INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH FAMILIES: THE ROLE OF AGE, FAMILY STATUS AND COMMUNICATIVE DISTANCE

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Abstract

This article examines the pragmatic characteristics of intergenerational communication in Uzbek and English families with particular attention to age, family status and communicative distance. The study focuses on forms of address, requests, advice and disagreement between older and younger family members. The analysis demonstrates that age and family position influence linguistic choices in both languages, although these relations are expressed through different linguistic resources. Uzbek family communication makes productive use of kinship terms, the *sen–siz* distinction and age-related forms of address, while English relies more on personal names, modal constructions and contextual means of regulating interpersonal distance. The study argues that communicative relations between generations are not fixed but change according to family roles, topic, situation and the participants' knowledge and experience.

Keywords: family communication, intergenerational communication, age, family status, communicative distance, address forms, pragmatics, Uzbek, English.

Annotatsiya

Maqolada o‘zbek va ingliz oilalaridagi avlodlararo muloqotning pragmatik xususiyatlari yosh, oilaviy mavqe va kommunikativ masofa omillari asosida o‘rganiladi. Katta va kichik avlod vakillari o‘rtasidagi murojaat, iltimos, maslahat

va e’tirozda qo‘llanadigan lisoniy vositalarga e’tibor qaratiladi. Tahlil yosh va oilaviy mavqe har ikki tilda nutq shaklining tanlanishiga ta’sir qilishini, biroq bu munosabatlarning lisoniy ifodalanishi bir xil emasligini ko‘rsatadi. O‘zbek oilaviy muloqotida qarindoshlik nomlari, *sen–siz* farqlanishi va yosh bilan bog‘liq murojaat shakllari faol bo‘lsa, ingliz tilida ism, modal qurilmalar va kontekstual vositalarning o‘rni yuqori ekanligi aniqlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: oilaviy muloqot, avlodlararo muloqot, yosh, oilaviy mavqe, kommunikativ masofa, murojaat shakllari, pragmatika.

Аннотация

В статье исследуются прагматические особенности межпоколенческого общения в узбекских и английских семьях с учётом возраста, семейного статуса и коммуникативной дистанции. Основное внимание уделяется формам обращения, просьбам, советам и выражению несогласия между представителями старшего и младшего поколений. Анализ показывает, что возраст и семейный статус влияют на выбор языковых средств в обоих языках, однако способы их языкового выражения различаются. В узбекском семейном общении активно используются термины родства, противопоставление *sen–siz* и возрастные формы обращения, тогда как в английском языке важную роль играют личные имена, модальные конструкции и контекстуальные средства регулирования межличностной дистанции.

Ключевые слова: семейное общение, межпоколенческая коммуникация, возраст, семейный статус, коммуникативная дистанция, формы обращения, прагматика.

Introduction

The family is one of the first environments in which an individual learns that linguistic behaviour changes according to the person being addressed. Communication with parents, grandparents, siblings and children is influenced not only by kinship but also by age, authority, emotional closeness and family roles.

Consequently, intergenerational communication represents an important area of pragmatic research. Age itself does not automatically determine a particular linguistic form. Its communicative significance emerges in interaction with family position and the relationship between speakers. The same person may communicate differently when speaking to a parent, younger sibling or child.

Consider the Uzbek example:

— **Dada, sizdan bir narsa so‘rasam maylimi?**

The speaker does not immediately present the request but first prepares the communicative ground. A comparable English form is:

— **Dad, can I ask you something?**

Both utterances introduce a request, although the interpersonal relationship is linguistically organised through partly different resources. The aim of this article is to compare the influence of age, family status and communicative distance on intergenerational communication in Uzbek and English families. Particular attention is given to address forms, requests, advice and disagreement.

Age, Family Status and Forms of Address

Forms of address provide clear evidence of the relationship between language and family hierarchy. Uzbek possesses a developed system of kinship terms such as *aka, opa, uka, singil, dada, oyi, amaki, xola, buvi* and *bobo*. Some of these terms directly encode relative age. The distinction between *aka* and *uka* or between *opa* and *singil*, for instance, identifies not only a kinship relation but also the relative age of family members. English *brother* and *sister* do not contain this distinction. When necessary, age is specified through *older brother, younger brother, older sister* or *younger sister*. In everyday interaction, siblings also commonly address one another by personal name.

Compare:

— **Opa, telefonimni ko‘rmadingizmi?**

and:

— **Emma, have you seen my phone?**

The examples perform a similar communicative function, but the Uzbek utterance makes the kinship and age relation linguistically explicit.

Another important difference concerns second-person pronouns. Uzbek has the *sen–siz* distinction, which can express different interpersonal relations:

— **Dada, siz charchadingizmi?**

In contemporary standard English, *you* is used regardless of whether the addressee is a parent, child or sibling:

— **Are you tired, Dad?**

Consequently, English relies more heavily on address terms, lexical choice, intonation and context to express relations that Uzbek may partly encode through pronoun selection. These differences should not be interpreted as evidence that one language expresses greater respect than another. Rather, the languages provide speakers with different linguistic resources for organising interpersonal relations.

Requests and Advice Between Generations

Requests are particularly relevant to intergenerational communication because they attempt to influence another person's behaviour. Their linguistic form can therefore change according to age and family position.

An Uzbek young speaker may ask:

— **Dada, mashinani bugun olsam bo'ladimi?**

The construction *olsam bo'ladimi?* presents the action as requiring permission. A more cautious version is:

— **Agar kerak bo'lmasa, mashinani kechgacha olib tursam maylimi?**

The conditional clause recognises the listener's possible needs before the request is made.

English offers similar pragmatic possibilities:

— **Dad, can I take the car tonight?**

or:

— **Would it be okay if I used the car tonight?**

The second construction creates greater distance between the speaker's wish and the requested action. Such variation shows that grammatical form can regulate the force of a request.

Advice also reflects intergenerational relations. An older Uzbek family member may say:

— **Bu ishga shoshilma, avval yaxshilab o'ylab ko'r.**

A less categorical version would be:

— **Menimcha, yana bir o'ylab ko'rsang yomon bo'lmasdi.**

English provides a comparable contrast:

— **Don't rush into it.**

and:

— **If I were you, I'd give it a little more time.**

In both languages, speakers can move between direct and mitigated forms. The choice depends not only on age but also on the sensitivity of the topic and established family relationships.

An important feature of contemporary family communication is that advice can also move from younger to older generations:

— **Dada, bu tugmani bosmang, avval faylni saqlab oling.**

English:

— **Grandma, don't click that link. It might be a scam.**

Here, the younger speaker possesses greater knowledge of the immediate issue. This demonstrates that communicative authority does not always coincide with age. Family status may remain unchanged while expertise temporarily gives the younger participant an advisory role.

Disagreement and Communicative Distance

Disagreement is another area in which the relationship between age and linguistic choice becomes visible. A younger speaker may avoid an abrupt contradiction when speaking to an older relative.

For example:

— **Yo‘q, siz noto‘g‘ri aytyapsiz.**

may be replaced by:

— **Menimcha, bu masalaning boshqa tomoni ham bor.**

The second form communicates disagreement without directly characterising the other person’s position as incorrect.

English offers similar resources:

— **You’re wrong.**

may become:

— **I see what you mean, but I think there may be another way of looking at it.**

Expressions such as *I think*, *I’m not sure* and *maybe* allow disagreement to be presented less categorically. Uzbek *menimcha*, *balki*, *ehtimol* can perform comparable pragmatic functions. However, communicative distance should not be equated directly with emotional distance. An Uzbek speaker may address a parent with *siz* while maintaining a very close emotional relationship. Similarly, an English speaker may use a parent’s kinship title and direct grammatical constructions without expressing disrespect. Communicative distance is therefore a dynamic category. It can change according to the topic and immediate communicative purpose. Routine household interaction may permit direct language, while discussions concerning education, marriage, money or personal decisions may require more careful linguistic choices.

Changing Intergenerational Roles

Traditional family roles do not remain unchanged in every communicative situation. Education, professional experience, digital technologies and contact with

other languages can alter the distribution of knowledge between generations. For instance, younger family members often assist older relatives with digital devices, online services or new forms of communication. In such situations, the younger participant temporarily becomes an instructor:

— **Oyi, bu yerga parolni yozasiz, keyin shu tugmani bosasiz.**

English:

— **Mum, enter your password here and then press this button.**

The direction of instruction has changed, but the underlying family relationship has not disappeared. A younger Uzbek speaker may continue using *siz* while giving direct instructions to a parent. This demonstrates that linguistic respect and situational authority can coexist.

Family decision-making also illustrates changing roles. Compare:

— **Bu yil ta’tilga Samarqandga boramiz.**

with:

— **Bu yil qayerga borsak yaxshi bo‘ladi, sizlar nima deb o‘ylaysizlar?**

The first presents a decision as established; the second invites participation. English shows a similar contrast:

— **We’re going away in August.**

and:

— **Where does everyone want to go this summer?**

Thus, intergenerational relations are reflected not only in address forms but also in who is invited to express an opinion, who gives advice and how decisions are linguistically presented.

Comparative Discussion

The comparison demonstrates that age and family status influence linguistic choices in both Uzbek and English family communication. Nevertheless, the linguistic means through which these relations are expressed differ. Uzbek possesses explicit grammatical and lexical resources such as the *sen–siz* opposition and age-

sensitive kinship terms. These forms allow relative age and family position to become directly visible in ordinary interaction. Contemporary English lacks an equivalent grammatical distinction in second-person pronouns. Communicative distance is therefore expressed through other resources, including modal constructions, personal names, address terms, indirect questions and contextual cues. At the same time, neither linguistic system should be described through absolute cultural oppositions. It would be inaccurate to claim that Uzbek family communication is always hierarchical or that English family interaction is necessarily egalitarian. Individual family traditions, generation, education, region and social environment can produce substantial variation. A particularly important common feature is the dynamic nature of communicative authority. Older family members may possess authority based on age and family position, whereas younger speakers may gain situational authority through education, technology or professional knowledge. Consequently, age hierarchy and communicative authority do not always operate in the same direction.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis shows that intergenerational family communication is shaped by the interaction of age, family status and communicative distance. These factors influence forms of address, requests, advice and disagreement in both Uzbek and English. Uzbek makes age and family position relatively visible through kinship terms and the *sen–siz* distinction. English relies more strongly on lexical, modal and contextual resources to regulate interpersonal distance. These structural differences, however, do not indicate different degrees of respect; they represent different linguistic means of expressing interpersonal relations. The analysis also demonstrates that age does not independently determine communicative authority. Knowledge, experience and the immediate topic can change the roles of family members during interaction. Younger participants may advise or instruct older relatives while preserving established forms of respect. Therefore, intergenerational

family communication should be regarded as a dynamic system rather than a fixed hierarchy. Its pragmatic organisation emerges from the interaction of linguistic resources, family roles, communicative situation and the relationship between speakers.

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