

## PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK CHILDREN'S SPEECH

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**Abstract:** this article presents a comparative analysis of the pragmatic aspects of the speech of English and Uzbek children. It explores how children use speech acts, their communicative strategies, the development of dialogic speech, and the application of speech etiquette. The influence of cultural context and psychological factors on the development of children's speech is also discussed. The findings indicate that while certain universal psycholinguistic tendencies exist, pragmatic differences between English and Uzbek children's speech are evident and significant.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, child speech, English language, Uzbek language, speech act, communication strategy, culture

Pragmatics is a key discipline in linguistics, focusing on how speech activity is connected to context - that is, the conditions and circumstances of communication between speaker and listener. In pragmatics, attention is paid not only to the meaning that words and sentences can express on their own, but also to the additional meanings and implications that arise depending on who is communicating, where, when, and for what purpose. When studying children's language development from a pragmatic perspective, we examine what purposes they pursue in communication, how they express their ideas, and how flexibly they adapt their speech to various situations. Researchers observe factors such as ability to take turns in conversation, use appropriate forms of politeness, adjust to the listener's social status or relationship, and navigate misunderstandings or ambiguities. Comparing the pragmatic aspects of English and Uzbek children's speech reveals not only the influence of language and culture but also highlights universal psycholinguistic regularities. Such comparisons can shed light on how cultural expectations shape communicative strategies, as well as reveal certain patterns common to all children, such as the gradual development of conversational skills, the emergence of indirect requests, and the adaptation to cooperative principles of conversation, regardless of the language context.

At first, children's language ability develops at the phonetic and lexical levels. In the earliest stages of acquisition, young learners start by recognizing and producing individual sounds and simple words, gradually expanding their vocabulary and mastering the building blocks of language. However, pragmatic competence—expressing communicative intentions appropriately and tailoring linguistic resources to the context—emerges over time. This aspect of language development involves a child's growing awareness of how to use language effectively in different social situations, including understanding tone, politeness, turn-taking, and cultural norms. For this reason, investigating the pragmatic features of English and Uzbek children's speech uncovers their everyday communicative styles, cultural values, and psychological characteristics. Through detailed examination and comparison, researchers can reveal how children from different backgrounds learn to express requests, refuse offers, convey emotions, and manage conversations, thus shedding light on the intricate interplay between language, cognition, and culture in the development of communicative competence. Focusing on stages of development, from the age of 2–3, children begin to engage more actively in communication, using speech acts like questioning, requesting, and expressing dissent. During this critical period, their linguistic abilities rapidly expand as they start to interact deliberately with

caregivers, peers, and other adults. English-speaking children at this age frequently use direct questions and statements such as “Why?”, “What is it?”, or “Give me!”, which reflects a straightforward approach to communication that is often encouraged in English-speaking cultures. These expressions allow young children to seek information, clarify their environment, and express their needs or desires. In contrast, Uzbek children, shaped by their cultural environment and social norms, tend to form questions and requests more politely, highlighting values of respect and indirectness in their interactions. For example, instead of making demands, they might say, "Bu nima?" (What is this?), or use forms such as "Menga ham berasanmi?" (Can you give it to me, too?), which embed a polite inquiry or request within the structure of the statement. Clearly, pragmatic competence—the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts—is influenced not only by the structural features of language itself, such as grammar and vocabulary, but also by the broader societal values, cultural expectations, and norms of interaction that children observe and internalize during early childhood. Thus, language development, while following certain universal milestones, is deeply intertwined with the specific pragmatic conventions of the community in which the child is raised, shaping the way they learn to express themselves and interact with others in meaningful ways.

Several core dimensions are highlighted in the pragmatic study of children’s speech. First, the variety of speech acts: English children actively use both imperatives and polite forms early in life, such as “Close the door!” and “Help me, please!” For example, even very young English-speaking children are often observed making direct requests or giving commands in their interactions with both peers and adults, reflecting an early familiarity and comfort with this range of speech acts. Uzbek children, on the other hand, typically address adults using softer forms: “Eshikni yopib qo’yasizmi?” (Would you close the door?), “Menga yordam bera olasizmi?” (Can you help me?). In everyday situations, these more indirect and polite forms are favored, particularly when speaking to elders or individuals in positions of authority, illustrating a deep-rooted respect within cultural communication norms. Such contrasts showcase the strong link between pragmatic choices and cultural expectations, highlighting how language socialization processes are influenced by societal values and norms from an early age. These patterns underscore the importance of examining language use not just as a set of grammatical rules but as a culturally embedded practice that shapes and reflects children’s social experiences.

Second is the use of communicative strategies: In English, children often rely on direct expressions to communicate their feelings, such as “I don’t like it!” or “I’m happy!” These direct statements allow them to clearly convey their emotions, opinions, or preferences, so that listeners are in no doubt about what they mean. For example, if a child does not want to participate in an activity or eat a particular food, they might simply say, "I don't like it," thereby leaving their feelings unmistakable. English-speaking culture often encourages this kind of openness and directness in expressing one’s mood or desires from an early age. Uzbek children, on the other hand, tend to opt for more indirect ways to express emotions: instead of saying “Yo’q, men buni xohlamayapman” (No, I do not want this), they may say “Boshqasini olsam bo’ladimi?” (Can I have another one?), choosing a softer approach. This indirectness can serve to avoid confrontation, show politeness, or demonstrate respect for elders or authority figures. In many Uzbek families, it is considered more appropriate to express a negative preference or request in a way that minimizes the potential for offense or discomfort. For instance, rather than outright refusing something, a child might subtly suggest an alternative or express their preference in the form of a question, which is seen as more courteous and considerate in their cultural context.

Third, the formation of dialogic speech: English children quickly acquire question-and-answer patterns, engaging in concise, rapid exchanges such as "What are you doing?" – "I'm playing." These brief interactions allow them to efficiently communicate their actions, with little elaboration or

contextual information. As a result, children become adept at responding directly and succinctly in everyday conversations. In contrast, Uzbek children typically participate in longer dialogues rich in explanation: “Nima qilyapsan?” (What are you doing?) – “Men mashina o’ynayapman, dadam olib bergan.” (I’m playing with a car my dad gave me.) In Uzbek culture, it is customary to provide more details and context during exchanges. Children often elaborate on their answers by mentioning relevant background information or other people involved, reflecting a broader cultural emphasis on thorough explanation and connection to family or personal experiences in conversation. This difference highlights how cultural values shape the verbal interaction patterns children learn from an early age, influencing the way they converse with peers and adults alike.

Fourth, the matter of speech etiquette: English children assimilate polite words and phrases - like “please,” “thank you,” and “sorry” - from an early age, reflecting the social environment’s emphasis on polite interaction. Through exposure in both familial and educational settings, they develop a habit of integrating these expressions into everyday conversation, which not only signals respect and consideration for others but also forms an essential part of their social development. Uzbek children also use “rahmat” (thank you), “iltimos” (please), and “kechirasiz” (excuse me), though the frequency and situations of their use differ. These phrases are commonly known and recognized, but their actual use might depend on context, such as when speaking to elders, guests, or in formal situations. Often, adults prompt Uzbek children to use polite expressions, indicating that pragmatic skills are sometimes shaped under direct social instruction. Unlike the more implicit reinforcement in English-speaking environments, Uzbek children may receive explicit reminders from parents, teachers, or elders, who actively teach and encourage the use of polite language as a sign of respect towards others, particularly within the hierarchy of family and community relationships.

Fifth, pragmatic flexibility: English-speaking children tend to communicate with peers on more equal footing, expressing requests or commands directly. For example, when they want a toy or another object, they might say “Give me your toy” or “Let me use that for a minute,” without significant hesitation or the use of mitigating expressions. In comparison, Uzbek children, even when interacting with peers rather than adults or authority figures, tend to favor gentler, more tentative forms in their interactions. For instance, instead of directly asking for something, they might say, “O’ynab ko’rsam bo’ladimi?” (Can I try playing with it?), which comes across as politer and less imposing. This difference reflects larger cultural values that influence communication styles from a young age; while English-speaking children are encouraged to assert themselves and make direct requests, Uzbek children are typically socialized to maintain harmony and show respect, even among equals. As a result, the strategies used for making requests or issuing commands in peer interactions differ significantly between the two cultural groups, highlighting the ways in which pragmatic flexibility is shaped by both language and cultural expectations.

The methodologies for researching the pragmatics of children’s speech are also essential. Observation allows researchers to record children’s natural use of speech acts in everyday settings. Experimentation involves creating scenarios where children must solve communicative challenges, such as requesting a toy. Interview techniques measure the ability to express ideas on different topics. Comparative analysis helps reveal both differences and similarities in how English and Uzbek children communicate.

Psychological foundations are equally important. The more developed a child’s attention, memory, and thinking, the more sophisticated their pragmatic skills. For example, a child who can focus and remember details will better understand what is being said and respond more appropriately. While the psychological developmental stages for English and Uzbek children are largely similar, their linguistic choices in communication are influenced by cultural factors.

The pragmatic study of children's speech has significant implications for education and upbringing. In English-speaking environments, children are encouraged from an early age to think independently and express their wishes openly. In Uzbek-speaking contexts, children are taught to show respect to adults, make requests politely, and avoid giving direct orders. Each approach has its merits: the English model fosters independence, while the Uzbek model inculcates social politeness.

In conclusion, a pragmatic comparison of English and Uzbek children's speech demonstrates the inseparable relationship between language and culture. While there are universal psycholinguistic mechanisms underlying children's speech, clear differences in speech acts, communicative strategies, and the use of etiquette can be observed. English-speaking children lean toward direct, open communication, whereas Uzbek children often choose polite, indirect forms of expression. Studying the pragmatic dimension of children's language is crucial not only for linguistics but also for pedagogy, psychology, and cultural studies.

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