THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON ENGLISH AND UZBEK SPEECH ACT VARIABILITY

Boburjon Solijonov
PhD Candidate
Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages
Email: boburjon.solijonov95@gmail.com
Andijan, Uzbekistan

Abstract

This article explores how different social media platforms influence the way Speech Acts (SAs) are expressed in English and Uzbek digital communication. While cultural values shape general communication norms, platform-specific features such as brevity, multimodality, and audience structure also significantly affect the form and level of directness in online interactions. The study shows that platforms like Twitter/X tend to reinforce the direct and explicit communication style common in English-speaking contexts, whereas Telegram, widely used in Uzbekistan, produces more variable politeness patterns depending on whether interaction occurs in public channels or semi-private group chats. The findings highlight the need to consider both cultural background and platform affordances when analysing SA realization in digital discourse.

Keywords: *Speech Acts, Social Media, Platform Affordances, Uzbek, English, Digital Pragmatics, Online Communication.*

Introduction

In recent years, social media has become a primary environment for communication, creating new conditions for how Speech Acts are performed. While cultural norms continue to shape communication styles, the technical features of each platform also influence how users formulate requests, complaints, compliments, or disagreements. This study focuses on how platform affordances affect the variability of SAs in English and Uzbek online discourse, offering a platform-aware approach to digital pragmatics.

Platform Affordances and Their Pragmatic Impact

This analysis draws on Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and the concept of platform affordances (Hutchby, 2001). Social media platforms differ in key features such as message length, audience type, and multimodal tools. These features shape how direct, explicit, or polite users' messages become.

- **Brevity:** Platforms with strict character limits (e.g., Twitter/X) encourage short, explicit messages with limited politeness marking.

- **Multimodality:** Emojis and visual elements can strengthen or soften the illocutionary force of a message.

- **Audience Structure:** Public feeds promote formal and face-sensitive behaviour, while semi-private chats allow more relaxed communication.

These affordances interact with cultural norms and help explain cross-cultural variability in SA realization.

Speech Act Variability in English Social Media Discourse

English-speaking digital communication often reflects cultural preferences for directness and low Power Distance. On platforms like Twitter/X, the short message format favours concise

requests, clear statements, and direct criticism. Public discussions commonly involve open disagreement or assertive commentary. On Instagram or TikTok, multimodal tools—such as emojis and reaction GIFs—frequently intensify the emotional content of SAs, matching the explicit style typical of low-context cultures.

Speech Act Variability in Uzbek Social Media Discourse

Uzbek online communication shows different tendencies, largely due to the central role of Telegram. In public channels, communication remains formal and polite, reflecting cultural expectations of respect and social harmony (odob). Politeness markers, honorifics, and indirect strategies are commonly used. In semi-private group chats, however, users may express themselves more directly than in face-to-face communication, partly due to the platform's informal atmosphere. Emojis often function as softeners that help preserve yuz (face) and maintain positive interpersonal relations.

Conclusion

The findings show that the variability of Speech Acts in English and Uzbek social media depends not only on cultural norms but also on platform-specific features that shape how users communicate. English platforms tend to reinforce directness, while Uzbek digital spaces reveal a flexible balance between politeness and informality depending on audience structure and context. A platform-aware approach is therefore essential for understanding cross-cultural digital pragmatics. Future work should include corpus-based comparisons of matched SA types across platforms.

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