

PAPER

# PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF KINSHIP ADDRESS TERMS AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN UZBEK ENGLISH BILINGUAL FILM DIALOGUES

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## Abstract

This study investigates the pragmatic functions of kinship address terms and associated politeness strategies in bilingual Uzbek-English movie dialogues. Using a qualitative comparative approach, the research examines how kinship terms such as "aka," "opa" in Uzbek and "brother," "sister," or "elder" in English function as markers of politeness, hierarchy, and social relations. Drawing on speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975), politeness frameworks (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014), and media discourse analysis (Bednarek, 2018; Culpeper, 2021), this paper identifies patterns of indirectness, deference, and egalitarianism. Findings reveal that Uzbek dialogues employ kinship terms extensively as face-saving strategies, whereas English dialogues rely on modal politeness and hedging. The study contributes to intercultural pragmatics and offers insights into subtitling, translation, and cross-cultural communication education.

**Key words:** kinship address terms, politeness, speech acts, bilingual film dialogues, Uzbek films, English films, intercultural pragmatics

## Introduction

Cinema reflects social structures, norms, and communicative behavior through the language of its characters. While dialogues in films are scripted, they often mirror real-life interactions and provide a rich resource for pragmatic analysis. In bilingual contexts, such as Uzbek-English films, the interaction between linguistic forms and

cultural conventions becomes particularly salient. Kinship address terms, a notable feature of Uzbek language use, convey respect, social hierarchy, and relational proximity. English equivalents, though less hierarchical, still fulfill pragmatic functions in maintaining politeness and mitigating face-threatening acts (Hofstede, 2011; Brown and Levinson, 1987). The current study explores how these address terms operate in cinematic dialogues

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and how they interact with politeness strategies. By analyzing bilingual film dialogues, the research aims to uncover both universal and culturally-specific patterns of speech act realization.

## Research Objectives

Identify the occurrence and function of kinship address terms in Uzbek and English film dialogues.

Examine the politeness strategies accompanying these terms.

Compare cross-cultural pragmatic patterns in bilingual cinematic discourse.

## Literature Review

*Speech Act Theory and Pragmatics* Austin (1962) first proposed that utterances perform actions, which Searle (1975) expanded into a typology: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. These categories allow researchers to classify speech acts and analyze how language enacts social intentions. Yule (1996) and Cutting (2020) further highlight the interaction between context and meaning, emphasizing that pragmatic analysis must consider sociocultural expectations. The distinction between illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect becomes critical in film dialogue, as filmmakers often manipulate speech acts to influence audience perception of character relations and social hierarchy.

*Politeness and Kinship Terms* Brown and Levinson (1987) propose universals for politeness strategies, including positive and negative face considerations. Leech (2014) extends this to moral and social dimensions. Kinship address terms function as face-saving tools, signaling respect, hierarchy, and social solidarity, especially in high-context cultures such as Uzbek (Nurmonov, 2002; 2009). These terms, when embedded in cinematic dialogues, not only communicate respect but also help shape character identity, social positioning, and interpersonal dynamics.

*Pragmatics in Film Discourse* Bednarek (2018) and Culpeper (2021) demonstrate that scripted dialogues in films often reflect authentic communicative behavior. Dynel (2011) shows that pragmatic mechanisms, including humor and politeness, enhance narrative realism. Films create a microcosm of society where linguistic norms are both followed

and artistically adapted. Within bilingual contexts, the interplay between the original language's norms and translation/adaptation processes presents an additional layer of pragmatics, influencing the perception and interpretation of politeness and relational markers.

*Uzbek and English Cultural Contexts* Uzbek communication reflects collectivist and hierarchical values, emphasizing indirectness and deference (Nurmonov, 2002; 2009). English, in contrast, tends toward egalitarianism and directness, relying on modal verbs and hedging devices to maintain politeness (Hofstede, 2011). This contrast provides a fertile ground for examining how kinship terms function pragmatically across cultures. Previous research has noted that direct translations often fail to capture the relational and face-saving nuances inherent in kinship terms, making bilingual film dialogues a particularly valuable site for cross-cultural pragmatic analysis.

## Methodology

*Research Design* A qualitative comparative design was adopted to analyze film dialogues. The focus is on speech acts, kinship address terms, and accompanying politeness strategies. This approach allows for in-depth interpretation of both linguistic forms and their sociocultural motivations.

### Corpus Selection

The study analyzes eight films: four Uzbek (Sarvinoz, Qo'shni, Shaytanat, Baxt izlab) and four English (Pride and Prejudice, The Intern, The King's Speech, Notting Hill). Fifty dialogue segments per film were selected, yielding a total of 400 utterances (200 per language) where kinship terms and politeness strategies were clearly identifiable. *Analytical Framework* Speech acts were classified using Searle's (1975) typology. Kinship address terms were coded for:

Type (e.g., aka, opa, brother, sister)

Function (respect, deference, solidarity)

Accompanying politeness strategies (modal verbs, hedges, honorifics)

*Directness vs. indirectness* Inter-rater reliability was ensured by two linguists reviewing the coding independently. Cohen's kappa was 0.87, indicating strong agreement.

*Data Analysis Procedure* Dialogue segments were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively.

Patterns of kinship term usage and associated politeness markers were tabulated. Comparative analysis highlighted similarities and differences between Uzbek and English dialogues in pragmatic realization.

## Results

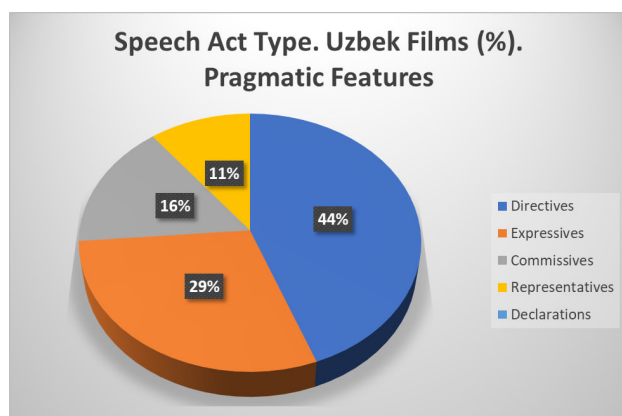
**Frequency and Distribution of Kinship Terms** Uzbek dialogues frequently employ kinship terms to soften requests, apologize, or show solidarity. English dialogues occasionally use analogous terms (e.g., "brother, mate") but rely more on modal hedging for politeness. **Pragmatic Functions**

**Uzbek:** Kinship terms serve as honorifics, mitigate face-threatening acts, and reinforce social hierarchy. These terms are multifunctional, operating simultaneously at linguistic, social, and cultural levels, marking both solidarity and distance as appropriate.

**English:** Politeness is often conveyed via modal verbs, hedges, and explicit performatives rather than relational terms. These strategies tend to focus on individual interaction norms and egalitarian social structures.

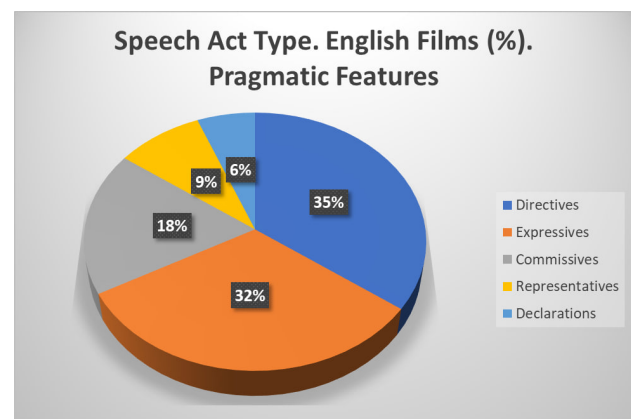
## Discussion

The comparative analysis underscores the cultural specificity of kinship terms as pragmatic tools. In Uzbek dialogues, the frequent use of "aka, opa," and similar terms illustrates a layered approach to politeness, combining respect, solidarity, and hierarchical acknowledgment (Nurmonov, 2009). Indirectness is prevalent, aligning with collectivist cultural norms where preserving social harmony and the interlocutor's face is paramount (Hofstede, 2011).



English dialogues, conversely, emphasize clarity and directness, employing hedging expressions, modal verbs, and explicit performatives to achieve politeness. The relative infrequency of kinship terms reflects an egalitarian approach where relational hierarchy is less linguistically encoded.

From a cross-cultural perspective, these findings highlight the challenges of translating or adapting dialogues. Literal translation of Uzbek kinship terms into English may obscure pragmatic nuances, potentially diminishing the intended politeness or hierarchical signals. The study reinforces Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that politeness strategies must be interpreted within cultural contexts, and it extends this understanding to the domain of bilingual cinematic discourse.



Moreover, the research illuminates the role of kinship terms in narrative construction. In Uzbek films, these markers not only serve communicative functions but also contribute to character development, emotional engagement, and social realism, echoing observations by Bednarek (2018) and Dynel (2011). In English films, the subtler use of relational cues paired with syntactic and lexical strategies fulfills a similar narrative purpose but operates under different cultural expectations.

These insights have implications for translation studies, subtitling, and language education. Understanding the interplay between kinship address terms and politeness strategies allows translators to make informed choices, preserving both meaning and social nuance. For language instructors, analyzing bilingual cinematic dialogues can enhance learners' pragmatic competence and intercultural awareness.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that kinship address terms in Uzbek cinema function as central pragmatic tools for enacting politeness, signaling hierarchy, and fostering social cohesion. Uzbek dialogues show a nuanced interplay between direct and indirect forms, where kinship markers are embedded in requests, apologies, and expressions of solidarity, effectively regulating social distance and reinforcing relational dynamics. The frequent use of terms such as “aka” and “opa” reflects the high-context nature of Uzbek culture, where respect for elders, social hierarchy, and communal values are linguistically encoded and culturally reinforced.

In English film dialogues, while kinship terminology is less prevalent, communicative politeness is realized through modal verbs, hedges, and explicit performatives. These strategies reflect egalitarian and individualistic values, where face-saving and courteous interaction are maintained through syntactic and lexical means rather than relational markers. The contrast highlights that while the ultimate pragmatic goals—maintaining harmony, showing respect, and mitigating face-threatening acts—are universal, their linguistic realization is culturally specific.

The findings of this study have several implications. First, for translation and subtitling, literal conversion of kinship terms may fail to preserve pragmatic intent, potentially leading to loss of cultural nuance. Translators must consider both the sociocultural and communicative context to convey relational and hierarchical subtleties effectively. Second, for intercultural communication education, analyzing bilingual film dialogues provides learners with authentic examples of how politeness and relational dynamics are linguistically realized, fostering greater pragmatic competence and cultural awareness. Third, this research contributes to the theoretical understanding of intercultural pragmatics by demonstrating that kinship terms are not merely linguistic forms but also vehicles for conveying social norms, identity, and narrative function within cinematic discourse.

Finally, future research may expand on this study by examining gender-specific uses of kinship terms, exploring genre-specific variations, or analyzing multilingual films where interactions occur across multiple linguistic and cultural frameworks. By

deepening our understanding of how kinship address terms and politeness strategies function in both Uzbek and English contexts, researchers and practitioners can better interpret, translate, and teach the nuanced ways in which language enacts social meaning and maintains intercultural communication harmony.

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