

Speech Aggression and Hate Speech in English and Uzbek Social Media Discourse: A Linguopragmatic and Linguocultural Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the linguopragmatic and linguocultural features of speech aggression and hate speech in English and Uzbek social media discourse. The study aims to differentiate speech aggression from related phenomena such as verbal conflict and hate speech while identifying their linguistic markers in digital communication. The corpus consists of 600 public social media comments (300 English, 300 Uzbek) collected from open-access platforms between 2023 and 2024. Using discourse analysis and comparative pragmatic methods, the research identifies lexical, syntactic, graphic, and discursive means of aggressive expression. Hate speech is classified into hard, moderate, and soft types based on pragmatic intensity and illocutionary force. The findings reveal universal mechanisms of verbal hostility, including evaluative nomination, polarisation, and rhetorical intensification, alongside culturally specific patterns shaped by sociolinguistic norms. English discourse demonstrates a higher frequency of explicit individual-targeted aggression, whereas Uzbek discourse shows a tendency toward indirect evaluative strategies and collective identity references. The study contributes to comparative pragmatics and digital discourse research by systematising aggressive communication patterns in two linguocultural contexts.

Keywords: Speech aggression, hate speech, digital discourse, pragmatics, evaluation, English-Uzbek comparison

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern media language develops under the contradictory tendencies of democratization and intellectualization, which significantly reshape communicative norms in digital environments (Crystal 2011; Fairclough 2013). Social networks, as the most democratized form of mass communication, remove institutional filters and enable emotionally charged, conflict-prone discourse (Wallace 2001; Herring 2004).

In this context, speech aggression and hate speech are increasingly prevalent. While both phenomena involve negative evaluation and hostility, they differ in scope, target, and pragmatic function. Speech aggression typically targets an individual, whereas hate speech targets social groups or collective identities (Van Dijk 1991; Wodak 2015).

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the main linguistic and discursive strategies of speech aggression in English and Uzbek social media discourse?
2. How can hate speech be classified into hard, moderate, and soft types in these two languages?
3. Which cultural and linguistic factors influence the manifestation of aggression and hate speech?

The novelty of this study lies in its comparative linguopragmatic analysis of English and Uzbek social media discourse, integrating evaluative theory and hate speech classification.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. *Speech aggression*

Speech aggression is a complex linguopragmatic phenomenon. In a narrow sense, it is understood as a verbal substitution of physical aggression (Basovskaya 2004), whereas in a broad sense, it is a communicative act aimed at establishing dominance or inequality (Kopnina 2012).

Some scholars emphasise intentionality: aggressive acts aim to discredit, insult, or degrade the addressee (Petrova & Ratsiburskaya 2011). Others focus on emotional expression, highlighting that verbal aggression can be unintentional, arising as a spontaneous emotional reaction (Shakhovsky 2008).

2.2. *Hate speech*

Hate speech targets social groups rather than individuals and can legitimise discriminatory practices (Delgado & Stefancic 2012; UNESCO, 2019). It is generally categorised into three types: hard, moderate, and soft.

- **Hard hate speech** includes direct calls for action or harm against a group.
- **Moderate hate speech** legitimises or justifies discriminatory acts without direct incitement.
- **Soft hate speech** relies on stereotyping and generalisation without explicit calls for violence (Delgado & Stefancic 2012; Retta 2023).

2.3. *Evaluation and pragmatics*

Evaluation is the cognitive and linguistic expression of a speaker's attitude towards an object, person, or situation (Arutyunova 1999; Lakoff 2004). Evaluative language is a core mechanism of both speech aggression and hate speech, allowing speakers to express hostility or bias indirectly.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Data collection*

The corpus consisted of 600 publicly available comments collected from Facebook, Telegram, and Twitter/X between January 2023 and March 2024. The dataset includes 300 English-language and 300 Uzbek-language comments. User identities were anonymised to maintain ethical compliance.

3.2. *Selection criteria*

Comments were selected based on the presence of:

- Explicit negative evaluation
- Derogatory nomination
- Calls for exclusion or hostility
- Generalised group stereo typing

3.3. *Analytical methods*

- Discourse analysis
- Pragmatic analysis (speech act theory)
- Comparative linguocultural analysis
- Semantic contextual analysis

4. RESULTS

4.1. *Lexical markers*

Lexical items such as derogatory adjectives, expletives, and evaluative nouns are the primary indicators of aggression (Shakhovsky 2008; Crystal 2011). For example:

English: "These migrants are lazy and unreliable."
 Uzbek: *Ularodatdangasavaishonchsizbo'ladi.*

Lexical units constitute the most direct form of aggression.

In both English and Uzbek discourse, the following lexical categories are prominent:

- Colloquial and vulgar vocabulary
- Jargon
- Derivational neologisms
- Metaphors with dehumanizing connotations
- Borrowings used pejoratively

English: "These parasites are destroying our country."
 Uzbek: *Bularjamiyatgafoydasisztoifa.*

Lexical aggression often relies on semantic derogation and evaluative intensification.

4.2. *Syntactic and graphic markers*

Syntactic strategies include rhetorical questions, exclamations, repetition, and antithesis (Searle 1969; Yule 1996). Graphic markers in written digital discourse include capitalisation, quotation marks, and ellipses (Herring 2004).

Common syntactic mechanisms include:

- Rhetorical questions
("Do they even think before acting?")
- Exclamatory constructions
("What a disgrace!")
- Repetition
("Lies, lies, and more lies!")

Antithesis and contrast

Rhetorical questions are particularly aggressive because they simulate dialogue while denying response.

Graphic markers are especially relevant in digital discourse:

- CAPITALISATION → signals dominance or shouting.
- Quotation marks → express scepticism ("experts").
- Ellipses → imply absurdity or irony.
Example: "So-called 'professionals'..."

In Uzbek discourse, quotation marks often function as distancing devices equivalent to the phrase *shundayataluvchi*.

4.3. *Discursive strategies*

Discursive strategies include irony, demagoguery, negative information overload, and discreditation of the opponent (Fairclough 2013; Van Dijk 2008). Discursive tactics include:

- Demagoguery
- Irony and sarcasm
- Negative information overload
- Discrediting competence
- Refusal to engage in dialogue

These tactics operate at macro-discourse level.

4.4. *Classification of hate speech*

Type	English example	Uzbek example	Pragmatic function
Hard	"We should drive these migrants out."	"Kelgindilarnishahardan haydabyu borish kerak."	Direct call to action; individual/group targeting
Moderate	"It is understandable they provoke people."	"Ulnikamsitish to'g'ri, ularfoydabermaydi."	Justifies hostility; no direct incitement
Soft	"People like them are always lazy."	"Ularodatdadanga savaishonchsizbo'ladi."	Generalised stereotype; in direct aggression

Type of aggression	English data	Uzbek data	Pragmatic function
Direct insult	High frequency	Moderate	Individual discreditation
Collective stereotyping	Moderate	High	Group polarisation
Imperative hostility	Present	Limited	Hard hate speech
Indirect irony	Moderate	High	Soft aggression

A three-level model is proposed.

- **Hard hate speech:** Characterised by explicit calls to action

English: "We should drive these migrants out."

Uzbek: *Ulnishahardanhaydabyuborishkerak.*

Markers:

- Modal verbs of obligation (should, must, kerak)
- Action verbs (drive out, destroy, expel)

Pragmatically: direct illocutionary acts encouraging discrimination or violence.

- **Moderate hate speech:** Characterised by justification of illegal acts.

English: "It's understandable why people attack them."

Uzbek: "Ulnikamsitish to'g'ri."

Violence is not directly encouraged but morally legitimised.

- **Soft Hate Speech:** Characterised by stereotyping.

English: “They are always lazy.”

Uzbek: *Ularodatdadangasabo'ladi.*

Markers:

- Generalising quantifiers (always, usually, odatda)
- Negative adjectives

No explicit call to action, but discriminatory representation is constructed.

4.5. *Evaluation as a pragmatic category*

Following Arutyunova, evaluation is a cognitive act establishing the subject's attitude toward an object.

We distinguish:

- Evaluation → judgement
- Evaluativeness → linguistic expression of value

In social media discourse, evaluation becomes intensified through:

- Word formation
- Semantic shifts
- Irony
- Language play

Evaluative meaning forms the core mechanism of speech aggression.

4.6. *Communicative strategies and tactics*

Communicative strategy determines overall interactional orientation.

Two approaches exist:

1. Strategy as structured sequence of actions.
2. Strategy as goal realisation process.

Communicative tactics are local actions implementing strategy.

Examples in social media:

- Strategy of discreditation
- Strategy of polarisation
- Strategy of moral superiority
- Strategy of victimisation

Tactics include:

- Labelling
- Ironisation
- Exaggeration
- Comparison
- Generalisation

These terms originate from military discourse, where strategy implies planning and tactics represent operational realisation.

5. DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis indicates both universal and culturally specific patterns. English discourse frequently exhibits explicit individual-targeted aggression, while Uzbek discourse tends toward indirect evaluation and collective stereotyping.

These findings align with Van Dijk's (2008) framework of ideological polarisation, demonstrating that digital affordances influence the intensity and type of aggression. While online platforms encourage open expression, cultural norms mediate the choice of pragmatic strategies.

The comparative findings suggest that while both English and Uzbek digital discourse employ universal strategies of polarisation (Van Dijk 2008), the Uzbek data reflect stronger collectivist framing patterns, which align with culturally embedded communicative norms. This supports the view that hate speech intensity is shaped not only by linguistic resources but also by sociocultural expectations regarding directness and public confrontation.

The comparative analysis reveals:

- **Universal Features**
 - Emotional intensification
 - Use of generalising quantifiers
 - Modal obligation markers in hard hate speech
 - Graphic emphasis
- **Culture-specific features**
 - Uzbek discourse more frequently employs collectivising constructions.
 - English discourse shows greater use of irony and sarcasm.
 - Religious and moral evaluative frames are more salient in Uzbek contexts.
 - English discourse demonstrates more overt political polarisation.

Extralinguistic factors play a decisive role:

1. Weak regulation of internet discourse.
2. Anonymity or partial identification.
3. Mobile-based communication promoting spontaneity.
4. Visual orientation creating documentary illusion.
5. Comment genre functioning as semi-independent discourse unit.

Unlike traditional print journalism, which gradually incorporated subjectivity, internet discourse emerged within a highly subjective paradigm.

6. CONCLUSION

Social media discourse, due to its technological affordances and weak normative regulation, facilitates the expression of both speech aggression and hate speech. The comparative study shows universal mechanisms such as evaluative nomination and rhetorical intensification, alongside culturally specific tendencies

shaped by Uzbek and English sociolinguistic norms. This research contributes to comparative pragmatics and digital discourse analysis, providing a foundation for future cross-linguistic studies.

The study confirms that social media communication possesses distinctive genre characteristics shaped by technological affordances and socio-cultural dynamics.

Speech aggression is a multidimensional linguopragmatic phenomenon realised through lexical, syntactic, graphic, and discursive means. Hate speech represents a specialised form targeting social groups and can be classified into hard, moderate, and soft levels.

The comparative English-Uzbek analysis demonstrates both universal mechanisms of evaluative aggression and culturally specific realisations.

Understanding these genre characteristics is essential for:

- Medialiteracydevelopment,
- Legalregulationframeworks,
- Preventionofonlinediscrimination,
- Further research in comparative pragmatics.

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