



A LINGUOCULTURAL MODEL OF TRUST CONSTRUCTION
IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS DISCOURSE

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*Oliy ta'lim, fan va innovatsiyalar vazirligi huzuridagi Bilim va malakalarni baholash
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Abstract: *Trust is a central but culturally contingent concept in public relations (PR), particularly in digital environments where organizations must communicate under conditions of uncertainty and reputational risk. While trust has been extensively theorized in organizational psychology and PR studies, less attention has been paid to its linguistic and linguocultural realization across languages. This paper proposes a Linguocultural Trust Construction Model (LTCM) that integrates organizational trust theory (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995), sociological approaches to trust (Luhmann, 1979), discourse-pragmatic frameworks (Hyland, 2005), and intercultural rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Using a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek online PR texts (corporate apologies and institutional press releases), the study demonstrates that while both languages draw on similar trust dimensions—competence, integrity, benevolence, and accountability—their linguistic realization differs systematically. English PR discourse prioritizes procedural transparency and explicit responsibility-taking, whereas Uzbek PR discourse emphasizes relational reassurance, institutional authority, and culturally grounded politeness strategies. The findings highlight trust as a performed linguistic practice shaped by culture, with implications for cross-cultural PR, translation, and professional communication.*

Keywords: *trust, public relations discourse, linguoculture, pragmatics, English–Uzbek comparison*

Introduction

Trust plays a foundational role in public relations, shaping organizational legitimacy, stakeholder cooperation, and reputational stability. In online contexts, trust must be constructed through language alone, often in situations of crisis or public scrutiny. Scholars have argued that trust is not merely an abstract attitude but a communicative achievement negotiated through discourse (Bentele, 2008; Valentini, 2021).

Organizational trust is commonly defined as a willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another party's ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). From a sociological perspective, trust enables social action by reducing complexity and uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979). These approaches, however, rarely address how trust is linguistically enacted across different cultural contexts.

This paper argues that trust in PR discourse is not universal in its linguistic realization. Instead, it is shaped by linguocultural norms governing politeness, authority, accountability,



and interpersonal positioning. Focusing on English and Uzbek online PR discourse, the study proposes a compact analytical model suitable for cross-cultural comparison.

Trust in Public Relations and Discourse: Theoretical Background

Mayer et al.'s (1995) integrative model identifies ability, benevolence, and integrity as the core dimensions of trust. This model has been widely adopted in management and PR research due to its clarity and applicability to institutional contexts. Luhmann (1979) conceptualizes trust as a mechanism that enables action despite uncertainty, a perspective particularly relevant to PR during crises. In such situations, organizations seek to stabilize public expectations through communicative acts rather than empirical proof alone.

In PR research, trust is often linked to relationship management and dialogic communication. Kent and Taylor (2002) argue that openness, responsiveness, and mutuality are essential for trust-building, especially in mediated communication.

Discourse, Stance, and Trust Construction

From a discourse-analytic perspective, trust is constructed through stance—the ways in which speakers express evaluation, commitment, and responsibility (Hyland, 2005). Linguistic choices such as modality, pronoun use, and evaluative lexis position organizations as accountable, empathetic, or authoritative.

Studies in institutional discourse suggest that explicit responsibility-taking and future-oriented commitments enhance perceived credibility in low-context communication cultures (Hyland, 2005; Hall, 1976).

Linguoculture, Politeness, and Rapport

Intercultural pragmatics emphasizes that communicative expectations differ across cultures. Spencer-Oatey's (2008) rapport management framework highlights how trust is closely tied to respect, sociality rights, and face concerns.

Research on Uzbek communicative norms shows a strong emphasis on respect, moral responsibility, and social harmony in public and institutional discourse (Karimova, 2018; Abdullaeva, 2020). These norms influence how trust is linguistically signaled, particularly in PR texts aimed at the general public.

The Linguocultural Trust Construction Model (LTCM)

To account for these differences, this paper proposes the Linguocultural Trust Construction Model (LTCM), consisting of three interrelated levels:

Trust Dimensions (Conceptual Level)

Based on Mayer et al. (1995) and PR research (Valentini, 2021), four trust dimensions are identified:

- Competence (ability to act effectively),
- Integrity (ethical conduct and honesty),
- Benevolence (care for stakeholders),
- Accountability/Transparency (openness and responsibility).

Discursive Strategies (Functional Level)

These dimensions are realized through recurrent PR strategies:



- apology and acknowledgment of concern,
- explanation and justification,
- corrective and preventive action,
- reassurance and stakeholder inclusion,
- institutional value positioning

(Kent & Taylor, 2002).

Linguocultural Realization (Pragmatic Level)

The same strategies are linguistically realized differently depending on:

- stance and engagement choices (Hyland, 2005),
- politeness and rapport management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008),
- cultural preferences for explicitness vs. implicitness (Hall, 1976).

Data and Method

The data consist of a small comparable corpus of English and Uzbek online PR texts, including:

- corporate apology statements,
- institutional press releases addressing public concern.

The analysis follows a qualitative discourse-analytic approach, focusing on:

1. which trust dimensions are foregrounded,
2. how responsibility and concern are linguistically expressed,
3. how cultural norms shape tone and structure.

The goal is pattern identification, not statistical generalization.

Analysis and Findings

English PR Discourse: Explicit Accountability and Procedural Transparency

English-language online PR discourse frequently constructs trust through explicit responsibility-taking, procedural explanation, and forward-looking commitments, reflecting low-context communication norms (Hall, 1976) and stance-based credibility construction (Hyland, 2005).

A clear example is the corporate apology issued by Toyota following internal misconduct. In its official newsroom statement, Toyota explicitly acknowledges fault and frames trust repair as a matter of institutional responsibility:

“We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience and concern caused. Toyota takes this matter seriously and will take steps to prevent recurrence by thoroughly educating employees and strengthening internal controls.”

(Toyota Global Newsroom, 2023)

This statement illustrates three core trust-building mechanisms typical of English PR discourse:

1. Explicit apology (“we sincerely apologize”),
2. Clear acknowledgment of responsibility (“Toyota takes this matter seriously”),
3. Forward-looking corrective action (“prevent recurrence,” “strengthening internal controls”).



In another Toyota statement addressing regulatory violations, the company explicitly frames the issue as a breach of trust:

“Such conduct undermines trust in the company, and Toyota deeply regrets this breach of confidence.”

(Toyota Global Newsroom, 2023)

Here, trust itself is lexicalized, and repair is framed through disclosure and control, consistent with PR scholarship that links transparency and accountability to credibility in English-language institutional discourse (Bentele, 2008; Hyland, 2005).

A similar pattern appears in UK government crisis communication. In a public statement on vaccine confidence, UK Government emphasizes transparency and evidence-based reassurance:

“Public trust is essential. We are committed to clear communication, transparency, and addressing concerns with evidence.”

(UK Government, 2021)

Across these English examples, trust is constructed as repairable through disclosure, explanation, and procedural guarantees, aligning with low-context cultural expectations (Hall, 1976).

Uzbek PR Discourse: Relational Reassurance and Institutional Guardianship

In contrast, Uzbek online PR discourse tends to foreground relational reassurance, moral responsibility, and institutional authority, rather than explicit self-criticism. Trust is constructed through alignment with culturally valued norms of respect, care, and social stability (Karimova, 2018).

A representative case is the public apology issued by UzAuto Motors, reported by Kun.uz, following public dissatisfaction with vehicle sales procedures. The company's statement emphasizes concern for citizens and material reassurance:

“We understand the concerns of our customers. All funds will be refunded in full, and additional compensation will be provided. UzAuto Motors remains committed to acting responsibly and protecting the interests of the population.”

(Kun.uz, 2021)

Although an apology is present, it is embedded within expressions of concern and commitment, rather than foregrounded as explicit self-blame. Trust repair is achieved through:

- material guarantees (refunds and compensation),
- moral positioning (“acting responsibly”),
- collective orientation (“interests of the population”).

This aligns with Uzbek communicative norms, where institutional credibility is closely linked to social responsibility and guardianship rather than overt admission of fault (Karimova, 2018).

A further example comes from Central Bank of Uzbekistan, whose official press releases repeatedly frame trust as a function of institutional integrity and stability:



“The Central Bank consistently implements measures to ensure transparency, reliability, and public confidence in the banking system.”

(Central Bank of Uzbekistan, 2022)

Here, trust is constructed through authority-based reassurance and moral legitimacy rather than dialogic self-disclosure. The institution positions itself as a stable guardian of public welfare, reflecting high-context expectations of state communication.

Comparative Interpretation

The English and Uzbek examples demonstrate that while both PR traditions activate the same underlying trust dimensions—competence, integrity, benevolence, and accountability (Mayer et al., 1995)—they differ markedly in linguistic realization.

- English PR discourse frames trust as procedurally repairable through explicit apology, transparency, and future control.
- Uzbek PR discourse frames trust as relationally sustained through respect, moral responsibility, and institutional care.

These findings empirically support the Linguocultural Trust Construction Model by showing that trust is not merely communicated but performed in culturally specific ways through discourse.

Discussion

The findings support recent calls in public relations research to integrate linguistic analysis into studies of trust (Valentini, 2021). The Linguocultural Trust Construction Model (LTCM) demonstrates that trust in PR discourse is not a universal communicative formula but a linguistically performed, culturally mediated process operating at the intersection of cognition, discourse, and culture.

The analysis shows that English and Uzbek PR discourse activate similar trust dimensions—competence, integrity, benevolence, and accountability (Mayer et al., 1995)—but differ in how these dimensions are legitimized. English PR discourse constructs trust primarily through explicit responsibility-taking and procedural transparency, as illustrated by direct apologies and detailed corrective commitments. This reflects low-context communication norms, where trust is framed as repairable through disclosure and institutional control (Hall, 1976; Hyland, 2005).

By contrast, Uzbek PR discourse emphasizes relational reassurance and institutional guardianship, embedding trust repair within expressions of care, moral responsibility, and social stability. Rather than foregrounding explicit self-criticism, Uzbek PR texts align with culturally valued norms of respect and authority, where institutional credibility is maintained through continuity and moral positioning (Karimova, 2018).

These differences challenge the assumption that transparency-driven trust models are universally applicable. While explicit accountability functions as a strong trust signal in English PR, the Uzbek data demonstrate that trust can also be effectively constructed through relational and authority-based discourse, supporting sociological views of trust as culturally embedded (Luhmann, 1979).





For practitioners, the findings highlight the risks of direct translation in cross-cultural PR. Effective communication requires adapting trust cues—such as apology, reassurance, and accountability—rather than transferring content verbatim. The LTCM provides a practical framework for anticipating how trust signals may be interpreted differently across linguocultural contexts.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that trust construction in online PR discourse is a linguoculturally performed practice, shaped by culturally specific expectations of responsibility, respect, and authority. The comparative analysis demonstrates that English PR discourse foregrounds explicit accountability and procedural transparency, whereas Uzbek PR discourse emphasizes relational reassurance and institutional guardianship. By proposing the Linguocultural Trust Construction Model, the study offers a compact analytical framework suitable for cross-linguistic PR research and conference-level discussion. Future studies may extend the model to multimodal PR content or audience reception.

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