

THE IMPACT OF UZBEK CULTURAL NORMS ON ENGLISH PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

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Annotation. This article examines the impact of Uzbek cultural norms on the development of pragmatic competence in English as a foreign language. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to context, social relations, and communicative intent. Drawing on theories of intercultural pragmatics and politeness, the paper analyzes how collectivism, respect for hierarchy, indirectness, and hospitality influence Uzbek learners' English communication. The study argues that pragmatic transfer can result in both effective politeness strategies and pragmatic failure. Pedagogical implications for English language teaching in Uzbekistan are discussed, emphasizing explicit pragmatics instruction and intercultural awareness.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola o‘zbek madaniy me’yorlarining ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o‘rganishda pragmatik kompetensiyaning shakllanishiga ta’sirini tahlil qiladi. Pragmatik kompetensiya deganda tilni kontekst, ijtimoiy munosabatlar va kommunikativ niyatga mos ravishda qo‘llash qobiliyati tushuniladi. Madaniyatlararo pragmatika va xushmuomalalik nazariyalariga tayangan holda, maqolada kollektivizm, ierarxiyaga hurmat, bilvosita ifodalash va mehmondo’slik kabi omillarning o‘zbek tilini o‘rganuvchilarning ingliz tilidagi muloqotiga qanday ta’sir ko‘rsatishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot pragmatik transfer ba’zi hollarda samarali xushmuomalalik strategiyalariga olib kelishi, ayrim vaziyatlarda esa pragmatik muvaffaqiyatsizlikka sabab bo‘lishi mumkinligini asoslaydi. Shuningdek, O‘zbekistonda ingliz tilini o‘qitish jarayoni uchun pedagogik xulosalar berilib, pragmatikani ochiq (eksplisit) o‘rgatish hamda madaniyatlararo xabardorlikni rivojlantirish zarurligi ta’kidlanadi.

Аннотация. Данное исследование рассматривает влияние узбекских культурных норм на формирование прагматической компетенции при изучении английского языка как иностранного. Прагматическая компетенция понимается как способность использовать язык уместно в зависимости от контекста, социальных отношений и коммуникативного намерения. Опираясь на теории межкультурной прагматики и вежливости, в статье анализируется влияние коллективизма, уважения к иерархии, косвенности и гостеприимства на англоязычную коммуникацию узбекских изучающих. В исследовании утверждается, что прагматический перенос может приводить как к эффективным стратегиям вежливости, так и к прагматическим неудачам. Также обсуждаются педагогические импликации для преподавания английского языка в Узбекистане с акцентом на необходимость эксплицитного обучения прагматике и развития межкультурной осведомленности.

Keywords: Uzbek culture, pragmatic competence, intercultural pragmatics, EFL, politeness.

Kalit so‘zlar: o‘zbek madaniyati, pragmatik kompetensiya, madaniyatlararo pragmatika, ingliz tili chet tili sifatida (EFL), xushmuomalalik.

Ключевые слова: узбекская культура, прагматическая компетенция, межкультурная прагматика, английский язык как иностранный (EFL), вежливость.

Introduction.

Pragmatic competence has become a central concept in second language acquisition research. While grammatical accuracy has traditionally dominated language teaching, successful communication also depends on the appropriate use of language in context (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Learners of English in Uzbekistan often encounter pragmatic difficulties due to differences between Uzbek and English communicative norms.

Literature Review.

Pragmatic competence has become a central concept in second language acquisition (SLA) research, particularly as the field has shifted from a focus on formal linguistic accuracy toward communicative effectiveness. While early language teaching methodologies emphasized grammatical correctness and vocabulary acquisition, later communicative approaches highlighted the importance of using language appropriately in social interaction. As Kasper and Rose (2002) argue, successful communication requires not only linguistic knowledge but also an understanding of how language functions within specific sociocultural contexts.

Pragmatic competence is commonly defined as the ability to interpret and perform language functions in a manner that is socially and culturally appropriate. It encompasses both pragmalinguistic knowledge, which involves linguistic resources for expressing communicative acts, and sociopragmatic knowledge, which relates to social norms, values, and expectations governing language use (Leech, 2014). These components enable speakers to perform speech acts such as requests, refusals, apologies, and compliments in ways that align with contextual variables including power relations, social distance, and degree of imposition.

One of the most influential concepts in interlanguage pragmatics is pragmatic failure, introduced by Thomas (1983), who distinguishes between pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. Pragmalinguistic failure occurs when learners use inappropriate linguistic forms to express an intention, while sociopragmatic failure arises from mismatches between learners' cultural norms and those of the target language community. Both types of failure can result in misunderstanding, negative impressions, or breakdowns in communication, even when grammatical accuracy is achieved.

Pragmatic transfer plays a crucial role in shaping learner behavior in foreign language contexts. Defined as the influence of learners' first language and culture on their second language pragmatic performance, pragmatic transfer may have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, it can facilitate communication when norms overlap; on the other hand, it can lead to inappropriate or non-native-like usage when cultural expectations differ significantly (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). In EFL contexts, where exposure to authentic interaction is limited, learners often rely heavily on first-language pragmatic frameworks.

Intercultural pragmatics provides a theoretical lens for examining how speakers from different cultural backgrounds negotiate meaning and politeness in communication. Politeness theories, particularly those proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), emphasize the concept of face and the strategies speakers employ to maintain social harmony. These strategies vary considerably

across cultures, influenced by values such as individualism versus collectivism, directness versus indirectness, and egalitarianism versus hierarchy.

In collectivist cultures, such as Uzbekistan, communication tends to prioritize group harmony, respect for elders, and avoidance of direct confrontation. Indirect speech acts, mitigation devices, and elaborate politeness formulas are commonly employed to preserve interpersonal relationships. When Uzbek learners use English, these culturally embedded strategies may be transferred into English discourse, sometimes resulting in overly indirect requests, avoidance of explicit disagreement, or excessive politeness markers that may appear unusual or ambiguous to native English speakers.

Uzbek Cultural Norms and Communication. Uzbek communication is characterized by collectivism, hierarchical respect, and indirectness. Social harmony is prioritized, and direct refusals or disagreements are often avoided. Hospitality and ritual politeness play a major role in daily interaction, influencing pragmatic choices such as requests and offers.

Pragmatic Transfer in Uzbek EFL Learners. When Uzbek learners use English, pragmatic transfer may occur. Indirect requests and excessive politeness may be interpreted as vagueness by native English speakers. However, such strategies also demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect, which can be communicative strengths.

Learners of English in Uzbekistan often encounter pragmatic difficulties due to systematic differences between Uzbek and English communicative norms. While English discourse generally values clarity, efficiency, and moderate directness, Uzbek communication is deeply influenced by hierarchical relationships, hospitality norms, and implicit understanding among interlocutors. As a result, Uzbek EFL learners may struggle to adjust their pragmatic behavior to meet English expectations, particularly in institutional, academic, or professional settings.

Research in similar EFL contexts suggests that pragmatic competence does not automatically develop alongside grammatical proficiency and often requires explicit instruction (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Without targeted pedagogical intervention, learners may continue to exhibit pragmatic transfer that leads to misinterpretation or reduced communicative effectiveness. This highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that integrate pragmatics instruction with intercultural awareness.

Pedagogical Implications.

English language teaching in Uzbekistan should integrate pragmatic instruction into curricula. Classroom activities such as role-play, discourse analysis, and authentic materials can raise learners' pragmatic awareness. Teacher education programs should also address intercultural pragmatics.

Given the importance of pragmatic competence for successful intercultural communication, English language teaching in Uzbekistan should move beyond structural instruction to include explicit focus on pragmatic norms and cultural differences. Raising learners' awareness of speech acts, politeness strategies, and contextual variation can help reduce pragmatic failure and enhance communicative confidence. Incorporating authentic materials, role-plays, and contrastive analysis of Uzbek and English norms may further support learners' pragmatic development.

Conclusion.

Uzbek cultural norms significantly influence English pragmatic competence. Recognizing these influences allows educators to support learners in developing interculturally appropriate communication skills.

In sum, pragmatic competence represents a crucial yet often underemphasized dimension of language learning. Understanding how Uzbek cultural norms influence English pragmatic performance provides valuable insights for both SLA theory and pedagogical practice, reinforcing the need for culturally informed and pragmatically oriented EFL instruction.

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