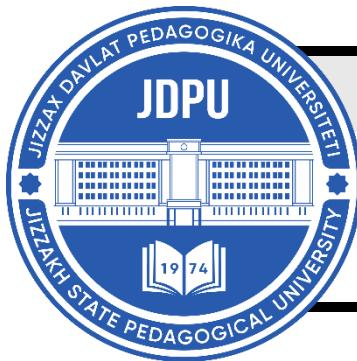


# MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC – METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL



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### MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK INSTAGRAM/FACEBOOK DISCOURSE

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#### ABOUT ARTICLE

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**Abstract:** This article presents a comparative analysis of the pragmatic and sociolinguistic features of multimodal discourse in English and Uzbek on Instagram and Facebook. Based on a corpus of 200 posts published between 2023 and 2024, the study examines the interaction of multimodal resources such as images, text, emojis, hashtags, visual genres, and layout. A specially developed analytical framework of 20 parameters enables a detailed comparison of modal composition, politeness strategies, code-switching patterns, identity construction, visual genres, and algorithmic engagement across the two languages. The findings reveal that English posts tend to emphasize individualism, self-branding, and global engagement, while Uzbek posts highlight collectivism, respect, spirituality, and national identity through multimodal means. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural digital communication and offers practical implications for digital pragmatics, translation studies, language teaching, and media literacy.

**Introduction.** In recent years, social networks such as Instagram and Facebook have become leading platforms for sharing personal experiences, self-presentation, and forming and

reinforcing social identity. Communication on these platforms is inherently multimodal, as it combines various semiotic resources-text, images, video, emojis, hashtags, gifs, background music, color, and layout-in an integrated manner to construct meaning. Therefore, analyzing such discourse solely at the textual level is insufficient; it must instead be approached from the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis [Exploring the Dynamics..., 2025]. Numerous international studies have examined Instagram discourse and social media communication more broadly. For example, the visual-textual strategies used by tourism brands, restaurants, government institutions, and academic organizations on Instagram have been studied in detail [Kautsar, 2021; Tomber, 2023; Gardam, 2025; Kovácová, 2024]. These works demonstrate that images, text, emojis, and hashtags serve specific communicative purposes. Research focusing on the pragmatic functions of emojis and other digital para-linguistic tools (gifs, stickers, reaction icons) highlights their ability to express emotional states, soften or intensify attitudes, signal irony, and perform other complex pragmatic roles [Zappavigna, 2021; Weissman, 2022; Yang & Liu, 2021; Yus, 2024; Zhang, 2025]. Recent studies based on Uzbek-language materials also address aspects of social media communication, particularly online etiquette, emoji use, new lexical items, and emerging communicative styles [Abdullazoda, 2025; Dilnoza, 2025; Karimbaeva, 2025; Vohidova, 2024; Yusupova & Karimov, 2022]. However, many of these studies are mainly oriented toward linguistic-pragmatic interpretation, while the question of how multimodal components interact with one another is often not examined comprehensively.

The present article aims to fill this gap by comparing the cross-cultural features of multimodal communication in English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook posts. The main objective of the study is to analyze how text, images, emojis, and hashtags interact across the two languages, identify their pragmatic functions, and determine the role of cultural and sociolinguistic factors in shaping meaning. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight similarities and differences in multimodal resources across the two cultures and substantiate the need to consider these distinctions in language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication practices.

**Methodology.** The research design is based on a corpus-driven qualitative and partially quantitative multimodal discourse analysis. Methodologically, the study draws upon analytical approaches proposed in recent works on multimodal analysis of social media texts [Tomber, 2023; Shahami, 2024; Firmansyah, 2025]. The data corpus consists of 200 posts published between 2023 and 2024-100 posts in English and 100 in Uzbek-selected from Instagram and Facebook accounts. Several criteria were defined for selecting the posts. First, all posts had to

be publicly accessible, meaning they were not taken from private accounts, but from profiles belonging to bloggers, educational pages, small businesses, student clubs, or media organizations. Second, each post was required to contain at least an image and textual caption, preferably also emojis and hashtags. Third, the chosen posts reflected themes such as daily life, education and career development, promotion and self-branding, motivational content, and socially oriented topics. The composition of the corpus is summarized in the following analytical table:

**Table 1. Multimodal Features of English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook Discourse: Comparative Analysis**

No	Parameter / Aspect	English Instagram/Facebook discourse	Uzbek Instagram/Facebook discourse	Analytical commentary
1	Modal composition	The combination of image + text + emoji + hashtag is most common. Short captions with many hashtags are widespread.	Mostly image + text and image + text + emoji. Posts including hashtags are relatively fewer.	English posts are optimized for algorithmic visibility and engagement; Uzbek posts still rely heavily on images and text as central resources.
2	Caption length	Short, usually 1–3 sentences, often with many hashtags.	Generally longer, explanatory, motivational, or advisory captions.	English captions favor fast-paced consumption; Uzbek captions tend toward descriptive and interpretive styles.
3	Emoji frequency	Emojis appear in almost every post; some posts contain 3–5 emojis.	Emojis appear moderately; common among youth and influencers.	Emojis are normalized in English discourse; in Uzbek discourse their use is growing but more modest.

4	Emoji functions	Joy, excitement, humor, motivation, softening “humble-brag,” legitimizing positive self-presentation.	Gratitude, prayer, respect, national pride (uz), family/community belonging, softening criticism.	Clear intercultural differences: English emojis express individual emotion; Uzbek emojis signal communal and spiritual values.
5	Emoji types	Global emojis such as 😊 😂 😅 😁 🌹 🌸 🔥.	Prayer, heart, flag, flower emojis such as 🙏 ❤️ uz 🌸 😊.	Visual symbols themselves embody cultural codes; religious and national imagery appears more often in Uzbek posts.
6	Hashtag frequency	Nearly every post includes several hashtags (#selfcare, #workmode, #blessed).	Fewer hashtags, typically 1–3 (#kitobxon, #oila, #talaba).	In English hashtags are tools for visibility and community indexing; in Uzbek they mostly serve topical labeling.
7	Hashtag functions	Topic marking, community joining, self-branding, trend alignment, increasing reach.	Topic marking, campaign tags (#uydaqoling), motivational reinforcement.	English hashtags in Uzbek posts often function as a gateway to global discourse.
8	Code-switching	Switching to other languages is rare; sometimes used for greetings or cultural references.	Widespread use of English items: post qildim, story joyladim, like bosing, follow qiling.	Social networks intensify the influx of English digital lexicon into Uzbek; these forms are becoming grammatically integrated.

9	Lexical innovation	Frequent use of internet slang and abbreviations (idk, tbh, lol, omg).	English slang is less common but words like trend, kontent, bloger, kreativ appear often.	English acts as a global digital slang center; Uzbek selectively adapts such items.
10	Address forms	Friendly, egalitarian forms like "Hey guys," "friends," "everyone."	Respect-based forms like "aziz obunachilar," "hurmatli do'stlar," "qadrli ustozlar."	English discourse emphasizes solidarity; Uzbek discourse maintains status-sensitive etiquette.
11	Politeness strategies	Friendly tone, emojis, softened expressions.	Respect, prayer, gratitude; "mentor-student," "parent-child" frames.	Both employ strategic politeness, but roles and values differ culturally.
12	Visual genres	Selfies, lifestyle (café, gym, office), travel, product shots, "before/after."	Family photos, teacher/student images, certificates, religious events, hospitality scenes.	Visual genres in English express individualism; in Uzbek, collectivism and spiritual/family values.
13	Identity construction	Personal branding, professional image, self-improvement, success narratives.	Identities tied to social roles: child, student, young specialist, family member, national identity.	English identity is achievement-oriented; Uzbek identity is relational and community-based.
14	Thematic domains	Productivity, mental health, travel, career, fitness, self-care.	Education, exams, spirituality, family, holidays, religious and local events.	Both share global themes, but Uzbek posts highlight national and religious content more.

15	Layout & design	Professional templates, brand colors, logos, grid designs, Reels/carousels.	Less standardized; simple photos, occasional templates, fewer branded grids.	More systematic brand communication in English; Uzbek digital branding is emerging.
16	Multimodal cohesion	Text, emoji, hashtag, and image semantically complement one another.	Images, text, and emojis are cohesive, but hashtags are not always semantically integrated.	English multimodal cohesion is stronger; Uzbek cohesion is developing.
17	Cognitive load	Many multimodal elements but short text creates balance; easy to scan.	Image + long text + emojis increase cognitive load for the reader.	English posts are “quick to consume”; Uzbek posts favor detailed explanation.
18	Platform strategies	Reels, Stories, carousels, call-to-action (link in bio, comment, share).	Mainly Stories and posts; CTAs exist but less systematically used.	English users exhibit higher digital media literacy.
19	Audience interaction	Q&A, polls, challenges, giveaways.	Interaction primarily through comments; occasional giveaways.	More interactive multimodality in English; Uzbek interaction is more text-based.
20	Discursive tone	Uplifting, humorous, motivational, sometimes ironic or self-mocking.	Sincere, respectful, advisory, prayerful, sometimes formal.	Tone reflects cultural pragmatic priorities: humor/lightness vs. respect/spirituality.

As can be seen from the expanded analytical table, although there are significant differences between the multimodal features of English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook discourse, their overall communicative functions are in many respects similar. First of all, in terms of modal composition, English-language posts are clearly oriented towards maximizing algorithmic visibility: the combined use of image, text, emoji and hashtag is recorded as the

most widespread multimodal pattern. Uzbek posts, by contrast, still retain more traditional multimodal structures in which image and text are the primary components; while the use of emojis and hashtags is increasing, their frequency remains lower than in English discourse. This situation indicates that the development stages of social media culture differ across the two languages. Caption length also reflects culturally shaped communicative priorities. In English posts, short, often one- or two-sentence minimal captions enriched with numerous hashtags are common. In Uzbek posts, however, extended, explanatory captions-often infused with didactic, motivational or socially oriented content-predominate. This suggests that the discursive tradition in Uzbek, which favors elaboration, commentary and detailed explanation, continues to be reproduced in the online environment. Differences in emoji usage are likewise noteworthy. In English discourse, emojis serve functions such as enhancing emotional tone, expressing humor, legitimizing an upbeat self-presentation, and softening “humble-brag” strategies. In Uzbek discourse, by contrast, frequent use of symbols such as prayer hands, expressions of gratitude, the national flag, and flowers reflects the importance of community belonging, religious-spiritual values and relationships of respect. In this way, the emoji system multimodally manifests the cultural semiosphere of each language. With respect to hashtag usage, English discourse is dominated by global genres (#selfcare, #productivity, #fitnessgoals) and self-branding tags (#smallbusinessowner, #workmode), whereas Uzbek thematic hashtags more often relate to local topics (#kitobxon “reader”, #oila “family”, #motivatsiya “motivation”). At the same time, the frequent use of English-language hashtags in Uzbek posts clearly reveals sociolinguistic processes such as code-mixing, integration into global discourse, and aspirations to increase social capital.

As noted in the table, in terms of code-switching, switching to other languages in English posts is very rare, whereas Uzbek posts actively employ English internet lexis: expressions such as “story qildim” (“I posted a story”), “live boshlaymiz” (“we’re going live”), “post joyladim” (“I posted”), “follow qiling” (“please follow”) have adapted to the Uzbek grammatical system and are forming new semi-integrated constructions. This illustrates the interplay between multimodal and linguistic innovation. Differences in forms of address are also an important indicator of intercultural pragmatics. English discourse prefers expressions that signal equality and friendliness, such as “hey guys,” “friends,” and “everyone.” In Uzbek discourse, categories of social status and respect remain salient, as seen in forms like “aziz obunachilar” (“dear followers”), “qadrli do’stlar” (“respected friends”), “hurmatli ustozlar” (“honorable teachers”), and “azizlarim” (“my dear ones”). In multimodal context, these address forms combine with emojis, images and visual attributes to construct a distinct sociolinguistic system of “written

etiquette." In terms of visual genres, English posts are dominated by visual formats such as selfies, lifestyle shots, sports, business and "before/after" imagery, whereas Uzbek posts more frequently feature family, spirituality, teacher-student relationships, certificates and celebrations-visual genres grounded in collectivism. This further clarifies, at a multimodal level, the contrast between individualism in English discourse and collective values in Uzbek discourse. Identity construction likewise diverges sharply between the two discourses. In English posts, self-branding, professional image and motivational identities ("I am improving", "working harder", "achieving goals") are foregrounded. In Uzbek posts, identities anchored in social roles-such as "being a child," "being a student or disciple," "being a family member," "being national"-are expressed through multimodal means. This difference shows which social roles are actively rearticulated in each society through multimodal discourse. Regarding layout and design strategies, English posts display a high degree of professionalism, with coordinated color palettes, grid layouts, templates, logos and the frequent use of Reels and carousel formats. Uzbek posts, by contrast, show relatively less branded visual consistency, although there is a clear trend toward development in this direction. Furthermore, audience interactivity is higher in English-language posts: Q&A formats, challenges, giveaways and polls are widely used. In Uzbek posts, interaction tends to occur more through comments and traditional forms of address. Discursive tone also differs: English posts are more often upbeat, humorous and motivational, while Uzbek posts tend to be sincere, respectful and frequently didactic. Overall, the broad analysis based on the table clearly demonstrates how English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook discourses use multimodal resources to construct distinct social, cultural and pragmatic meanings. While English discourse is more strongly oriented toward individualism, globalism, professionalism and algorithmic adaptation, Uzbek discourse is more inclined to express collectivism, respect, spirituality, family and community-specific values in multimodal form. At the same time, both discourses confirm that multimodal resources occupy a central place in contemporary communication.

Methodology. Each post was saved in a separate file in the form of a screenshot and a textual transcription, and all personally identifiable information (profile picture, name, username) was anonymized. A unified coding scheme was then applied to every post. First, the modal composition was recorded (image only; image + short text; image + extended text; image + text + emoji; image + text + emoji + hashtag). Next, the functions of emojis-emotional expression, softening or intensifying attitude, signaling irony, and providing additional semantic imagery (for example, flags, hearts, prayer symbols)-were coded separately [Zappavigna, 2021; Weissman, 2022; Yang & Liu, 2021; Pardede, 2025]. Hashtags were

classified according to their functions of topic marking, self-branding, and linking the post to a community or campaign. At the verbal level, the language used (English, Uzbek, mixed), forms of address (friendly, formal, respect-marking), and specific (im)politeness strategies were recorded [Abdullazoda, 2025; Yusuf, 2025]. As visual resources, elements such as selfies, group photos, product photos, screenshots, color schemes and filters, and text overlays on images were identified. The coding process was carried out independently by two researchers; prior to full-scale coding, a pilot coding of 20 posts was conducted to refine the categories and introduce necessary adjustments. In cases of disagreement, a joint discussion was held to reach a consensus. Analysis proceeded in two directions. In the quantitative analysis, the frequencies of modal compositions, emojis, hashtags, and instances of code-switching were calculated and compared between the English and Uzbek corpora. In the qualitative analysis, selected posts were examined in depth to show how images, text, emojis, hashtags and layout elements jointly construct meaning, following principles of multimodal discourse analysis.

**Results.** The extended analytical table (see Table 1) made it possible to compare the multimodal structure of English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook discourse across numerous parameters. The results show that while the main components of multimodal communication—images, text, emojis, hashtags, layout and visual genres—are actively employed in both languages, their functional loads differ significantly.

First, in terms of modal composition, English posts are dominated by the simultaneous use of images, text, emojis and hashtags. This combination indicates that English social media culture is oriented toward algorithmic visibility, brand-building and increasing engagement. Uzbek posts, on the other hand, are primarily structured around images and text, with emojis and hashtags gaining ground gradually. Caption length also differs substantially: in English posts, short, minimalist captions are prevalent, whereas in Uzbek posts longer, more explanatory captions—often motivational or spiritual in tone—are common. This difference reflects the continuity of language-specific communicative habits in the online space.

The analysis also clarified emoji use. In English posts, positive-emotion emojis such as 😊, ✨, 🔥 frequently appear and serve to create an upbeat atmosphere or strengthen humor. In Uzbek posts, emojis such as 🙏, ❤️, uz are dominant; they express religious and national meanings and multimodally signal collective values such as gratitude, respect and community belonging. Hashtags likewise reveal important differences. In English discourse, hashtags are connected with global genres (#selfcare, #worklife, #fitnessgoals), while in Uzbek discourse they often serve to mark topics (#oila “family”, #kitobxon “reader”, #talaba “student”) or to convey the spirit of campaigns. The widespread use of English hashtags in Uzbek posts indicates

an intensifying connection to global discourse and a growing degree of code-mixing. Code-switching results are particularly noteworthy: Uzbek posts make active use of semi-integrated English constructions such as “post qildim,” “story joyladim,” “like bosing,” “follow qiling,” while switching into other languages in English posts is relatively rare. Forms of address and politeness strategies also highlight intercultural differences. Whereas English discourse prefers egalitarian forms like “hey guys,” “friends,” and “everyone,” Uzbek discourse favors forms that index status and respect such as “aziz obunachilar,” “qadrli do’stlar,” and “hurmatli ustozlar.” In terms of visual genres, English posts largely feature selfies, lifestyle shots, sport, business and travel imagery aligned with individualism, while Uzbek posts prioritize images of family, certificates, teachers and students, spiritual events and local traditions. The results clearly show that English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook discourses employ multimodal resources to construct meaning in different ways, yet in both languages multimodal units function as central elements of communication.

**Discussion.** Based on Table 1, interpreting multimodal strategies in English and Uzbek discourses through the lenses of intercultural pragmatics and sociolinguistics reveals that, despite their fundamental differences, their communicative goals are similar. First, English discourse prioritizes individualism, global communicative norms and algorithmic adaptation in its use of multimodal resources. The functional alignment of images, emojis and hashtags serves to strengthen the user’s personal brand, attract an audience, and adapt to platform algorithms. This underscores the prominence of “self-presentation” and “performative identity” in English. Second, in Uzbek discourse, the primary function of multimodal resources is to express collectivism, spiritual values, respect and social status. Emojis such as , , uz are used less to convey purely individual emotion and more to express community belonging, religious prayers, respect or shared joy. Hashtags typically mark thematic and local content. Third, code-switching in Uzbek discourse shows that English social media terminology is being actively integrated. This process can be viewed as a sign of “linguistic modernization” and adaptation to digital culture. In English discourse, by contrast, the centrality of English as the primary medium remains relatively stable. Fourth, differences in visual genres reveal the sociocultural values of the two communities. English posts are oriented towards showcasing individual achievements, lifestyle and professional activity, whereas Uzbek posts multimodally represent collective realities such as family, teachers, holidays and national events. Fifth, politeness strategies manifest differently in each language’s online discourse. In English, a “friendly, informal tone” is central, while in Uzbek, “respect and status marking” occupy the core position. This is reinforced by multimodal means: emojis, images, layout choices, filters and background

colors contribute to shaping the cultural tone. Overall, the results of the analytical table show that although both English and Uzbek discourses employ multimodal resources to address universal communicative needs, the semiotic load, culturally specific interpretations and pragmatic functions of these resources differ sharply. These differences are fully consistent with theoretical principles in multimodal communication (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen), intercultural pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

**Conclusion.** The above results and discussion, based on Table 1, offer an in-depth account of the multimodal nature of English and Uzbek Instagram/Facebook discourse. The study demonstrates that multimodal communication plays a central role in both speech communities today. English discourse uses multimodal resources primarily to construct individual identity, professional image, motivation, self-branding and global connectivity. Uzbek discourse, in turn, utilizes multimodal resources to express family, community, spirituality, respect, national ideas and collective identity. The differences identified across the 20 coded parameters show that multimodal resources in each language carry distinct semiotic loads. While English discourse is global, algorithmic and individualistic, Uzbek discourse is more local, collective and spiritually oriented. This once again confirms the need for multimodal competence in intercultural communication, language teaching, translation and media pragmatics. In the future, it would be fruitful to extend this research by applying multimodal analysis to other platforms such as TikTok, Telegram and YouTube Shorts, and by constructing segmented corpora based on age, gender and professional groups. This would further enrich our understanding of multimodal communication across diverse digital environments.

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