

Linguopragmatic Features of Cultural-Specific Units in the Uzbek Language

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the linguopragmatic features of cultural-specific units in the Uzbek language, with particular attention to the relationship between linguistic form, cultural meaning, communicative intention, and context. Cultural-specific units represent elements of language that reflect the historical experience, social relations, traditions, values, and communicative norms of the Uzbek speech community. The study focuses on lexical units, kinship terms, forms of address, phraseological expressions, and culturally marked concepts that acquire additional pragmatic meanings in actual communication. The analysis demonstrates that the pragmatic interpretation of such units cannot always be determined by their denotative meaning alone. Their communicative function is influenced by the social status of interlocutors, interpersonal distance, communicative situation, and the speaker's intention. Particular attention is paid to kinship terms and forms of address, which may function beyond their primary nominative meanings to express respect, familiarity, solidarity, social distance, or emotional attitude. The study also considers the role of phraseological and culturally marked expressions in conveying implicit meanings and maintaining culturally established patterns of communication. The findings indicate that cultural-specific units constitute an important linguistic resource through which speakers encode and interpret culturally determined pragmatic meanings. The research contributes to the study of Uzbek linguopragmatics by demonstrating the interaction of semantic, cultural, and pragmatic factors in the functioning of culturally marked language units.

Keywords: Cultural-specific units, Uzbek language, linguopragmatics, cultural meaning, pragmatic meaning, communicative intention, forms of address, kinship terms, phraseological units, cultural context.

INTRODUCTION

Language is not only a means of transmitting information but also an important mechanism through which the cultural experience, social values, and communicative norms of a speech community are preserved and transmitted. In this respect, the study of culturally marked language units provides an opportunity to identify the ways in which linguistic forms reflect the worldview and social practices of a particular community. Cultural-specific units are especially significant because their meanings may extend beyond their direct lexical or semantic content and acquire additional interpretations in particular communicative contexts.

The relationship between language and culture has been examined from different perspectives within linguistics, including linguistic anthropology, ethnolinguistics, linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics, and pragmatics. From a pragmatic perspective, however, the meaning of a culturally marked linguistic unit is determined not only by its conventional semantic content but also by the communicative situation, the relationship between interlocutors, their social roles, and the speaker's communicative intention. Consequently, the same linguistic expression may perform different communicative functions depending on the context in which it is used.

The Uzbek language provides particularly relevant material for examining this interaction between language, culture, and pragmatics. The Uzbek communicative tradition contains a wide range of culturally significant lexical and phraseological units, kinship terms, forms of address, etiquette expressions, proverbs, and concepts associated with social and cultural practices. Units such as *aka* "elder brother," *opa* "elder sister," *amaki* "paternal uncle," and *tog'a* "maternal uncle," for example, primarily denote kinship relations. In actual communication, however,

some of these forms may also be employed as forms of address toward non-relatives, where they can signal respect, familiarity, social proximity, or a particular interpersonal relationship. Thus, their pragmatic interpretation is determined by factors extending beyond their dictionary meanings.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in culturally marked concepts associated with traditional Uzbek social life, including *mahalla*, *hashar*, *mehmon*, and *to'y*. Such units refer not merely to particular objects, events, or social practices but may activate broader cultural knowledge shared by members of the speech community. Their use in discourse can therefore convey implicit evaluations, social expectations, solidarity, and culturally recognizable associations. This demonstrates that cultural meaning and pragmatic meaning are closely interconnected in communication.

Despite considerable attention to the relationship between language and culture, the pragmatic functioning of culturally specific units in Uzbek requires further systematic investigation. In particular, the interaction between the conventional meaning of a cultural unit and the additional meaning generated by communicative context remains an important area for linguopragmatic research. A context-sensitive analysis makes it possible to determine how speakers use culturally marked expressions to establish interpersonal relations, express attitudes, maintain politeness, and communicate meanings that are not explicitly stated.

The present study therefore aims to identify the linguopragmatic features of cultural-specific units in the Uzbek language and to determine the principal pragmatic functions they perform in communication. Particular attention is given to culturally marked lexical units, kinship terms, forms of address, phraseological expressions, and other language elements whose interpretation depends on cultural and contextual knowledge. The study seeks to demonstrate how semantic, cultural, and pragmatic factors interact in the interpretation of these units and how they contribute to the expression of communicative intentions in Uzbek discourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between language and culture has long been recognized as one of the important areas of linguistic research. Language reflects the historical experience, social organization, values, traditions, and worldview of a particular speech community. Within this broad field, the study of culturally marked linguistic units has developed through several complementary approaches, including linguistic anthropology, ethnolinguistics, linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics, and pragmatics.

The cultural dimension of language was extensively discussed in linguistic and anthropological studies concerned with the interaction between language and worldview. Sapir emphasized that language is closely connected with the cultural experience of its speakers and that linguistic categories reflect culturally established ways of interpreting reality. Whorf further developed the relationship between language and conceptualization by examining how linguistic patterns may influence the ways in which speakers organize and interpret their experience. These approaches established an important theoretical basis for investigating linguistic units that contain culturally significant information.

The development of linguoculturology subsequently provided a more systematic framework for examining the interaction of language and culture. Researchers in this field have emphasized that certain linguistic units accumulate culturally significant knowledge and function as carriers of collective experience. Such units may include culturally marked lexical items, phraseological expressions, metaphors, proverbs, symbols, and concepts associated with traditional practices. Their interpretation often requires not only linguistic competence but also knowledge of the cultural background shared by members of a particular speech community.

The pragmatic approach adds another dimension to the analysis of culturally specific language units. Pragmatics focuses on how meaning is constructed and interpreted in relation to context, communicative intention, interlocutors, and social

circumstances. Austin's theory of speech acts demonstrated that utterances may perform actions in communication rather than merely describe states of affairs. Searle subsequently developed a systematic classification of speech acts and emphasized the role of speakers' intentions in determining the function of utterances. From this perspective, culturally marked expressions can be examined not only as semantic units but also as resources employed by speakers to perform particular communicative actions.

The concept of implicature developed by Grice is also relevant to the analysis of cultural-specific units. Communicative meaning is not always explicitly expressed through the linguistic form of an utterance. Speakers and hearers may rely on contextual and shared background knowledge to derive meanings that remain implicit. Cultural knowledge is particularly important in this process because culturally familiar expressions can activate meanings that are readily accessible to members of the same speech community but may remain less transparent to outsiders.

Politeness theory provides another important perspective for examining culturally marked expressions. Brown and Levinson demonstrated that linguistic choices are influenced by social relations and the communicative goals of speakers. Forms of address, kinship terms, honorific expressions, and other culturally conventional forms may therefore function as pragmatic resources for managing interpersonal relations. Their interpretation may depend on such factors as social distance, relative status, age, familiarity, and the degree of respect expected in a particular communicative situation.

Studies of Uzbek language and culture have also paid considerable attention to culturally significant vocabulary, phraseological expressions, forms of address, and national-cultural concepts. Such research has demonstrated that Uzbek linguistic units frequently preserve information about traditional social relations, customs, values, and patterns of interpersonal communication. However, a significant part of previous research has focused primarily on the semantic, ethnolinguistic, or cultural interpretation of these units, while their functioning as context-

dependent pragmatic resources requires further systematic consideration.

From a linguopragmatic perspective, cultural-specific units should therefore be considered as dynamic elements of communication rather than as static carriers of cultural information. Their pragmatic value emerges through the interaction of linguistic form, cultural knowledge, communicative intention, and contextual factors. A kinship term, for instance, may retain its direct denotative meaning in one communicative situation but function as a socially meaningful form of address in another. Likewise, a phraseological expression may convey an evaluative or interpersonal meaning that cannot be fully explained through its literal lexical components.

The present study builds on these theoretical approaches but focuses specifically on the linguopragmatic functioning of cultural-specific units in Uzbek. Unlike analyses limited to their lexical or cultural semantics, this study considers how such units operate in communication and how their pragmatic interpretation is shaped by context, interpersonal relations, communicative intention, and culturally shared knowledge. This perspective makes it possible to identify the interaction between cultural meaning and pragmatic function and to clarify the role of culturally marked language units in Uzbek communication.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employs a qualitative linguopragmatic approach to examine the functioning of cultural-specific units in the Uzbek language. The research material consists of culturally marked lexical units, kinship terms, forms of address, phraseological expressions, proverbs, and names of culturally significant practices and concepts used in Uzbek discourse. Particular attention is given to units whose interpretation may change or acquire additional pragmatic meaning depending on the communicative context.

The linguistic material was selected according to three principal criteria. First, the unit had to contain a culturally identifiable component associated with Uzbek social practices,

values, traditions, or interpersonal relations. Second, the selected unit had to demonstrate a pragmatic function in an actual or contextually interpretable communicative situation. Third, the material had to provide sufficient contextual information for identifying the relationship between its conventional meaning and its context-dependent pragmatic interpretation.

The analysis was conducted through several complementary methods. The descriptive method was used to identify and characterize the structural and semantic properties of cultural-specific units. The contextual method was applied to determine how the meaning and communicative function of a unit are influenced by the surrounding linguistic and situational context. The linguopragmatic method was employed to identify communicative intentions, interpersonal relations, pragmatic implications, and context-dependent meanings associated with the selected units. A comparative method was also used where necessary to distinguish the conventional lexical meaning of a unit from its pragmatic function in communication.

Particular attention was paid to the relationship between linguistic form and communicative intention. In analyzing forms of address and kinship terms, the study considered such contextual variables as the age and social status of interlocutors, degree of familiarity, interpersonal distance, and the communicative situation. In the analysis of phraseological and culturally marked expressions, emphasis was placed on their implicit meanings, evaluative potential, emotional-expressive functions, and culturally shared associations.

The interpretation of pragmatic meaning was based on the assumption that linguistic meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic form and contextual factors. Accordingly, each selected unit was analyzed according to four interconnected parameters: 1) conventional linguistic meaning, 2) cultural-semantic component, 3) communicative context, and 4) pragmatic function. This analytical framework makes it possible to distinguish between the culturally encoded meaning of a unit and the additional meaning generated through its use in a particular communicative situation.

The study primarily adopts a qualitative analytical procedure because the principal objective is to explain the relationship between cultural meaning and pragmatic function rather than merely to establish the frequency of particular units. The analysis proceeds from individual linguistic examples to broader observations concerning the role of culturally marked units in Uzbek communication. This approach enables the identification of recurring pragmatic functions, including the expression of respect, familiarity, solidarity, social distance, evaluation, emotional attitude, and interpersonal positioning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis demonstrates that cultural-specific units in Uzbek perform functions that extend beyond their direct lexical meanings. Their pragmatic interpretation is shaped by the communicative situation, the relationship between interlocutors, cultural knowledge, and the speaker's communicative intention. In this regard, culturally marked units can be regarded as important pragmatic resources through which speakers express interpersonal attitudes, establish social relations, and communicate culturally shared meanings.

Cultural-specific lexical units and pragmatic meaning

One of the most distinctive features of cultural-specific units is the coexistence of their conventional lexical meaning and additional cultural-pragmatic meaning. The Uzbek lexicon contains numerous units that refer to concepts deeply associated with the social and cultural life of the Uzbek community. Examples include *mahalla*, *hashar*, *to'y*, *mehmon*, *kelin*, and *duo*. Although these units have relatively stable lexical meanings, their interpretation in discourse may activate broader cultural associations.

For example, the lexical unit *mahalla* primarily denotes a territorial and social community. However, in Uzbek discourse, its use may evoke ideas of neighborhood solidarity, collective responsibility, social interaction, and mutual assistance. Therefore, when the unit occurs in a communicative context

concerning social relations, its pragmatic meaning may extend beyond the designation of a geographical or administrative community. The cultural knowledge shared by speakers allows the unit to function as a reference to a broader system of interpersonal and social relations.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the use of *hashar*. Its direct meaning refers to collective voluntary work. Pragmatically, however, the unit may evoke solidarity, cooperation, mutual assistance, and communal responsibility. Thus, its communicative value depends partly on culturally shared knowledge about the practice represented by the word.

The unit *mehmon* also demonstrates the interaction of lexical and cultural-pragmatic meanings. Its primary meaning refers to a guest, but within Uzbek communicative culture it may be associated with hospitality, respect, generosity, and particular behavioral expectations. Consequently, an utterance containing this unit may communicate an evaluative or interpersonal meaning that cannot be fully derived from its dictionary definition alone.

Kinship terms as pragmatic resources

Kinship terminology represents another important group of culturally significant units in Uzbek. Words such as *aka*, *opa*, *amaki*, *tog'a*, *xola*, and *amma* primarily denote family relationships. In actual communication, however, some of these terms may be used to address people who are not biological relatives.

The use of *aka* and *opa* toward non-relatives is particularly significant from a pragmatic perspective. Depending on the communicative situation, these forms can express respect toward an older interlocutor, interpersonal familiarity, social proximity, or a culturally established form of polite interaction. The pragmatic interpretation therefore depends on factors such as age difference, social relationship, communicative setting, and the degree of familiarity between speakers.

For example, addressing an unfamiliar older man as *aka* does not necessarily communicate a literal statement about kinship. Instead, the expression may establish a respectful and socially

acceptable interpersonal relationship. Similarly, *opam* may be used toward an older woman to express respect and social familiarity. In such cases, the original kinship meaning becomes pragmatically extended.

This phenomenon demonstrates that kinship terminology can operate simultaneously on two levels: the denotative level, where the unit identifies a family relationship, and the pragmatic level, where it performs an interpersonal function. The second level is particularly dependent on cultural norms governing forms of interaction.

Forms of address and social relations

Forms of address provide direct evidence of the relationship between language and social organization. In Uzbek communication, the choice of address form may signal differences in age, status, familiarity, respect, and interpersonal distance. Consequently, selecting one form rather than another constitutes a pragmatic decision.

Culturally established address forms may also contribute to politeness strategies. The speaker may select a respectful form not because the interlocutor occupies a formally higher institutional position, but because Uzbek communicative norms associate particular linguistic choices with appropriate interpersonal behavior. In this respect, address forms function as markers of social positioning.

The pragmatic significance of address forms becomes especially apparent when the same lexical item is used in different contexts. A kinship term used between actual relatives primarily performs a nominative function, whereas the same term used between non-relatives may perform an interpersonal and politeness-related function. This contextual variation confirms that pragmatic meaning is not an inherent property of the lexical form alone but emerges through its interaction with the communicative situation.

Phraseological units and implicit cultural meaning

Phraseological expressions constitute another important category of cultural-specific units. Their pragmatic significance derives

partly from the fact that their interpretation cannot always be reduced to the meanings of their individual components. Speakers who share the same cultural and linguistic background can recognize the conventional associations and evaluative meanings encoded in such expressions.

In discourse, phraseological units may perform several pragmatic functions, including evaluation, emotional expression, intensification, criticism, approval, and indirect communication. Their use can make an utterance more expressive while simultaneously activating culturally familiar patterns of interpretation.

The pragmatic potential of phraseological expressions is particularly evident when speakers employ them to communicate an evaluation indirectly. Instead of explicitly stating approval, criticism, or dissatisfaction, a speaker may use a culturally familiar expression whose conventional meaning allows the hearer to infer the intended evaluation. Thus, phraseological units may function as instruments of implicit communication.

Proverbs and culturally shared knowledge

Proverbs represent a particularly concentrated form of cultural knowledge. They encode collective observations, social experience, values, and behavioral expectations. Their pragmatic function becomes evident when a speaker uses a proverb not merely to communicate a general proposition but to evaluate a particular situation or influence the addressee's interpretation of an event.

A proverb may function as an indirect recommendation, warning, justification, criticism, or evaluation. Its communicative effectiveness depends on the hearer's ability to recognize the culturally established meaning associated with the expression and apply that meaning to the current situation.

Therefore, the pragmatic interpretation of proverbs involves two interconnected processes: recognition of the conventional cultural meaning and contextual adaptation of that meaning to a particular communicative event. This makes proverbs significant units for studying the interaction between culture and pragmatics.

The role of context in the interpretation of cultural-specific units

The analysis further demonstrates that context is a decisive factor in determining the pragmatic meaning of culturally marked units. The same linguistic form may perform different functions in different situations. Its interpretation may depend on the participants, their social relationship, the topic of communication, the degree of formality, and the speaker's communicative intention.

For instance, a form of address may express respect in one context but familiarity or solidarity in another. A culturally marked lexical unit may have a primarily nominative function in one utterance while acquiring evaluative or emotionally expressive meaning in another. Consequently, the pragmatic interpretation of cultural-specific units requires consideration of both linguistic context and extralinguistic cultural knowledge.

The findings indicate that cultural-specific units should not be treated as fixed carriers of cultural information. Their pragmatic potential is activated dynamically in communication. Speakers select and interpret these units according to the communicative situation, while hearers rely on shared cultural knowledge to reconstruct the intended meaning.

Overall, the results confirm that cultural-specific units constitute an important interface between language, culture, and communication. Their analysis from a linguopragmatic perspective reveals how Uzbek speakers use culturally marked linguistic resources to express respect, solidarity, familiarity, evaluation, emotional attitude, and social positioning. The interaction of conventional meaning, cultural knowledge, context, and communicative intention consequently plays a central role in the construction and interpretation of pragmatic meaning in Uzbek discourse.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that cultural-specific units constitute an important component of the pragmatic organization of the Uzbek language. Their communicative value is not limited to their conventional lexical or semantic meanings but is formed through

the interaction of linguistic form, cultural knowledge, communicative context, and the speaker's intention. This interaction enables culturally marked units to convey meanings that may remain implicit at the purely lexical level.

The analysis has shown that cultural-specific lexical units, kinship terms, forms of address, phraseological expressions, and proverbs perform a range of pragmatic functions in Uzbek communication. They can express respect, familiarity, solidarity, social distance, emotional attitude, evaluation, and interpersonal positioning. In particular, kinship terms such as *aka* and *opa* may acquire pragmatic functions when they are used as forms of address toward non-relatives. In such contexts, their interpretation depends on social relations, age differences, cultural conventions, and the communicative situation.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of cultural context in interpreting units such as *mahalla*, *hashar*, *mehmon*, and *to'y*. Their meanings may activate culturally shared knowledge concerning social cooperation, hospitality, collective responsibility, and traditional practices. Phraseological expressions and proverbs similarly provide speakers with culturally recognizable resources for expressing evaluations, recommendations, warnings, and interpersonal attitudes indirectly.

A significant finding of the study is that the pragmatic meaning of a cultural-specific unit cannot be determined exclusively from its dictionary definition. The same linguistic form may perform different communicative functions depending on the context in which it occurs. Therefore, the analysis of Uzbek culturally marked units requires an integrated approach that considers semantic, cultural, contextual, and pragmatic dimensions simultaneously.

From a broader perspective, the study confirms that culturally specific language units provide valuable evidence for understanding how language encodes and reproduces culturally established patterns of social interaction. Their linguopragmatic analysis contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language and culture in Uzbek communication.

Further research may extend the present analysis through corpus-based investigation of cultural-specific units in different discourse types, including everyday conversation, media discourse, literary texts, and digital communication. Quantitative analysis could also be employed to identify the frequency and distribution of particular pragmatic functions, while comparative research could examine similarities and differences between Uzbek and other languages in the pragmatic use of culturally marked units.

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