elders, collectivism, and family hierarchy. The use of honorifics, respectful titles like “*aka*”, “*opa*”, “*otaxon*”, and deferential verb forms reflect this emphasis. For example, in the works of Said Ahmad or Asqad Mukhtor, younger characters address older ones with careful politeness, even when in conflict.

A character might say: “*Aytganingiz to‘g‘ri, lekin izn bersangiz...*”, which combines agreement, permission-seeking, and hedging — a clear example of negative politeness. In family dialogues, deference is shown through reduced tone, indirect suggestions, and references to cultural wisdom via proverbs. A mother might gently say: “*Kattalarning gapida hikmat bor, bolam,*” as a reminder cloaked in affection and authority.

Cultural expectations shape what is considered polite. In Western texts, eye contact and directness may be seen as honesty, while in Eastern contexts, such behaviors could be interpreted as aggressive or disrespectful. This difference is often dramatized in cross-cultural novels or stories involving expatriate characters.

Pragmatic markers are small linguistic elements that help manage discourse, indicate speaker attitudes, or guide conversational flow. These include words and phrases such as “well,” “you know,” “actually,” “I mean,” and “so” in English. While they often carry little semantic meaning, they perform crucial sociopragmatic functions. In literary texts, pragmatic markers are used to construct realistic dialogue, show character psychology, and express subtle cultural or interpersonal cues.

In English literature, characters’ use of pragmatic markers often reveals emotional states or hesitation. For example, in modern fiction, a character might say, “Well, I don’t know... maybe we shouldn’t,” to signal uncertainty and politeness. The marker “well” functions as a softener and a turn-taking device. Similarly, “you know” may invite solidarity or suggest shared knowledge. In British literature, markers often signal indirectness or understatement, which align with cultural values of modesty and restraint.

In Uzbek literary discourse, pragmatic markers also play important roles, though they differ in form and function. Uzbek uses particles like *ku*, *-da*, *axir*, *emasmi*, and *bo’ldi* to manage tone, emphasis, or emotional nuance. A character might say, “*Aytdim-ku, eshitmading-da,*” to express frustration and assert authority. These markers serve to frame the speaker’s attitude, maintain politeness, or assert shared understanding.

Uzbek pragmatic markers often reflect **social hierarchy** and **communal identity**. The use of *axir* or *emasmi* can suggest indirect persuasion, appealing to the listener’s logic or experience. In poetic or dramatic texts, markers add rhythm and cultural flavor, helping characters navigate honor, shame, or mutual respect.

Sociocultural Relational Units in Literary Texts

Sociocultural relational units are expressions that reflect social relationships, cultural roles, and communal expectations. These include terms of address, kinship expressions, idioms, and culturally significant metaphors. In literary texts, they serve to portray character identities, reinforce social structures, and convey collective values. These units differ across cultures, offering insight into how language encodes social norms.

In English literature, relational units like “sir,” “madam,” “dear,” “my lord,” or “buddy” reflect class, formality, or intimacy. For example, in Charles Dickens’ novels, the way characters address each other often signals their social status. Pip calling Estella “Miss Estella” in *Great Expectations* reflects both deference and class awareness.

English idioms such as “blood is thicker than water” or “don’t air your dirty laundry” express familial loyalty and social discretion. Such units reinforce

cultural attitudes toward family, reputation, and privacy. In American novels, relational units like “sis,” “bro,” or “chief” can show camaraderie or casual hierarchy.

Uzbek literature relies heavily on relational expressions tied to kinship, age, and respect. Common units include “aka” (older brother), “opa” (older sister), “otaxon” (fatherly elder), and “bolajon” (dear child). These units not only identify roles but also encode respect and affection. In works by Abdulla Qahhor or Said Ahmad, such expressions are central to family and community dynamics.

Proverbs also function as relational units, reflecting shared wisdom and values. Phrases like “*Kattalarning gapida baraka bor*” or “*O‘z uyim — o‘lan to‘shagim*” highlight respect for elders and the value of home. These sayings reflect collective morality and are often spoken during moments of tension or advice.

In dialogues, relational units help establish formality or intimacy. A young woman calling an older neighbor “*Xola*” instantly signals cultural hierarchy and communal closeness. English equivalents like “ma’am” or “auntie” may serve similar roles but lack the same depth of cultural expectation.

Authors use these units to ground characters in their cultural environment. A shift from “aka” to a neutral “siz” in an Uzbek text may mark emotional distance or conflict. Similarly, dropping “sir” in English fiction may indicate rebellion or growing familiarity.

These units also evolve with time and reflect societal change. In modern Uzbek literature, characters may adopt more neutral or Westernized terms, reflecting urbanization and globalization. In English, terms like “dude,” “man,” or “fam” appear in contemporary novels to mark generational speech.

Conclusion

In conclusion, language is a reflection of culture as well as a means of communication. Different cultural values are highlighted by the sociopragmatic elements present in Uzbek and English literary discourse. Each society's norms influence speech acts including requests, rejections, and promises. Directness and clarity of expression are usually emphasized in English. On the other hand, indirection, courtesy, and respect are valued in Uzbek conversation. The speaker's understanding of social roles and relationships is frequently reflected in their use of politeness techniques. Subtle emotions and reluctance are conveyed via pragmatic indicators such as “well” in English and “ku” in Uzbek. The emotional depth and realism of literary discourse are improved by these markers.

Social positioning and relationship intimacy are defined by terms of address and kinship expressions. Hierarchical organizations and collectivist ideals are common themes in Uzbek literature. On the other hand, English texts frequently emphasize autonomy and self-expression. Character interactions have latent cultural connotations that can be discovered through sociopragmatic research. This enhances our comprehension of narrative structure and dialogue.

Different worldviews can be understood by comparing various literary traditions. In the end, literary language reflects the cultural life and ideals of its speakers.

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