



DIRECT AND INDIRECT APOLOGIES ACROSS CULTURES: A LINGUOPRAGMATIC STUDY

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Abstract. This article examines the use of direct and indirect apology strategies across English and Uzbek cultures from a linguopragmatic perspective. Drawing on speech act theory and politeness frameworks, the study analyzes how speakers express remorse and repair social relations in different cultural contexts. The research combines theoretical analysis with illustrative examples from both languages to demonstrate how cultural norms shape the choice of apology strategies. The findings indicate that English speakers tend to employ more direct and explicit apology forms, while Uzbek speakers often rely on indirect and context-dependent expressions. The study highlights the role of politeness, social hierarchy, and cultural expectations in shaping apology behavior.

Keywords: apology, speech act, pragmatics, politeness, English, Uzbek, cross-cultural communication

Annotatsiya : Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillarida uzr nutqiy aktining bevosita va bilvosita shakllari lingvopragmatik nuqtai nazardan tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot nutqiy aktlar nazariyasi va xushmuomalalik konsepsiyalariga asoslanadi hamda turli madaniyatlarda uzr ifodalash usullarining farqlarini ko'rsatadi. Misollar orqali ingliz tilida to'g'ridan-to'g'ri uzr ifodalari ko'proq qo'llanilishi, o'zbek tilida esa bilvosita va kontekstga bog'liq shakllar ustunligi aniqlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: uzr, nutqiy akt, pragmatika, xushmuomalalik, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili

Аннотация : В данной статье рассматриваются прямые и косвенные формы извинения в английском и узбекском языках с лингвопрагматической точки зрения. Исследование основано на теории речевых актов и теории вежливости. Анализ показывает, что в английском языке преобладают прямые формы извинений, тогда как в узбекской культуре чаще используются косвенные и контекстуально обусловленные выражения.

Ключевые слова: извинение, речевой акт, прагматика, вежливость, английский язык, узбекский язык

Introduction

Apology is a fundamental communicative act that plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony. It is used to acknowledge responsibility, express regret, and restore relationships after a social norm has been violated. From a linguistic perspective, apology belongs to the category of speech acts, which are actions

performed through language. The study of apologies provides insight into how language reflects cultural values and interpersonal relations.

The concept of speech acts was first systematically developed by J. L. Austin, who argued that language is not merely descriptive but also performative [1]. This idea was further elaborated by John Searle, who classified speech acts into categories such as representatives, directives, commissives, and expressives, with apologies belonging to the expressive category [2]. These theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for analyzing how apologies function in communication.

Apology strategies vary significantly across cultures. What is considered appropriate or sufficient in one culture may be perceived differently in another. In English-speaking contexts, directness and clarity are often valued, leading to explicit expressions such as "I'm sorry" or "I apologize." In contrast, Uzbek communication tends to emphasize politeness, respect, and indirectness, which influences how apologies are formulated.

This study aims to explore the differences between direct and indirect apology strategies in English and Uzbek. It focuses on how cultural norms and pragmatic factors shape the choice of linguistic forms. By comparing these two languages, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of

Literature Review

The study of apology as a speech act has been widely addressed in pragmatics. Austin's theory laid the groundwork for understanding how utterances function as actions [1]. Searle further developed this framework by emphasizing the role of intention and context in speech acts [2]. Apologies are classified as expressive acts because they convey the speaker's psychological state.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory provides another important perspective. According to this theory, communication involves managing "face," which refers to a person's social self-image [3]. Apologies are considered face-threatening acts because they involve admitting fault. However, they also serve to repair the speaker's relationship with the listener.

Cohen and Olshtain proposed a model of apology strategies, identifying components such as expression of regret, explanation, acknowledgment of responsibility, and offer of repair [4]. This model has been widely used in cross-cultural studies.

In Uzbek linguistics, Safarov emphasizes the importance of pragmatics in understanding language use, particularly in relation to cultural norms [5]. Rahimova highlights the connection between speech acts and cultural values, noting that communication patterns are shaped by social expectations [8].

Recent research by Murotova provides a detailed analysis of apology strategies in English and Uzbek, demonstrating significant differences in directness and formality

[6][7]. These studies show that Uzbek speakers often use indirect forms to maintain politeness and avoid confrontation.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach to analyze apology strategies in English and Uzbek. The analysis is based on theoretical frameworks from pragmatics and speech act theory, as well as examples drawn from authentic language use.

Data consist of typical apology expressions in both languages, including everyday conversations and formal contexts. The examples are analyzed to identify patterns of directness, indirectness, and cultural influence.

The analysis focuses on three main aspects: linguistic form, pragmatic function, and cultural context. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how apology strategies differ across languages.

Analysis

Direct apologies in English are typically explicit and formulaic. Common expressions include “I’m sorry,” “I apologize,” and “I didn’t mean to.” These forms clearly signal the speaker’s intention to apologize and are often accompanied by explanations or offers of repair. For example:

“I’m sorry for being late. There was heavy traffic.”

This example shows a direct acknowledgment of fault followed by an explanation.

In Uzbek, apologies are often expressed indirectly, especially in formal or hierarchical contexts. Instead of directly admitting fault, speakers may use expressions that soften the apology or shift focus to circumstances. For example:

“Kechikib qoldim, yo‘lda muammo bo‘ldi.”

While this includes an apology, the emphasis is on the situation rather than personal responsibility.

Indirect strategies in Uzbek may also include expressions of respect or mitigation, such as:

“Agar noqulaylik tug‘dirgan bo‘lsam, uzr.”

This form avoids direct responsibility and emphasizes politeness.

These differences reflect broader cultural values. English communication tends to prioritize clarity and efficiency, while Uzbek communication emphasizes harmony and respect. As a result, Uzbek speakers may avoid direct apologies to prevent embarrassment or loss of face.

Results

The analysis reveals clear differences between English and Uzbek apology strategies. English speakers predominantly use direct forms that explicitly express regret and responsibility. These forms are straightforward and leave little ambiguity.

In contrast, Uzbek speakers frequently employ indirect strategies that rely on context and shared understanding. These strategies often include mitigation, explanation, and expressions of respect.

The findings also show that social hierarchy plays a significant role in Uzbek communication. Speakers adjust their apology strategies depending on the status of the interlocutor. In English, such distinctions are less pronounced, and similar forms are used across contexts.

Discussion

The differences identified in this study highlight the importance of cultural context in language use. Apology strategies are not only linguistic choices but also reflections of social values and norms. Brown and Levinson's concept of face is particularly relevant in explaining why Uzbek speakers prefer indirect strategies [3].

The findings also support Cohen and Olshtain's model, which emphasizes the complexity of apology as a speech act [4]. Both languages use similar components, but their realization differs due to cultural factors.

These results have practical implications for language teaching. Learners of English need to understand the importance of directness, while learners of Uzbek must be aware of indirect and polite forms. Failure to recognize these differences can lead to misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication.

Conclusion

This study has examined direct and indirect apology strategies in English and Uzbek from a linguopragmatic perspective. The findings demonstrate that while both languages use apologies to maintain social harmony, they differ significantly in their expression.

English favors direct and explicit forms, reflecting values of clarity and efficiency. Uzbek, on the other hand, relies on indirect and context-dependent strategies that emphasize politeness and respect.

Understanding these differences is essential for effective cross-cultural communication. Future research may explore how these strategies are used in specific contexts such as business or education.

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