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A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF COMPLIMENTS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article analyzes the linguistic and cultural features of compliments in English and Uzbek languages. Compliments are regarded as important pragmatic tools that maintain positive relationships and express admiration or approval. The study explores similarities and differences in the structure, semantics, and pragmatic use of compliments in both languages. It also highlights how cultural norms shape the way compliments are expressed and responded to in English and Uzbek societies.

Keywords: compliments, pragmatics, politeness, communication, culture, speech etiquette, linguistic comparison.

Compliments are among the most common speech acts used to establish friendly and respectful relations between speakers. They serve not only as a way to express admiration but also as a reflection of social values and cultural norms. Since language and culture are interrelated, the study of compliments provides valuable insights into how people from different cultures express positive emotions and maintain social harmony.

In both English and Uzbek, compliments play a crucial role in maintaining interpersonal relationships. However, their expression, frequency, and cultural interpretation vary significantly depending on linguistic traditions and social etiquette.

A compliment can be defined as a speech act that expresses the speaker's positive evaluation of the hearer's appearance, behavior, achievements, or possessions. Compliments aim to create a pleasant atmosphere in communication and to reinforce social bonds.



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Examples:

- **English:** “You look wonderful today!”, “That’s a great idea!”, “You did an excellent job!”
- **Uzbek:** “Bugun juda chiroqli ko‘rinyapsiz!” (You look very beautiful today!), “Zo‘r fikr ekan!” (That’s a great idea!), “Ishingiz a’lo chiqibdi!” (Your work turned out excellent!)

Compliments in English are usually short, direct, and formulaic. They often use evaluative adjectives such as nice, good, beautiful, great, amazing, etc. Uzbek compliments, in contrast, are more emotional, expressive, and metaphorical. They frequently include exaggeration and imagery to convey sincerity and warmth.

English examples:

- “You’re amazing!”
- “I love your new haircut.”
- “That’s impressive!”

Uzbek examples:

- “Sen quyoshdek porlab turibsan!” (You’re shining like the sun!)
- “Bu ishni ajoyib uddalabsan!” (You’ve done this wonderfully!)
- “Gap yo‘q, juda zo‘r chiqibdi!” (No words, it turned out great!)

Cultural norms heavily influence the way compliments are given and received.

In **English-speaking cultures**, compliments are usually brief and polite. They are often used to maintain social harmony but not to create emotional intimacy. For example, saying “You look nice” is appropriate in many social contexts without sounding exaggerated.

In **Uzbek culture**, compliments tend to be warmer, more emotional, and sometimes hyperbolic. Compliments often show genuine admiration and are seen as an important part of hospitality and friendliness. Phrases like “Voy, juda go‘zal bo‘lib ketibsiz!” (Wow, you’ve become so beautiful!) are natural and socially accepted.

In **English:** People usually accept compliments directly with expressions like “Thank you” or “Thanks, that’s kind of you.” Example: A: “You did a great job!” B: “Thank you!”



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In Uzbek: Modesty is highly valued. People often downplay the compliment or respond with humility. Example: A: “Ishingiz juda a’lo chiqibdi!” (Your work turned out excellent!) B: “Yo‘q, unchalik emas.” (No, not really.) This shows that while English speakers tend to accept compliments straightforwardly, Uzbek speakers prefer to respond modestly, emphasizing humility and social harmony.

Compliments serve several pragmatic purposes:

- To express admiration or appreciation.
- To maintain social and emotional bonds.
- To create a friendly and positive conversational atmosphere.
- To reinforce politeness norms in communication.

Both English and Uzbek speakers use compliments to build rapport, but the degree of emotional involvement and social hierarchy affects how they are used. Although compliments in English and Uzbek serve the same communicative purpose — expressing approval and maintaining positive relationships — they differ in their linguistic form, emotional tone, and cultural background. English compliments are typically concise, polite, and restrained, reflecting the value of individualism and personal space. Uzbek compliments, on the other hand, are expressive, warm, and often metaphorical, reflecting collectivist values and emotional openness. Understanding these differences is essential for successful intercultural communication.

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