

THE PRAGMATICS OF MORAL DIRECTIVES IN RELIGIOUS FAMILY DISCOURSE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UZBEK AND AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS.

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Abstract. *This study investigates the pragmatics of moral directives—especially commands, advice, prayers, and calls to repentance—within religious family discourse in Uzbekistan and the United States. Drawing on Islamic and Christian traditions, it examines how parents utilize sacred texts such as the Qur'an and the Bible to convey moral values through their speech. The analysis reveals differences in tone, structure, and social expectations, demonstrating how sacred discourse functions both linguistically and socially in shaping children's ethical awareness.*

Keywords. *Pragmatics, moral directives, Qur'an, Bible, repentance, commands, family discourse, religious parenting, speech acts*

Introduction

Religious language plays a crucial role in the moral development of children, particularly in households where parenting is informed by faith-based traditions. In Uzbekistan and the United States, the Qur'an and the Bible (also referred to as the Injil in Islamic tradition) serve as moral reference points and linguistic models. Parents often rely on sacred verses when addressing children, either to instruct, advise, bless, or correct them.

According to John Searle's theory of speech acts, directives are utterances aimed at getting someone to do something.¹⁵ Moral directives based on sacred texts are more than pedagogical tools; they represent divine-backed authority filtered through parental speech. This article compares how such speech acts function pragmatically in Uzbek and American families, with special focus on commands, advice, supplications, and repentance.

Commands: Qur'anic and Biblical Imperatives as Moral Tools

In Uzbek Muslim families, commands often mirror Qur'anic imperatives such as "Establish prayer" (Qur'an 2:43) or "Speak truthfully" (Qur'an 33:70). These

¹⁵ Searle, J. R. (1979). **Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge University Press

utterances are typically authoritative, reflecting divine instruction and cultural obedience norms.¹⁶ They are delivered with formal intonation, especially in rural households.

In contrast, American Christian families frequently cite Biblical commandments in everyday parenting. Verses like “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (Ephesians 6:1), “You shall not lie” (Exodus 20:16), and “Love the Lord your God with all your heart...” (Deuteronomy 6:5) are often paraphrased in family discourse as: “God says we must be honest” or “Jesus wants us to be kind.” Rather than using direct imperatives, many American families integrate these values into storytelling or reflective dialogue.¹⁷ Thus, Qur’anic discourse often emphasizes directive clarity, while Biblical usage leans toward narrative-based moral modeling.

Advice: Ethical Instruction through Scriptural Wisdom

Moral advice in both religious traditions functions as a central pragmatic strategy through which parents shape their children's inner compass. In Uzbek families, Qur’anic phrases like: “Indeed, Allah is with the patient” (Qur’an 2:153), or hadith-based advice such as: “He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy” are frequently quoted to teach patience, empathy, and self-control. These expressions are typically presented not as personal views, but as divinely grounded guidance, often introduced with framing like “The Qur’an says...” or “Our Prophet taught us...”.¹⁸

In American Christian households, advice is more often embedded in biblical proverbs or teachings of Jesus. For instance: “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1), “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). These are shared in informal conversations, story time, or emotionally charged situations. As Diana Hess explains, such usage encourages children to reflect and internalize values rather than merely obey¹⁹. Thus, advice operates as a relational, narrative-driven directive.

References:

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¹⁶ Qur’an 2:43

¹⁷ Bible, Ephesians 6:1

¹⁸ Qur’an 2:153

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