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PRAGMATIC AND COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF NEGATION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: Negation plays a crucial role in human communication, shaping how individuals express denial, contradiction, politeness, and cognitive stance. This paper examines pragmatic and cognitive aspects of negation in English and Uzbek, focusing on speaker intention, politeness strategies, and mental processing. While English primarily relies on syntactic negation with auxiliaries, Uzbek frequently employs morphological and pragmatic negation with cultural emphasis on directness. The findings contribute to comparative linguistics and offer insights for English language teaching in Central Asia.

Introduction

Negation is a universal linguistic phenomenon, yet languages differ in how they encode negative meaning. Traditional studies usually investigate grammatical forms; however, modern linguistics also emphasizes pragmatics (speaker intention, politeness) and cognition (mental interpretation of negative meaning). Scholars such as Horn (2001) and Abduazizov (2007) argue that negation reflects both linguistic structure and cultural thinking.

In Uzbekistan, English language research is developing rapidly, with increasing interest in comparative pragmatics. This paper explores how English and Uzbek speakers form and interpret negation, and how cultural norms and cognitive strategies influence negative expressions.

Theoretical Framework

Negation can be analyzed through:

Syntactic negation (structure)

Semantic negation (meaning)

Pragmatic negation (speaker intention, politeness)

Cognitive negation (mental processing, expectations)

Cognitive linguistics suggests that negation requires extra mental effort because the listener must imagine a proposition and then reject it (Kovecses, 2010). This explains why negation in daily conversation often becomes indirect or softened.

Negation in English

English uses auxiliary verbs and adverbs for negation:

I do not understand.

She never agrees.

Cognitively, English speakers often favor politeness-based negation, especially in formal situations:



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I'm afraid I can't help you.
I don't think that is possible.
Indirect negation strategies are common:
Direct Polite Indirect
No. I'm not sure that's possible.
You are wrong. I don't quite agree.

This aligns with Anglo-European communication styles emphasizing politeness and mitigation.

Negation in Uzbek

Uzbek uses morphological negation:

bilmayman — “I do not know”

bormaydi — “does not go”

Pragmatically, Uzbek negation shows more directness, influenced by cultural norms valuing clarity:

Yo‘q, bo‘lmaydi — “No, it won't work”

However, Uzbek also uses softening forms, especially in respectful contexts:

Menga to‘g‘ri kelmaydi — “It doesn't suit me”

Ehtimol yo‘qdir — “Maybe not”

A notable feature is negative agreement:

Hech kim kelmadi — “Nobody came”

Directness in Uzbek can reflect trust and clarity in social interaction, rather than rudeness.

Cognitive Comparison

Cognitive Feature	English	Uzbek
Mental effort to process negation	high	similar
Preferred style	indirect polite negation	direct but context-dependent
Double negation	ungrammatical	normal, meaningful
Cultural frame	individualism + politeness	collectivism + honesty tone

Uzbek speakers learning English often transfer native pragmatic habits, leading to expressions that sound too direct in English contexts.

Pedagogical Implications

English teachers in Uzbekistan should introduce:

1. Polite negative expressions
2. Pragmatic awareness
3. Contrastive role-plays for refusal and disagreement
4. Cognitive strategies for interpreting long negation structures



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Tursunova (2020) noted that Uzbek students benefit from real examples of pragmatic negation in English dialogues.

Conclusion

Negation in English and Uzbek differs not only linguistically but also cognitively and pragmatically. English favors polite, indirect negation, while Uzbek commonly uses morphological and direct negation with optional softening. Understanding these distinctions supports language education and cultural communication. Future research can expand to corpus-based analysis and conversational negation in social media contexts.

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