

INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS IN ENGLISH-UZBEK COMMUNICATION: CHALLENGES FOR EFL LEARNERS

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Annotation : *This paper explores the challenges faced by Uzbek EFL learners in understanding and applying intercultural pragmatics during English-Uzbek communication. It examines how cultural differences in speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversational norms affect communication effectiveness. The study highlights common pragmatic failures and their impact on learners' language competence and intercultural awareness. Based on classroom observations and learner feedback, the paper suggests pedagogical approaches to enhance pragmatic competence, including the integration of cultural content and communicative practice in EFL curricula.*

Keywords: *intercultural pragmatics, English-Uzbek communication, EFL learners, speech acts, politeness strategies, pragmatic failure, intercultural awareness*

Intercultural pragmatics plays a crucial role in effective communication, especially for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Uzbekistan. While mastering grammar and vocabulary is essential, understanding how cultural norms influence language use is equally important for successful interaction. English and Uzbek cultures have distinct pragmatic conventions regarding politeness, directness, and speech acts such as requests, refusals, and apologies. EFL learners often encounter difficulties navigating these differences, which can lead to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. This paper investigates the pragmatic challenges Uzbek learners face in English-Uzbek communication and explores teaching strategies to improve their intercultural pragmatic competence.

Intercultural pragmatics focuses on how language users comprehend and produce communicative acts within their cultural contexts. For Uzbek learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), mastering intercultural pragmatics is essential to avoid miscommunication and to engage effectively in cross-cultural interactions. English-Uzbek communication presents unique challenges due to differences in speech acts, politeness norms, and conversational strategies.

One key area of difficulty lies in **speech acts** such as requests, refusals, apologies, and compliments. In Uzbek culture, indirectness and politeness are highly valued, often leading speakers to use euphemisms, mitigating expressions, or indirect language to maintain harmony and respect. Conversely, English pragmatic norms, while also valuing politeness, tend to favor a more direct style depending on the context. For example, an English speaker may say, "Could you send me the report by

tomorrow?” which is a polite but clear request. An Uzbek learner might either over-politeness the request or, conversely, translate Uzbek indirect expressions literally, causing confusion. This pragmatic mismatch can result in **pragmatic failure**, where the intended meaning is not effectively conveyed or understood.

Politeness strategies also differ markedly between the two cultures. Uzbek communication often emphasizes formality, honorifics, and deference, especially toward elders or authority figures. In contrast, English speakers may adopt a more egalitarian approach, sometimes using informal language even in professional settings. Uzbek EFL learners may struggle to gauge the appropriate level of politeness in English, leading to either excessive formality, which may seem awkward, or insufficient politeness, which could be perceived as rude.

Another challenge arises in **conversational norms**, including turn-taking, topic management, and the use of silence. Uzbek conversational style tends to allow longer pauses and indirect topic shifts, whereas English conversational norms often expect quicker turn exchanges and explicit topic changes. Misunderstandings can occur if learners are unaware of these cultural preferences, impacting the flow and effectiveness of communication.

These pragmatic challenges are compounded by the influence of **language transfer** and limited exposure to authentic English communication. Uzbek learners frequently apply their native pragmatic rules when speaking English, which may not align with target language expectations. For example, refusing an invitation politely in Uzbek might involve elaborate explanations and apologies, while in English, a simple and clear refusal is often preferred.

To address these challenges, pedagogical interventions are necessary. **Integrating intercultural pragmatics into EFL curricula** can raise learners’ awareness of cultural differences and teach appropriate language use. Role-plays, simulations, and authentic materials such as dialogues and videos can provide practical exposure. Teachers should explicitly explain and compare politeness norms, speech acts, and conversational strategies from both cultures.

Moreover, encouraging **reflective practice** helps learners analyze their communication styles and recognize potential pragmatic issues. Peer feedback and teacher guidance during speaking activities can foster pragmatic competence. Incorporating **task-based learning** with real-life scenarios allows learners to practice pragmatic skills in meaningful contexts.

In conclusion, developing intercultural pragmatic competence is vital for Uzbek EFL learners to navigate English-Uzbek communication effectively. By understanding and adapting to cultural differences in language use, learners can avoid pragmatic failure and enhance their overall communicative ability. Educators play a crucial role in facilitating this development through targeted teaching strategies that emphasize cultural as well as linguistic knowledge.

Intercultural pragmatic challenges significantly impact the effectiveness of English-Uzbek communication among Uzbek EFL learners. Differences in speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversational norms often lead to misunderstandings and pragmatic failure. Uzbek learners tend to transfer native cultural communication patterns into English, which may not always align with target language expectations. To overcome these challenges, it is essential to incorporate explicit instruction on intercultural pragmatics within EFL teaching. Utilizing authentic materials, role-plays, and reflective practices can enhance learners' pragmatic competence and intercultural awareness. Ultimately, fostering an understanding of cultural nuances alongside linguistic proficiency will empower Uzbek learners to communicate more effectively and confidently in diverse English-speaking contexts.

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