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GREETING UNITS AS LINGUISTIC TOOLS INDICATING SOCIAL DISTANCE AMONG SPEECH PARTICIPANTS

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Abstract: The Uzbek language contains various forms of greeting that pragmatically convey social information. This study analyzes greeting units in Uzbek within the framework of social deixis and considers them as linguistic tools that reinforce social connections in society. The thesis presents commonly used Uzbek greetings in a tabular format and analyzes them as social deictic expressions.

Keywords: social deixis, social relations, social status, pragmatic meaning, pragmatic category, speech participants.

Language is the primary communicative tool that shapes and regulates social relationships between people. In linguistics, indicators used in speech and their contextual dependence are studied through the concept of deixis. In speech, linguistic tools that express social relations, social status, respect, and closeness between individuals are referred to as social deictics.

One of the five main types of deixis described by Levinson [1] — social deixis — studies linguistic units that depend on the social status, age, gender, or degree of familiarity among the participants in the conversation. Social deixis (from the Greek deixis, meaning "pointing" or "indication") is an important pragmatic concept in linguistics. This term indicates the contextual dependence of deictic expressions in speech, meaning that the interpretation of such expressions is determined by the speakers, place, time, or social relationships. Linguistic units expressing social deixis are among the primary communicative means of a language. They reflect social relationships, respect, prestige, and status among members of society, and serve to express the nature of interaction, roles in the speech act, level of familiarity, and cultural-social norms [5].

Social deixis specifically reflects social relationships among speech participants. As Levinson also emphasizes [1], it manifests through linguistic means that define social distance and differences in status between participants in communication. One such linguistic unit is the form of greeting.

The Uzbek language is rich in various forms of greetings. These forms not only initiate conversation but also carry social, emotional, and cultural meanings. In speech, greetings are often chosen based on social criteria such as age differences, social status, level of formality, and degree of familiarity between the participants. These factors contribute to the realization of social deixis.

Below is a table presenting the main greeting words and expressions in Uzbek according to their use in social contexts:

Assalomu alaykum!	Formal, respectful, and humble greeting
Vaalaykum assalom!	Formal response with respect and humility
Assalomu alaykum va rohmatullohi va barokatuh!	Used mainly in religious contexts
Vaalaykum assalom va rohmatullohi va barokatuh!	Response used in religious settings
Xayrli tong / kun / kech (good morning/ day/ evening)	Relatively modern form, used in formal (e.g., media) contexts
Salom! (Hello/ Hi)	Informal, used among peers or when the greeter is older
Xush kelibsiz! (Welcome)	Used to welcome guests, hospitality situations
Omonmisiz? (How you have been?)	Reflects Uzbek cultural and moral values, respectful inquiry
Yaxshimisiz? / Yaxshi yuribsizmi? / Tuzukmisiz? / Salomatmisiz? (How are you?)	Combined with inquiring about well-being, used in general contexts
Qalaysiz? yoki qandaysiz? (How are you?)	Friendly greeting indicating closeness
Bormisiz?/ Bormisan? (How are you doing?)	**Greeting to initiate or renew a conversation, informal context**
Nima gaplar? (What is new?)	Informal form used among socially close individuals or peers

The traditional, general, and formal greeting in the Uzbek language is "Assalomu alaykum!", which pragmatically expresses social distance and respect. This form reflects differences in age, social status, and social relationships between individuals. This phenomenon is considered a type of social deixis, and the expression "Assalomu alaykum!" functions as a deictic unit representing it.

The expression "Bormisiz?" / "Bormisan?" (How are you doing?) is an informal form of greeting that is not used to literally check the presence of the interlocutor. Instead, it indicates that the speaker has remembered the other person. The pragmatics of "Bormisiz?" / "Bormisan?" (How are you doing?) suggest that the speaker and the addressee are well-acquainted and have not communicated for a long time. This form is commonly used among old friends, acquaintances, or close individuals who have not been in contact for a while. Through this pragmatic nuance, social deixis becomes evident, signaling

aspects such as age, status, and the closeness of the relationship between the speakers.

In the Uzbek language, the greeting "Omonmisiz?" (How you have been?) functions as a key pragmatic component of social communication, indicating social roles, degrees of respect, and closeness between the interlocutors. In this regard, S. Jurayev [3] has classified Uzbek greetings into pragmatic categories, demonstrating their role in reinforcing social bonds. When encountering an old friend, relative, or someone recovering from illness, the phrase "Omonmisiz?" (How you have been?) is typically used to inquire about their well-being and to show respect, sincerity, and care. The word “omon” is of Arabic origin and means peace, health, safety, and freedom from harm. This greeting is multifunctional and reflects the cultural and ethical values of the Uzbek people. To support this point, N. Kasimova [4] has evaluated greetings as a cultural tradition and directly linked them to the customs and practices of the people.

Conclusion

The diversity of greeting forms in the Uzbek language is determined by context, the age of the speakers, their social status, closeness, and the nature of their relationship. Greeting expressions not only carry lexical meaning but also serve social functions. It is this function that creates strong contextual dependence.

Through the pragmatic meanings of greetings, the phenomenon of social deixis emerges. For example, the greeting "Omonmisiz?" (How you have been?) literally expresses a desire to know about the person’s physical or emotional state. However, pragmatically, it conveys respect, sincerity, and care — emotions typically reserved for those with whom one shares close social ties (such as relatives, friends, or respected individuals). This implication constitutes social deixis.

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