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The Metacommunicative Nature of Sincere, Open Dialogue: A Comparative Study of English and Uzbek Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how speakers frame sincerity, openness, confidentiality, and mutual understanding through metacommunicative resources in English and Uzbek dialogue. The analysis revises a qualitative corpus-based comparison of selected literary dialogues, retaining the original corpus while sharpening the analytical distinction between metacommunication, metadiscourse, and metapragmatic activity. The study treats metacommunication as interactional framing: speakers do not merely transmit propositional content but also indicate how an utterance should be received, evaluated, continued, or corrected. Recent work on metadiscourse and metapragmatic expressions supports this interaction-oriented perspective, particularly the role of audience orientation, common-ground construction, and dialogue-act interpretation [5, 11, 9, 2].

The analysis identifies five recurrent functions – clarification, regulation, evaluation, rapport-building, and feedback – across three conversational phases: initiation, continuation, and closure. The comparison suggests that the functions are broadly shared, whereas their linguistic realization differs. Uzbek examples more often make openness and interpersonal commitment overt through direct framing, gratitude, oath-like confidentiality formulas, and relational expressions. English examples in the selected texts more frequently employ indirectness, mitigation, conditional framing, or idiomatic directives. These observations are interpreted cautiously because the corpus is literary and

qualitative rather than a statistically balanced spoken corpus. The revised study therefore presents the findings as functional tendencies and hypotheses for future corpus-based research rather than as categorical claims about all English or Uzbek speakers.

Keywords: Metacommunication, metapragmatics, metadiscourse, dialogue acts, sincerity, openness, English, Uzbek, discourse pragmatics, intercultural communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sincerity in interaction is not adequately described as a private intention located inside the speaker. In actual discourse, a participant has to make an interpretation of sincerity available to another participant by framing an utterance, requesting trust, restricting confidentiality, checking understanding, or responding to the interlocutor's reaction. From this perspective, sincerity is partly an interactional accomplishment. Contemporary metadiscourse research likewise emphasizes that communicative resources can guide recipients in interpreting, evaluating, and responding to propositions, while metapragmatic expressions can help participants construct common ground and repair possible misunderstandings [1; 2; 3, 5; 11].

The present article uses the term metacommunication in a broad interactional sense. It includes explicit comments on the communicative process, signals that regulate the direction or manner of talk, and resources through which participants negotiate how an utterance is to be understood. This broad orientation is compatible with recent work showing that metadiscourse, metapragmatics, and metacommunication overlap but are not identical categories. Dynel, for example, argues that these "meta" notions describe related forms of conscious awareness of language and communication, while corpus work on dialogue acts demonstrates that metadiscursive activity can be treated as a distinct functional layer in interaction.

The English-Uzbek comparison is significant because contrastive pragmatic research repeatedly demonstrates that

apparently equivalent interpersonal functions may be encoded through different degrees of directness, mitigation, stance marking, and relational framing. Recent comparative research on English and Uzbek has also drawn attention to differences in politeness, speech-act realization, and context-sensitive interpersonal meaning. However, metacommunicative resources specifically associated with sincere and open dialogue remain insufficiently described in a systematic English–Uzbek comparison. The present study addresses this gap by returning to the following questions [10; 7]:

1. RQ1: Which recurrent metacommunicative acts accompany declarations of sincerity, openness, or confidentiality in the selected English and Uzbek dialogues?
2. RQ2: Which pragmatic functions do these acts perform, and are the same broad functions represented in both languages?
3. RQ3: How do English and Uzbek differ in the lexical, syntactic, and interactional realization of these functions?

The study does not claim that literary dialogue is identical to spontaneous conversation. Instead, literary dialogue is treated as a fixed, interpretable record of interactional patterns. This limitation is important because recent dialogue-act research shows that pragmatic interpretation depends heavily on context and that annotation categories themselves can be difficult to separate.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. *Research design*

The research follows a qualitative comparative-contrastive design. The unit of analysis is a dialogic sequence in which a participant explicitly or implicitly comments on the communicative process – for example, by announcing openness, asking for confidentiality, demanding directness, redirecting a topic, evaluating the partner's openness, or checking whether a preceding meaning has been correctly understood. The purpose is functional interpretation rather than frequency measurement.

The analytical framework combines three dimensions. First, the interactional phase is identified as initiation, continuation, or closure. Second, each unit is assigned a primary pragmatic function: clarification, regulation, evaluation/interpretation, rapport-building/support, or feedback. Third, the linguistic realization is described in terms of directness, mitigation, explicitness, lexical imagery, and relational marking. This procedure reflects recent research that treats metadiscourse and metapragmatic expressions as resources for audience orientation, common-ground management, and interactional organization.

2.2. *Corpus*

The corpus retains the literary sources used in the original study. The English sub-corpus consists of selected dialogues from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The Uzbek sub-corpus consists of selected dialogues from Tohir Malik's *Shaytanat* and Pirimqul Qodirov's *Uch ildiz*. These texts were chosen because the relevant scenes contain confession, requests for confidentiality, interpersonal negotiation, hesitation, clarification, and expressions of relational support.

The literary works are treated here as primary corpus materials rather than as recent theoretical references. Their publication dates therefore do not conflict with the requirement to modernize the scholarly bibliography: the theoretical and methodological references have been replaced or supplemented with research published mainly during 2017-2025.

2.3. *Analytical procedure*

Candidate passages were identified through close reading. A passage was included when the speaker framed the communicative situation as honest, confidential, direct, supportive, or in need of clarification, or when the interlocutor explicitly evaluated or redirected that frame. Each candidate was read with its surrounding turns so that the function was determined from context rather than from isolated lexical forms. This is methodologically important because dialogue-act studies

have shown that the same surface form may acquire different pragmatic values depending on interactional position and participant interpretation [13].

For analytical consistency, each unit received one primary function, although secondary effects were noted in the discussion. The coding scheme was deliberately functional: clarification concerns making meaning or delivery more explicit; regulation concerns managing topic, sequence, or manner of talk; evaluation concerns judging the preceding contribution or relationship; rapport-building concerns maintaining interpersonal alignment; and feedback concerns testing or correcting mutual understanding.

2.4. *Limitations*

Three limitations should be emphasized. First, the corpus is literary and therefore represents stylized interaction. Second, the sample is qualitative and cannot establish reliable frequency differences between English and Uzbek. Third, the corpus is not balanced by genre, period, speaker status, or social setting. The findings should consequently be read as an interpretive model and as a basis for future corpus research rather than as a quantitative description of either language as a whole.

3. RESULTS

Across the selected dialogues, all five functions were represented in both languages. The most consistent pattern was the interaction between a speaker's communicative framing and the interlocutor's uptake: an openness or confidentiality signal frequently receives a confirming, redirecting, or corrective response. This supports an interactional interpretation of metacommunication in which a signal becomes consequential through the other participant's response.

3.1. *Initiation*

Framing an open exchange. At the beginning of an open exchange, speakers commonly orient the addressee toward the expected communicative mode. In the Uzbek material, explicit

formulas such as “Men siz bilan ochiq gaplashmoqchiman” (“I want to speak openly with you”) directly name the speaker’s intended manner of communication. Such wording performs more than an informational function: it establishes a frame within which the following disclosure is expected to be interpreted as sincere.

A comparable English pattern appears when a speaker requests confidentiality before revealing sensitive information. The request “I ask you to keep this secret for two years” is followed by Holmes’s “I promise.” The sequence is analytically important because the first turn proposes a confidentiality frame while the second turn ratifies it. The meaning of the exchange is therefore jointly constructed rather than produced by the first speaker alone.

Uzbek examples also contain oath-related formulas such as *Hech kimga aytmayman, deb qasam ichib*, which add a stronger normative dimension to the confidentiality commitment. By contrast, the English example relies on an explicit promise. The two constructions differ lexically and culturally, but both establish an interpersonal obligation concerning the circulation of information.

Another Uzbek pattern, *Bu gap oramizda qolsin, a?* (“Let this remain between us, shall it?”), uses a confirmation-seeking tag. The tag transforms a directive into a jointly negotiated request. Such forms are especially relevant to contemporary pragmatic accounts because they demonstrate how speakers calibrate the strength of an interpersonal action rather than simply selecting a fixed vocabulary item.

3.2. *Continuation: clarification and regulation*

During continuation, metacommunicative activity becomes more dynamic. Participants may comment on how something is being said, demand a clearer formulation, or explicitly reorganize the topic. In the Uzbek material, *Chaynalmang, sizga dadil gapirish yarashadi* criticizes hesitant delivery and encourages a more direct contribution. The point is not to add new information about the topic but to alter the manner in which information is being communicated.

The English material contains a closely comparable directive sequence: “Start at the beginning, my dear sir. Do not beat about the bush,” followed by “Speak out!” The lexical imagery is different, but the pragmatic objective is similar: the listener is being instructed to reduce hesitation and make the intended message more accessible. The contrast therefore illustrates functional equivalence without formal equivalence.

Regulation operates at a somewhat broader organizational level. In the Uzbek example *Agar yo‘q demasang, endi ishdan gaplashsak*, the speaker overtly signals a shift toward business. In Dickens, “if you will excuse me, we had better understand each other on that point, and come to business” similarly marks a topic transition while embedding it in a politeness frame. Contemporary work on audience orientation and discourse organization supports treating such signals as part of the interactional management of discourse rather than as disposable fillers [8; 6].

3.3. *Evaluation and rapport-building*

Evaluation becomes visible when a participant assesses the communicative quality or interpersonal significance of a preceding contribution. The Uzbek formula *Ochiq gapirganing uchun rahmat. Bu gaping chindan do‘stona bo‘ldi* explicitly thanks the interlocutor for openness and interprets it as a sign of friendship. The evaluation therefore links communicative behavior with relationship management.

English dialogue may encode a related interpersonal evaluation more indirectly. In the selected Wilde passage, “I hope you will always be fond of me, Dorian” does not contain an explicit thank-you for openness, yet it foregrounds the relational bond that the conversation is expected to maintain. The comparison suggests that the same broad interpersonal goal may be expressed through different degrees of explicitness.

Rapport-building is also realized through supportive behavior. In the Uzbek material, a brief directive accompanied by a smile and nod can function as interpersonal support without explicitly naming the communicative frame. Dickens’s “Joe’s ever the best of friends; ain’t us, Pip?” similarly combines a

relational label with supportive non-verbal behavior. This multimodal dimension is consistent with current work that treats interaction as more than a sequence of propositional sentences and recognizes the importance of social action in dialogue.

3.4. *Closure and feedback*

Feedback concerns the participant's attempt to verify, correct, or renegotiate an interpretation. In the Uzbek example *Ya'ni, nima demoqchisiz?* the listener asks the speaker to make the intended meaning more explicit. The response *E, unaqa ma'no chiqarmang-da* rejects an unwanted interpretation and repairs the conversational trajectory.

The English question "You don't mean to say that you think I have no heart?" performs a related operation. It tests an inference and invites correction, after which "I didn't say that at all. I was speaking generally" narrows the intended meaning. Such sequences demonstrate why dialogue-act analysis must consider adjacency, response, and context rather than treating individual expressions as autonomous markers [13].

Table 1. *Functional distribution of metacommunicative resources*

Function	**Typical phase**	**Uzbek realization**	**English realization**
Clarification	Continuation	*Chaynalmang; ... dadil gapirish...*	Speak out!; Do not beat about the bush
Regulation	Continuation	*Endi ishdan gaplashsak*	...we had better...come to business
Evaluation/ interpretation	Continuation / closure	*Ochiq gapirganing uchun rahmat*	I hope you will always be fond of me
Rapport-building/ support	Continuation	*Short supportive directive + gesture*	...best of friends... + gesture
Feedback	Closure	*Ya'ni, nima demoqchisiz?*	You don't mean to say that...?

The table indicates a shared functional architecture with different formal realizations. The comparison should not be interpreted as proof that English is inherently indirect or Uzbek inherently direct. Instead, the selected literary scenes show recurring differences in how particular communicative tasks are packaged.

This more cautious interpretation is preferable to culture-wide generalizations, especially because metadiscourse and pragmatic behavior vary across communicative contexts and genres.

4. DISCUSSION

The revised analysis supports an interactional account of metacommunication. Sincerity is repeatedly introduced as a frame, accepted or resisted by the interlocutor, and then maintained through clarification, regulation, evaluation, support, or feedback. Recent research on metapragmatic expressions similarly shows that speakers use explicit reflections on communication to anticipate problems, construct common ground, and repair interaction [9].

The five-function scheme is useful because it separates several operations that are easily conflated under the broad label "metacommunication." Clarification changes the transparency of the message; regulation changes the organization or manner of interaction; evaluation interprets the preceding contribution; rapport-building manages interpersonal alignment; and feedback tests the success of interpretation. Recent dialogue-act research likewise distinguishes information-seeking, social, action, and metadiscursive functions and stresses the difficulty of recovering pragmatic meaning from form alone [13].

The English-Uzbek comparison also indicates a recurring contrast in formal realization. Uzbek examples in this small corpus frequently use explicit performatives, gratitude formulas, relational vocabulary, and oath-based confidentiality. English examples more often employ conditional mitigation, idiomatic directives, or indirect relational framing. This pattern is compatible with the broader literature showing that metadiscourse and interactional resources vary with communicative context, audience orientation, genre, and language [1; 2; 8]. It should nevertheless be treated as a corpus-specific tendency, not as a fixed national communication style [11; 6; 1].

A second finding concerns feedback. Both languages use interrogative forms to check whether an inferred meaning is

correct. The similarity is theoretically interesting because it suggests that the need to externalize uncertainty and invite correction may be a recurrent interactional resource. Yet a larger spoken corpus would be necessary before this can be described as a cross-linguistic regularity.

The distinction between metacommunication and metadiscourse is also important. Recent scholarship treats metadiscourse as a flexible category whose realization changes across languages and genres, while interactional research highlights resources directed toward recipients and common ground. In the present study, metadiscourse is therefore considered one neighboring analytical domain rather than a complete synonym for metacommunication. The latter is broader here because it includes interpersonal framing, topic management, and communicative repair [6; 2].

The findings have practical implications. For translation, a literal rendering may preserve propositional meaning while weakening or strengthening the interpersonal frame. Translators should therefore reproduce the pragmatic function of confidentiality, mitigation, directness, or support rather than merely matching words. For language teaching, learners can benefit from practice with communicative functions—asking for clarification, negotiating a topic shift, confirming understanding, and responding to openness – rather than memorizing isolated phrases. Research on metadiscourse instruction also suggests that explicit attention to interactional resources can support learners' pragmatic choices [3].

Finally, the study points toward a methodological extension. Corpus-based annotation of spontaneous English and Uzbek conversations could test whether the five functions recur at comparable rates, whether their linguistic exponents differ by social relationship and setting, and whether non-verbal behavior systematically accompanies verbal framing. Such work would connect literary-pragmatic interpretation with contemporary corpus dialogue analysis [13; 1].

5. CONCLUSION

This study has re-examined the metacommunicative organization of sincere and open dialogue in English and Uzbek. The analysis identifies five recurrent functions – clarification, regulation, evaluation, rapport-building, and feedback – distributed across initiation, continuation, and closure. The central finding is that sincerity is represented not only by explicit statements of honesty but also by the interactional work surrounding disclosure: speakers request trust, negotiate confidentiality, manage the direction of talk, evaluate openness, and check whether meanings have been correctly received.

The two languages show broadly comparable communicative functions but different formal realizations in the selected texts. Uzbek examples more frequently foreground interpersonal commitment through explicit lexical and relational devices, whereas English examples in the corpus often use mitigated, conditional, or idiomatic constructions. These tendencies are suggestive rather than universal. A larger, balanced spoken corpus is required to determine how far they extend beyond the literary material.

The revised framework therefore offers a practical basis for future English-Uzbek research in discourse pragmatics, translation, intercultural communication, and pragmatic language teaching. The most important next step is to combine qualitative interpretation with corpus annotation so that metacommunicative functions can be tested against naturally occurring interaction.

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