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doi digital object identifier

eoconf.com - from 2024



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION: a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – London, England, 2026. Issue 1

Languages of publication: Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference «**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION**». Which took place in London , 2026.

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Cultural Models of Complaining in Uzbek and English: A Discourse-Pragmatic Analysis

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Abstract. The present article investigates complaints as a form of interpersonal discourse in Uzbek and English, with a focus on cultural models and discourse strategies. Complaints are analyzed as socially situated practices that reveal speakers' attitudes toward politeness, power, and solidarity. Drawing on examples from everyday communication, the study shows that English complaints are typically framed as personal concerns, whereas Uzbek complaints often reflect collective values and moral expectations. The article highlights the importance of cultural awareness in cross-linguistic pragmatics and discourse studies.

Keywords: cultural pragmatics, complaints, discourse analysis, Uzbek culture, English culture

1. Introduction. Complaining is a universal communicative act, yet its realization varies considerably across languages and cultures. In interpersonal discourse, complaints serve not only to express dissatisfaction but also to negotiate social relationships and cultural identities. This article compares complaint behavior in Uzbek and English, emphasizing how cultural models influence discourse patterns. Understanding such differences is particularly important in multilingual and multicultural settings, where inappropriate complaint strategies may lead to misinterpretation or conflict. The study adopts a discourse-pragmatic approach to examine how complaints are structured and culturally framed in the two languages.

2. Complaints as Interpersonal Discourse

From a discourse perspective, complaints are not isolated utterances but extended sequences of interaction. They often include background information, evaluation of the problem, and an implicit or explicit request for resolution. The way these elements are organized reflects cultural expectations about communication.

In pragmatics, complaints are closely related to politeness and facework. Speakers must balance the need to express dissatisfaction with the desire to maintain social harmony. This balance is achieved through culturally specific linguistic and discourse strategies.

3. English Cultural Model of Complaining

In English-speaking contexts, complaints are commonly framed as individual experiences rather than moral judgments. Speakers emphasize personal feelings using expressions such as "I feel that..." or "I've noticed that...". This strategy minimizes direct blame and presents the complaint as subjective.





Discourse markers like apologies (“Sorry to bother you”) and softeners (“a bit,” “kind of”) play a central role in English complaints. These features reflect a cultural preference for equality, non-imposition, and respect for personal boundaries. Even when dissatisfaction is strong, speakers often avoid explicit confrontation.

4. Uzbek Cultural Model of Complaining

In Uzbek discourse, complaints are frequently embedded in shared cultural knowledge and moral reasoning. Speakers may appeal to community norms, fairness, or mutual obligations. For example, a complaint may be justified by referring to what is considered appropriate behavior within the family or neighborhood.

While politeness is highly valued, it is closely linked to respect for hierarchy and age. Complaints addressed to younger or equal-status interlocutors may be relatively direct, whereas those directed at elders or authorities are carefully mitigated. This reflects the collectivist and hierarchical nature of Uzbek society.

5. Intercultural Implications. The differing cultural models of complaining in Uzbek and English have important implications for intercultural communication. Misalignment in expectations can result in pragmatic failure. An English speaker may underestimate the seriousness of an Uzbek complaint framed in moral terms, while an Uzbek speaker may misinterpret English indirectness as avoidance of responsibility.

Raising awareness of these differences is essential in language education, translation, and international communication. Teaching complaint strategies as part of pragmatic competence can help learners navigate intercultural interactions more effectively.

6. Conclusion. This article has analyzed complaints in Uzbek and English as culturally embedded forms of interpersonal discourse. The findings suggest that complaints are shaped by broader cultural models of communication, including attitudes toward individualism, collectivism, and social hierarchy. A discourse-pragmatic understanding of complaints can therefore enhance cross-cultural understanding and communicative success.

