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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**PRAGMATIC LACUNAE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS
OF SPEECH ETIQUETTE UNITS****Saybulbot Muhammadaliyevich Azamov***Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages**Department of English Language and Literature**Associate Professor**Email: sayfulbota@gmail.com**Namangan, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: pragmatic lacuna, speech etiquette, contrastive analysis, address forms, politeness, speech act, pragmatic correspondence, intercultural communication.

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Abstract: This article provides a contrastive analysis of pragmatic lacunae in English and Uzbek speech etiquette. It examines mismatches in address forms, greetings, requests, gratitude, apologies, invitations, and farewells. Pragmatic lacunae are shown to arise from differences among linguistic forms, social relationships, cultural expectations, and conventions governing contextually appropriate communication.

Introduction. Speech etiquette constitutes a system of conventional linguistic units and communicative strategies used to establish, regulate, and conclude interpersonal interaction. It includes greetings, forms of address, requests, apologies, expressions of gratitude, invitations, congratulations, good wishes, and farewells. Although similar communicative needs occur in different societies, the linguistic means and cultural rules used to satisfy them do not necessarily coincide.

Pragmatic lacunarity arises when a communicative meaning, social attitude, politeness value, or speech strategy conventionalised in one language lacks a direct and functionally equivalent means of expression in another. Unlike a lexical lacuna, a pragmatic lacuna does not always involve the absence of a word. Both languages may possess formally similar

expressions, yet these units may differ in their social conditions of use, degree of politeness, emotional value, or expected response.

Politeness has been examined in relation to face, interpersonal distance, imposition, solidarity, and socially appropriate behaviour. Brown and Levinson distinguish positive-politeness strategies, which emphasise closeness and approval, from negative-politeness strategies, which reduce imposition and protect the addressee's autonomy. Leech approaches politeness through pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions and examines its realisation in requests, apologies, offers, compliments, agreement, and disagreement.

However, politeness models cannot be transferred mechanically from one language and culture to another. Cross-cultural pragmatics demonstrates that similar speech acts may be realised through different levels of directness, formulaicity, social deference, and contextual elaboration. Wierzbicka argues that linguistic interaction is shaped by culture-specific meanings and communicative values, while interlanguage pragmatics investigates how speakers interpret and produce socially appropriate meanings in a second language.

English and Uzbek provide particularly significant material for the study of pragmatic lacunarity. English commonly expresses politeness through modal verbs, hedges, titles, indirect questions, conventional apologies, and respect for interpersonal autonomy. Uzbek speech etiquette makes extensive use of the *sen-siz* opposition, kinship-based forms of address, honorific expressions, blessings, inquiries about family well-being, repeated offers, and formulas reflecting age and social hierarchy. These are general tendencies rather than absolute rules, since communicative behaviour also varies according to region, generation, profession, relationship, and situation. Comparative research confirms that English and Uzbek speech-etiquette formulas differ in address, greeting, request, and politeness strategies as well as in their cultural associations.

The purpose of the present article is to identify the principal pragmatic lacunae in English and Uzbek speech etiquette and to describe their linguistic, sociopragmatic, and cultural characteristics. The study focuses on the distinction between formal correspondence and functional-pragmatic equivalence.

Materials and Methods. The research material consists of conventional English and Uzbek speech-etiquette units used in greetings, forms of address, requests, offers, invitations, apologies, gratitude, good wishes, and farewells. The analysed examples include you, Mr, Ms, Sir, Madam, hello, please, thank you, I am sorry, would you mind, help yourself, and take care in English, as well as *sen, siz, aka, opa, amaki, xola, assalomu alaykum, iltimos, rahmat, kechirasiz, marhamat, qani oling, sog' bo'ling*, and *yaxshi boring* in Uzbek.

The study employs contrastive, descriptive, contextual, componential, and pragmalinguistic methods. The contrastive method is used to determine full, partial, and zero correspondence between speech-etiquette units. Contextual analysis identifies the situations, social roles, and interpersonal relationships in which the formulas are used. Componential analysis separates their principal pragmatic features, including respect, intimacy, distance, mitigation, hospitality, solidarity, age hierarchy, and emotional involvement.

The study is qualitative rather than statistical. The units are compared according to a shared communicative function, or *tertium comparationis*. A greeting is therefore compared with another greeting, a request with a request, and a form of address with a unit performing a corresponding interpersonal function.

Three levels of correspondence are distinguished:

1. Full pragmatic correspondence occurs when units have similar meanings, social conditions, and communicative effects.
2. Partial pragmatic correspondence occurs when expressions share a general function but differ in politeness, connotation, frequency, or contextual restrictions.
3. Zero pragmatic correspondence occurs when a conventional strategy in one language has no regular equivalent in the other and requires explanation, restructuring, or pragmatic compensation.

The analysis was conducted by identifying the literal meaning of each unit, its intended speech act, the relationship between participants, its cultural associations, and the response conventionally expected from the addressee.

Results. Address forms and social deixis

The Uzbek opposition between *sen* and *siz* represents one of the clearest examples of a grammatical-pragmatic lacuna in relation to English. *Sen* generally marks informality, intimacy, or communication with a younger person, whereas *siz* may express respect, formality, social distance, or plural reference. The choice between them can signal the speaker's interpretation of age, status, familiarity, and interpersonal relations [1].

Modern English uses *you* in both formal and informal contexts. Consequently, English does not grammatically reproduce the social information contained in the Uzbek pronoun opposition. Respect may instead be expressed through titles, names, modal constructions, intonation, and lexical mitigation. In translation, both *sen* and *siz* usually become *you*, which creates a partial loss of social and pragmatic meaning.

Uzbek also employs kinship terms such as *aka*, *opa*, *amaki*, *xola*, *uka*, and *singil* when addressing people who are not biological relatives. In these contexts, the terms indicate age,

gender, respect, warmth, or social solidarity. English brother, sister, uncle, and aunt are more restricted in ordinary neutral address and cannot automatically replace the Uzbek units.

Thus, Excuse me, sir may function as a contextual equivalent of Kechirasiz, aka, but sir expresses formal respect without the same implication of kinship-based solidarity. The correspondence is functional but not semantically or culturally complete [2].

Greeting formulas

English greetings such as Hello, Hi, Good morning, and How are you? vary mainly according to formality, time, familiarity, and communicative setting. Uzbek has corresponding formulas such as Salom, Assalomu alaykum, Xayrli tong, and Yaxshimisiz? Nevertheless, apparent equivalence does not eliminate pragmatic differences.

Assalomu alaykum is not merely a lexical substitute for Hello. It is a conventional greeting with religious, cultural, and respect-related associations and normally elicits the established response Va alaykum assalom. Its social meaning can therefore be broader than that of a neutral English greeting [3].

Uzbek greeting sequences may also contain inquiries such as Uy ichilar yaxshimi?, Ota-onangiz salomatmi? or Ishlar yaxshimi? These questions help maintain social relationships and demonstrate interest in the interlocutor's family and general welfare. English greetings may include How is your family?, but such an inquiry is more dependent on familiarity and context. In some settings, detailed questions about family matters may be perceived as overly personal.

The lacuna is therefore not the absence of corresponding words but the lack of identical conventions governing how much relational information a normal greeting should contain.

Requests and mitigation

Both English and Uzbek possess direct and indirect means of requesting. English commonly uses modal and interrogative constructions such as Could you help me?, Would you mind opening the window?, and Could I possibly ask you to...? The word please can occur in different positions, but its pragmatic effect depends on intonation and sentence type [4].

Uzbek requests may employ iltimos, interrogative verb forms, respectful second-person morphology, introductory apologies, and expressions reducing the burden imposed on the listener: Iltimos, yordam berib yuborsangiz, Kechirasiz, bir narsani so'rasam maylimi? or Imkoningiz bo'lsa, ko'rib bersangiz.

Formal similarity does not guarantee functional equivalence. The direct transfer of please as iltimos may be inappropriate in some contexts, because both markers interact differently with grammatical form, intonation, and interpersonal status. Research in

interlanguage pragmatics shows that mastery of vocabulary and grammar alone does not ensure socially appropriate performance of requests, apologies, thanks, and related acts [5].

Offers, invitations, and hospitality

Uzbek hospitality discourse frequently uses formulas such as *Marhamat*, *Qani*, *oling*, *Choydan oling*, *Yana oling*, and *Bemalol o'tiring*. An offer may be repeated after the guest's initial refusal because the first refusal can function as modest hesitation rather than a final rejection.

English offers include *Please help yourself*, *Would you like some more?*, and *Make yourself at home*. These expressions perform related functions, yet repeated insistence may be interpreted differently. In some English-speaking contexts, an initial refusal is more readily accepted as the addressee's final choice. In Uzbek interaction, accepting a refusal immediately may occasionally appear insufficiently hospitable [6].

This difference produces a behavioural-pragmatic lacuna. Word-for-word translation cannot convey the complete cultural script because the mismatch concerns the expected sequence of offer, refusal, repetition, and acceptance.

Apologies and gratitude

English apology formulas range from *Sorry* and *I am sorry* to more explicit expressions such as *I apologise*, *It was my fault*, and *I should not have done that*. Uzbek employs *Kechirasiz*, *Uzr*, *Meni afv eting*, *Xafa bo'lmang*, and contextually extended formulas acknowledging inconvenience or requesting forgiveness.

The units *Sorry* and *Kechirasiz* are often treated as equivalents, but their frequency and functional range may differ. English *sorry* can express apology, sympathy, regret, or a request for repetition. Uzbek may use different expressions according to these functions. Consequently, the translation of *sorry* requires contextual rather than purely lexical selection.

Gratitude is expressed through *Thank you*, *Thanks*, and *I appreciate it* in English and through *Rahmat*, *Katta rahmat*, *Tashakkur*, and *Minnatdorman* in Uzbek. Uzbek responses such as *Arzimaydi*, *Hechqisi yo'q*, and *Xizmat* do not always correspond precisely to *You are welcome*, *Not at all*, or *My pleasure*. Their interpersonal tone and conventional distribution may vary [7].

Good wishes and farewell formulas

Uzbek possesses an extensive range of farewell and blessing formulas: *Sog' bo'ling*, *Omon bo'ling*, *Yaxshi boring*, *Oq yo'l*, *Ishlaringizga omad*, *Baraka toping*, and *Umringiz uzoq bo'lsin*. These expressions may simultaneously perform the functions of farewell, gratitude, blessing, approval, and emotional support.

English offers partial equivalents such as Goodbye, Take care, Have a safe journey, Good luck, and I wish you all the best. However, a single English formula may not reproduce the spiritual, evaluative, and relational meanings of an Uzbek blessing. For example, Baraka toping may express gratitude and a wish for prosperity, while Thank you conveys gratitude without necessarily including a blessing.

The major correspondences can be summarised as follows:

Speech-etiquette area	Uzbek unit or strategy	Closest English form	Type of lacuna
Social pronouns	<i>sen – siz</i>	<i>you</i>	Grammatical-pragmatic
Respectful address	<i>aka, opa, amaki, xola</i>	<i>sir, madam, first name/title</i>	Sociopragmatic
Traditional greeting	<i>Assalomu alaykum</i>	<i>Hello / Peace be with you</i>	Cultural-pragmatic
Hospitality	<i>Qani, oling; yana oling</i>	<i>Please help yourself</i>	Behavioural-pragmatic
Blessing and farewell	<i>Sog' bo'ling; oq yo'l</i>	<i>Take care; have a safe trip</i>	Semantic-pragmatic
Indirect refusal	<i>Boshqa safar; nasib qilsa</i>	<i>Maybe another time</i>	Contextual-pragmatic

Discussion. The findings demonstrate that pragmatic lacunae arise at the intersection of linguistic structure and cultural convention. In the *sen–siz* opposition, the lacuna is partly grammatical because English lacks the equivalent pronoun distinction. In the use of *aka* and *opa* for non-relatives, it is sociopragmatic because the difference concerns the cultural interpretation of age and solidarity. In repeated hospitality offers, it is interactional because the languages organise conversational sequences differently [8].

Pragmatic lacunarity should therefore not be identified solely by searching for absent expressions. A formal equivalent may exist while failing to produce the same communicative effect. For example, *How are you?* and *Yaxshimisiz?* are close in general function, yet extended Uzbek well-being inquiries may carry stronger relational content. Similarly, *please* and *iltimos* are lexical equivalents but do not operate identically in every request construction.

Cross-cultural studies of speech acts show that indirectness is not universally interpreted in the same manner. A longer or more indirect expression may be polite in one context but overly formal, vague, or insincere in another. Wierzbicka's research emphasises

that apparently ordinary English expressions encode cultural assumptions rather than culturally neutral meanings [9].

The contrastive study of pragmatic lacunae has direct relevance to translation. A translator must reproduce not only propositional meaning but also respect, intimacy, distance, hospitality, hesitation, or emotional involvement. The Uzbek *siz* may require compensation through Mr, Mrs, Professor, Sir, or a more formal syntactic construction. Conversely, an English first-name address may need adjustment when the Uzbek communicative context requires a title or kinship-based respectful form.

Pragmatic lacunae are equally important in foreign-language teaching. Learners may produce grammatically correct sentences that remain socially inappropriate because they transfer the communicative conventions of their first language. Interlanguage-pragmatics research accordingly treats pragmatic awareness, speech-act realisation, interactional behaviour, and social appropriateness as essential components of second-language competence.

Teaching materials should therefore present speech-etiquette units in complete situations rather than as isolated translations. Learners need information about the participants' age, status, familiarity, communicative intention, and expected response. Role plays, parallel dialogues, contextual commentaries, and comparison of alternative formulations can help develop pragmatic and intercultural competence [10].

The present study is limited by its qualitative design. Speech etiquette varies across English-speaking societies and across regions, generations, and social groups in Uzbekistan. Future research should employ parallel corpora, recordings of natural interaction, discourse-completion tasks, and interviews with native speakers to measure the distribution and interpretation of particular formulas.

Conclusion. Pragmatic lacunae in English and Uzbek emerge when formally similar or functionally related speech-etiquette units differ in their social meaning, cultural associations, degree of politeness, or conditions of use. They cannot be reduced to the absence of lexical equivalents.

The principal areas of pragmatic lacunarity include the *sen-siz* and *you* systems, kinship-based forms of address, greeting sequences, request mitigation, hospitality formulas, apologies, gratitude, blessings, and farewells. These differences may be grammatical-pragmatic, sociopragmatic, cultural, contextual, or interactional.

The analysis shows that full pragmatic correspondence between speech-etiquette units is relatively limited. Most units display partial correspondence because they perform similar

general functions while differing in connotation, social distribution, or expected response. Zero correspondence occurs when a conventional communicative practice must be explained or pragmatically compensated in the other language.

The study of pragmatic lacunae contributes to contrastive linguistics by revealing differences that cannot be identified through grammar and vocabulary alone. It is also significant for translation, bilingual lexicography, foreign-language teaching, and intercultural communication. Accurate communication between English and Uzbek speakers requires knowledge not only of what an expression means but also of when, to whom, and for what interpersonal purpose it is appropriately used.

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