



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRAGMATICS IN ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK CULTURES

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Introduction

Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that investigates language use in context, is concerned with how people interpret meaning based on the social and cultural setting. In this paper, we explore the differences and similarities in pragmatic practices between English and Karakalpak cultures, examining how these languages manage politeness, directness, indirectness, and other conversational strategies. English and Karakalpak reflect their respective cultural values, such as individualism and collectivism, and these values are evident in the pragmatic features that shape communication. This paper investigates how speakers of these languages navigate social interactions, focusing on speech acts, politeness strategies, indirectness, and social hierarchy in communication.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a field that examines how context influences the interpretation of utterances. Key concepts in pragmatics include speech acts, politeness strategies, deixis (reference to the context), implicature (meaning implied beyond what is stated), and face theory (the need to maintain one's social identity). Speech acts, introduced by Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), represent the actions performed when making statements, requests, or giving advice. [1.15, 4.45]

The concepts of face and politeness, particularly in Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, play an important role in how people manage social interactions. [2.32] Face refers to an individual's public self-image, which is maintained through polite strategies. Politeness theory posits that communication involves strategies designed to protect the speaker's and listener's face, especially when performing face-threatening acts (FTAs). [3.25]

2. Pragmatics in English Communication

English-speaking cultures, particularly in the Western world, often prioritize clarity, directness, and individual expression. English communication, especially in professional or formal contexts, is typically characterized by a preference for explicitness and efficiency. However, pragmatics in English communication is not



entirely devoid of politeness and indirectness. In fact, a subtle use of indirectness and politeness strategies can be observed across various social contexts.

Politeness Strategies in English

In English, politeness strategies often take the form of indirectness, hedging, and the use of modal verbs. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness identifies two types of politeness: positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness is used to convey a sense of camaraderie and closeness, while negative politeness is aimed at preserving the listener's autonomy and minimizing imposition. For example, in a request, English speakers might say, “Could you possibly help me with this?” or “I was wondering if you could” These forms soften the request and indicate deference, making it less likely to threaten the listener's face. [2.32]

In informal settings, positive politeness strategies are more commonly used, as speakers seek to express solidarity and friendliness. In contrast, in formal situations, negative politeness is preferred to respect the autonomy of the listener. The degree of politeness can vary depending on factors such as social distance, power relations, and the status of the interlocutors. For instance, a supervisor would be more likely to use formal language and indirect requests when speaking to an employee, while peers may engage in more direct forms of communication.

Indirectness in English

Indirectness in English communication plays a critical role, particularly in requests, refusals, and disagreements. In certain contexts, speakers prefer to imply rather than state their requests outright. For example, instead of saying “Give me the report,” a speaker might say, “I would appreciate it if you could provide me with the report by noon.” Such indirectness often helps soften the impact of the request and mitigate any potential threat to the listener's face.

Moreover, English speakers frequently use indirectness when offering criticism or disagreeing. Instead of directly saying “You are wrong,” a speaker might say, “I see your point, but I have a different perspective on this matter.” This softens the confrontation and preserves the social relationship between the speakers.

3. Pragmatics in Karakalpak Communication

The Karakalpak language, spoken by the Karakalpak people in Uzbekistan, is part of the Turkic language family. Karakalpak culture, like many Central Asian societies, places great emphasis on respect for elders, collectivism, and maintaining social harmony. These values significantly influence the way communication occurs, with an emphasis on politeness, formal speech, and indirectness. [5.58]

Politeness Strategies in Karakalpak



Politeness in Karakalpak is tightly bound to the hierarchical structure of society. Elders, authority figures, and individuals of higher status are treated with a high degree of formality. In addressing someone older or of higher status, Karakalpak speakers use specific linguistic markers that reflect respect. For example, verb forms can be modified to show deference, and terms of address are used to convey respect. One might say “Ata, sizden bir náirse soraytuǵın edim” (Literally, “Father, I would like to ask you something”), where the verb “soraytuǵın edim” (ask) is made formal.

Requests in Karakalpak often take the form of questions, with an emphasis on polite formulations to avoid direct imposition. For example, instead of saying “Give me that,” a Karakalpak speaker might say, “Can you please pass me that?” This formulation creates a space for the listener to decline or offer an alternative, reflecting a preference for maintaining harmonious relationships.

Indirectness in Karakalpak

Indirectness plays a crucial role in Karakalpak communication, particularly in situations involving disagreement or sensitive topics. For instance, instead of saying something like “You made a mistake,” a speaker might say, “Perhaps the situation has some other aspects we haven't considered.” This indirectness allows the speaker to express disagreement or offer correction without causing offense.

Metaphors, proverbs, and indirect expressions are frequently employed to convey delicate messages. For example, instead of directly criticizing someone's work, a speaker might say, “The horse must be trained before the race,” subtly implying that preparation or effort was lacking. This kind of indirectness helps to maintain harmony and avoid confrontation, both of which are central to Karakalpak social values.

4. Comparative Analysis of Pragmatics in English and Karakalpak Cultures

When comparing the pragmatic systems of English and Karakalpak, significant differences emerge, particularly in terms of directness, indirectness, and the role of politeness. These differences are deeply rooted in the cultural norms of each society.

Directness and Indirectness

English communication is generally more direct than Karakalpak communication. While English speakers may use indirectness, especially in formal or polite requests, the expectation of clarity and efficiency in communication often leads to more explicit statements. In contrast, Karakalpak communication is characterized by greater indirectness, especially in situations that could potentially threaten social harmony or lead to conflict. The emphasis on group harmony and respect for



hierarchy means that Karakalpak speakers are more likely to soften their statements and use indirect forms of expression.

Politeness and Social Hierarchy

In both English and Karakalpak, politeness is an essential component of communication. However, the way politeness is achieved differs between the two cultures. In English, politeness is often expressed through modal verbs, hedging, and indirect speech acts, reflecting a cultural preference for individual autonomy and respect for personal space. In Karakalpak, politeness is more overtly linked to social status and age, with different linguistic forms employed to show respect to elders and authority figures.

Furthermore, while English speakers may navigate politeness through individual choices, such as the degree of formality in a conversation, Karakalpak speakers are more likely to follow prescribed norms based on social hierarchy. This reflects the collectivist nature of Karakalpak society, where maintaining group harmony and avoiding direct confrontation is of paramount importance.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of pragmatics in English and Karakalpak cultures reveals that language use is deeply influenced by cultural values, particularly those related to social hierarchy, respect, and individualism versus collectivism. While English speakers often prioritize directness and efficiency in communication, Karakalpak speakers tend to favor indirectness, politeness, and formality, especially in interactions involving authority figures or elders. These differences in pragmatic behavior highlight the central role of culture in shaping communication strategies and the importance of understanding these differences in cross-cultural interactions.

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