

**CROSS-CULTURAL LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF TOAST-MAKING RITUALS****Azizova Mokhinur Muzaffarjon kizi**

Assistant Lecturer, Faculty of Foreign Philology

Kokand State University

E-mail: mokhinurazizova95@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This article presents a cross-cultural linguistic analysis of toasts as a distinctive ritual-speech genre. The toast is examined not merely as a formula for expressing goodwill, but as a complex communicative phenomenon in which lexical, stylistic, and pragmatic devices interact with social ritual, reflecting the value orientations and national-cultural identity of a linguocultural community. Drawing on material from English, Uzbek, and Russian traditions, the study demonstrates that the toast simultaneously fulfils the functions of social integration, ritual confirmation of participant status, and transmission of collective cultural values. Particular attention is paid to a comparative analysis of formulaic expressions, metaphorical imagery, and communicative strategies typical of different cultures.

**Keywords:** toast, ritual-speech genre, cross-cultural communication, linguoculturology, pragmatics, formulaic expressions, collective identity, national mentality, ritual, intercultural analysis.

**Introduction**

The toast represents one of the most intriguing objects of linguocultural and pragmatological research. Despite its apparent simplicity, it is a complex speech act in which linguistic form, stylistic devices, and social ritual interact to produce a culturally marked communicative genre. The toast accompanies the most significant events in the life of society — weddings, anniversaries, professional meetings, festive gatherings — and serves as a public affirmation of shared values. In every linguocultural tradition the toast develops according to particular rules that reflect the character of interpersonal relations, the norms of politeness, and the priorities of the given culture.

The relevance of the present study is determined by the growing interest of contemporary linguistics in ritual-speech genres and their role in intercultural communication. A comparative analysis of toasts among different peoples makes it possible to identify both universal and nationally specific features, which is particularly important in the context of globalisation and intensive intercultural contacts.

The aim of the present article is to provide a cross-cultural linguistic analysis of toasts based on material from English, Uzbek, and Russian traditions. The objectives of the study include: (1) describing the toast as a ritual-speech genre; (2) identifying the lexical and stylistic features of toasts in different languages; (3) determining the pragmatic functions of the toast; (4) comparing the communicative strategies typical of each of the traditions under examination.

**Materials and Methods**

The material of the study comprised toast texts represented in literary works, folklore collections, dictionaries of speech etiquette, and works on the theory of speech genres. Observations of the real communicative practice of speakers of English, Uzbek, and Russian linguocultures were also drawn upon. The corpus of collected toasts covers various genre types: wedding, anniversary, professional, friendly, ceremonial-official, and everyday toasts.

The methodological foundation of the study comprised: linguocultural analysis (V. N. Telia, V. A. Maslova, S. G. Ter-Minasova), the theory of speech genres (M. M. Bakhtin, A. Wierzbicka, V. V. Dementiev), pragmatic analysis of speech acts, and the comparative method. Each toast text was analysed according to the following parameters: lexical composition, stylistic devices,

formulaic structures, thematic orientation, pragmatic intentions, ritual context, and social function.

A toast is a formal expression of goodwill, gratitude, or a public appeal for the attention of a group concerning a significant event or person, usually accompanied by the simultaneous drinking of a beverage. Typical examples include a wedding toast in honour of the newlyweds, a toast in honour of a sports team or an individual player after a tournament victory, and a general toast to the health of those present during a celebration or other festive occasion. The toast performs an integrating function: it unites the group, focuses attention on a particular person or event, marks a special moment, or simply sustains the act of communal drinking. The content of toasts ranges from solemn to humorous; however, they typically verbalise what has already been recognised as common knowledge or socially significant. Verbal recognition accompanied by ritualised drinking serves as a form of public confirmation of status. Belonging to a group is a basic human need that requires constant reinforcement, and the toast can be characterised as a ritual of such reinforcement, simultaneously expressing respect for an individual or collective and consolidating the shared symbols, terms, values, beliefs, and goals of the community (McLean, 2005).

### Results and Discussion

1. The toast as a ritual-speech genre. Analysis of the collected material has shown that the toast should be classified as a complex hybrid genre combining features of epideictic speech, ritual utterance, and social performative. The toast is delivered in a strictly defined communicative situation, has a fixed compositional structure (opening — main part — closing), and is accompanied by a non-verbal ritual — the raising of glasses, clinking, and synchronous drinking. This ritual component transforms the toast from an ordinary speech act into a full-fledged cultural event.

It is fundamentally important that a toast is not "delivered" unilaterally but is "proposed": the act takes place only when the group supports the speaker's initiative. If the audience does not respond to the proposed toast, even the visible raising of a glass and a sip of the drink do not constitute a full-fledged ritual. Thus, the toast is fundamentally a dialogic genre in which communicative success depends on collective support. In a number of cultures the social role of the toast-giver is assigned to specific participants: at weddings — to the witnesses; at family celebrations — to the host or the eldest in the family; at business meetings — to the leader (McLean, 2005).

2. Lexical and stylistic features. The comparative analysis revealed significant differences in the lexical content of toasts across linguocultures. In the English tradition, brief formulaic expressions predominate: "Cheers!", "To friendship!", "Here's to success!", "Live long and prosper!", "Hear, hear!". Such formulas are characterised by extreme economy of linguistic means, an orientation towards individual success, and a conciseness that reflects the general communicative preferences of English-speaking culture. The vocabulary is concentrated around the concepts of "success", "health", "friendship", "future", and "prosperity".

In the Uzbek linguocultural tradition the toast exhibits a different stylistic organisation: it is considerably more elaborate, including extended good wishes, addresses to elders, blessings, and metaphorical turns of phrase. The lexical field of the toast is formed by words associated with family, home, hospitality, respect for elders, fertility, and abundance: "so'glik" (health), "baxt" (happiness), "fayz" (grace), "baraka" (blessing/abundance), "tinchlik" (peace), "oila" (family), "hurmat" (respect). Stylistically, Uzbek toasts gravitate towards a high, often poetic register; metaphors, similes, rhetorical questions, and parallel constructions are actively used, bringing them close to the oral oratorical tradition of the East.

The Russian toasting tradition occupies, in a certain sense, an intermediate position between the conciseness of the English-language model and the expansiveness of the Eastern one. Russian toasts, especially in the Caucasian-Russian sphere (the Tbilisi and Transcaucasian

traditions absorbed by Russian culture), may be both brief — "To health!", "To friendship!", "To success!" — and elaborate, incorporating a parable or associative narrative. The lexical core of the Russian toast is formed by the lexemes "health", "happiness", "friendship", "love", "fortune", and "well-being".

3. Pragmatic functions. Pragmatic analysis has shown that the toast simultaneously performs several communicative functions: (a) phatic — establishing and maintaining contact; (b) integrative — uniting participants into a communicative community; (c) axiological — expressing and affirming values; (d) performative — accomplishing a social act (recognition, blessing, honouring); (e) didactic — transmitting cultural norms, particularly to younger participants. The relative weight of these functions varies across cultures. The English-language tradition emphasises the phatic and performative functions; the Uzbek tradition, the axiological and didactic; the Russian tradition, the integrative and axiological.

The toast serves as an important instrument for constructing social hierarchy. In the Uzbek and other Central Asian traditions, the order in which toasts are proposed corresponds strictly to the age and status hierarchy: the eldest by age or position speaks first, which underscores the culturally significant value of veneration for elders. In the English-language tradition the order of toasts is less rigidly regulated and is determined by the situational role (host, witness, person of honour).

4. Compositional features. The toast-giver typically raises a glass, elevates the voice, and formulates a brief utterance containing praise of the honouree. Conciseness is recommended — no more than thirty words. Typical communicative errors include excessive length of speech and a shift of the focus of attention from the honouree to the speaker himself. The essence of the toast lies not so much in the particular words as in the ritual itself, by means of which the group expresses recognition and respect. The listeners raise their glasses in token of agreement and often repeat the key formula: "hear, hear!", "to success!", "to health!". The universal and most widespread toast in most cultures is the toast to health, which performs both a ritual and an integrative function.

5. Toast and roast: genre differentiation. Of particular interest is the roast — a public speech formally constructed as ironic criticism of the honouree but in fact expressing recognition and respect. The roast is a specifically English-language (primarily North American) genre, closely associated with the tradition of stand-up comedy and official anniversary celebrations. From a linguistic point of view, the roast is characterised by the intensive use of irony, hyperbole, invective (in mitigated form), and language play. In the Uzbek and Russian traditions an analogue of the roast as an independent genre is virtually absent: ironic honouring is regarded as potentially disrespectful.

6. Semiotics of the ritual. Alcohol is not a mandatory condition of the toast; equally, draining the glass is not obligatory. The choice of beverage and its quantity are determined by the norms and customs of the particular group. In a number of cultures (above all Islamic ones), toasts are accompanied by the consumption of non-alcoholic drinks — tea, mineral water, sherbet — which does not abolish the ritual structure or the social function of the genre. If a speaker anticipates the delivery of a responsible toast requiring tact, eloquence, and clarity of mind, he or she should refrain from consuming alcohol until fulfilling the communicative obligation.

## Conclusion

The cross-cultural linguistic analysis carried out allows the following conclusions to be drawn. First, the toast is a complex hybrid genre in which linguistic form is inseparably linked with ritual context and social function. Second, toasts of different linguocultures display significant differences in lexical composition, stylistic organisation, and pragmatic content, which reflects culturally specific systems of values. Third, despite the differences, all the

traditions examined share universal features: an integrating function, a ritual structure, an orientation towards collective values, and the use of formulaic expressions.

The English-language tradition is distinguished by conciseness, an emphasis on individual success, and the presence of the specific genre of the toast. The Uzbek tradition is marked by expansiveness, metaphoricity, a high register, and an emphasis on family and hospitable values. The Russian tradition combines brief formulaic toasts with elaborate narrative ones and is oriented towards health, friendship, and shared well-being. These differences do not place the traditions in opposition but rather enrich the overall picture of the toast as a universal cultural phenomenon.

Further research may be directed towards expanding the corpus of material by drawing on new linguocultures, towards a detailed examination of the communicative strategies of specific genre varieties of the toast, and towards analysing contemporary transformations of the toasting ritual in the context of digital and intercultural communication. The results obtained may find application in courses on linguoculturology, the theory of intercultural communication, pragmalinguistics, and speech etiquette.

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