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PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF SILENCE AND IMPLICATIVE MEANING IN UZBEK SPEECH- A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This article examines three closely related mechanisms of indirect meaning transmission — communicative silence, conversational implicature and presupposition — and compares the way they operate in Uzbek and English speech. The study proceeds from the assumption that a considerable portion of what speakers actually convey is never encoded in their words. Drawing on the classical pragmatic tradition established by Frege (1892), Strawson (1950), Austin (1962), Grice (1975), Searle (1969), Levinson (1983), Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Jaworski (1993), and on the Uzbek pragmalinguistic school represented by Safarov (2008), Mahmudov (2015) and Hakimov (2001), the paper argues that the three phenomena form a single continuum of implicit meaning rather than three unrelated categories. The contrastive part of the analysis demonstrates that Uzbek discourse, shaped by a collectivist and hierarchically organised communicative culture, exploits silence and presuppositional politeness far more intensively, whereas English discourse relies to a greater extent on calculable Gricean implicature generated through the flouting of maxims. The findings are relevant for translation studies, intercultural pragmatics and the teaching of English to Uzbek learners.

Keywords:pragmatics, communicative silence, conversational implicature, presupposition, Gricean maxims, Uzbek language, English language, contrastive pragmatics, politeness, implicit meaning.

1. Introduction: Human communication is economical by nature. Speakers rarely verbalise everything they intend their interlocutors to understand; instead, they rely on a shared stock of background knowledge, on culturally established conventions of interpretation, and on the listener's capacity to reconstruct unexpressed content. This gap between what is uttered and what is communicated constitutes the central object of pragmatic inquiry, and it is precisely within this gap that silence, implicature and presupposition are located.

The theoretical significance of these three categories has been recognised since the earliest stages of modern pragmatics. Presupposition entered linguistic discussion through the philosophical work of Frege (1892) and was subsequently reformulated in linguistic terms by Strawson (1950) and Karttunen (1973). Implicature was introduced as a technical notion by Grice in his William James lectures, published in 1975, and later refined within neo-Gricean theory by Horn (1984) and Levinson (2000). Silence, by contrast, remained on the periphery of linguistic attention until the work of Bruneau (1973), Tannen and Saville-Troike (1985), Jaworski (1993), Kurzon (1998) and Ephratt (2008) established it as a legitimate communicative unit rather than a mere absence of speech.

In Uzbek linguistics, the pragmatic dimension of utterance meaning was systematically introduced by Sh. Safarov, whose monograph "Pragmalingvistika" (2008) remains the foundational text of the national school. N. Mahmudov (2015) investigated the ethnocultural specificity of Uzbek communicative behaviour and the role of unspoken meaning in it, while M. Hakimov (2001) analysed the presuppositional foundations of the Uzbek utterance. Later studies by D. Yusupova, Sh. Iskandarova and G. Boqiyeva extended this line of research towards speech-act typology and

politeness strategies. Nevertheless, a systematic contrastive description of silence, implicature and presupposition as a unified system in Uzbek and English has not yet been produced.

The present article aims to fill this gap. Its objectives are threefold: first, to establish the theoretical relationship between the three phenomena; second, to describe their linguistic and paralinguistic realisation in each of the two languages; and third, to identify the culturally conditioned asymmetries that arise when meaning is transferred between Uzbek and English.

2. Theoretical background and the state of scholarship: The three phenomena under discussion differ in the mechanism by which implicit content is generated, yet they converge in their communicative function. Presupposition operates before the utterance: it consists of propositions whose truth the speaker takes for granted and which must be accepted for the utterance to be interpretable at all. Implicature operates after the utterance: it is inferentially derived by the hearer on the basis of the assumption that the speaker is behaving rationally and cooperatively. Silence operates instead of the utterance: it replaces verbal form altogether while retaining illocutionary force.

Grice (1975) formulated the Cooperative Principle together with the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner, and demonstrated that the deliberate violation, or flouting, of a maxim generates additional meaning that the hearer is expected to recover. His distinction between generalised and particularised implicature was later systematised by Levinson (1983, 2000), while Horn (1984) reduced the maxim inventory to the Q-principle and the R-principle. Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995) proposed a more radical reformulation within Relevance Theory, replacing the maxim system with a single cognitive principle of optimal relevance; their notion of explicature has since become an important instrument for describing how much of an utterance is actually decoded rather than inferred.

The theory of presupposition developed along two partly independent trajectories. The semantic tradition, initiated by Frege (1892) and continued by Strawson (1950), treated presupposition as a condition of truth-value assignment. The pragmatic tradition, associated with Stalnaker (1974), Karttunen (1974) and Levinson (1983), redefined it as a property of speakers and of the common ground they assume. Stalnaker's concept of common ground proved particularly productive, since it allows presupposition to be described as a dynamic and negotiable resource rather than a fixed semantic property. Van der Sandt (1992) subsequently integrated presupposition into discourse representation theory, and Beaver (2001) provided its formal dynamic account.

In the Uzbek scholarly context, Safarov (2008) established the conceptual apparatus of pragmalinguistics and provided the first Uzbek-language treatment of implicature and presupposition. Mahmudov (2015) approached unspoken meaning from the perspective of linguoculturology, emphasising that in Uzbek communicative tradition restraint in speech is evaluated positively and functions as an index of upbringing and social maturity. Hakimov (2001) described the presuppositional structure of the Uzbek utterance, and Boqiyeva together with Iskandarova extended pragmatic analysis to politeness formulae and address forms. These studies, however, remain predominantly language-internal, and the contrastive perspective adopted below is intended as their logical continuation.

3. Material and methods: The empirical basis of the study consists of dialogic fragments drawn from three types of source. The first comprises modern Uzbek and English prose and dramatic works, in which authorial commentary makes the communicative value of pauses and omissions explicit. The second comprises film and television dialogue in both languages, which offers direct access to paralinguistic accompaniment. The third comprises everyday conversational

exchanges recorded in informal settings and elicited through a discourse-completion questionnaire administered to bilingual respondents.

Four methods were combined in the analysis. Contextual-pragmatic analysis was used to reconstruct the implicit propositions accompanying each utterance. The Gricean test of cancellability and calculability served to distinguish implicature from presupposition and from semantic entailment. The negation test and the constancy-under-negation criterion, in the form proposed by Levinson (1983), were applied to identify presuppositional triggers. Finally, comparative-typological description was employed to establish the correspondences and the asymmetries between the two languages.

4. Silence as a pragmatic act: Silence becomes communicatively significant when it occupies a slot in which an utterance is structurally expected. In conversation-analytic terms, it acquires meaning when it fills the second position of an adjacency pair, since the absence of a response at that point is itself interpreted as a response. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) demonstrated that turn-taking rules make such gaps accountable, and Pomerantz (1984) showed that delay preceding a dispreferred second is a systematic feature of interaction rather than a performance failure.

In English discourse, unfilled pauses in the second position of an adjacency pair are predominantly interpreted as markers of dispreference. A request that meets with silence is normally understood as declined, and an assertion that meets with silence is understood as doubted. English speakers therefore tend to minimise silence by inserting hedging and delay devices — well, I mean, actually, the thing is — which preserve the surface continuity of the exchange while signalling the forthcoming disagreement. Silence in English institutional discourse is additionally associated with the right to remain silent, a specifically legal function analysed in detail by Kurzon (1998).

Uzbek communicative culture assigns silence a broader and functionally richer role. Restraint in speech is evaluated as a virtue, and the traditional maxims of folk wisdom explicitly recommend it, as in the well-known formula "So'z kumush bo'lsa, sukut — tilla" ("If speech is silver, silence is gold"). Silence in Uzbek interaction may express deference towards an older or higher-status interlocutor, may function as the culturally preferred means of refusal in situations where a direct negative would damage the addressee's face, and may signal offence, disagreement or grief. A junior speaker who lowers the gaze and remains silent in response to a reproach performs an act of acknowledgement, not of resistance; interpreting such silence as indifference constitutes a typical intercultural misunderstanding.

A further asymmetry concerns the treatment of silence in the presence of a proposal. Where an English speaker's failure to answer an invitation is normally read as refusal, an Uzbek speaker's silence in the same position frequently functions as hesitant assent awaiting further insistence, since the ritual of repeated invitation is itself part of the politeness system. The pragmatic value of the pause is therefore determined not by its duration but by the social configuration of the participants, a conclusion consistent with the position of Jaworski (1993) and with the ethnographic findings of Basso (1970).

5. Conversational implicature in the two languages: Implicature is generated when the hearer, assuming that the speaker observes the Cooperative Principle, reconciles an apparently uncooperative utterance with that assumption by attributing to it an additional proposition. The mechanism is uniform across languages, but the maxims that speakers most readily exploit, and the degree of inferential effort that is culturally tolerated, differ substantially.

English conversation makes intensive use of quantity-based scalar implicature. An utterance such as "Some of the students passed the examination" implicates that not all of them did, although the semantic content of the sentence is compatible with universal success. The cancellability of this inference, demonstrable by continuing "in fact, all of them did", confirms its implicatural rather than entailed status. Equally characteristic of English is the flouting of the maxim of relation in evaluative contexts: the classic reference letter that praises only a candidate's punctuality and handwriting communicates a negative assessment of professional competence precisely by remaining irrelevant to it.

Uzbek discourse also produces scalar and relevance-based implicatures, yet its most productive source of implicit meaning lies in the flouting of the maxim of quantity in the direction of excess and in the culturally sanctioned use of indirectness for face management. A refusal is rarely formulated as a negation; instead the speaker offers a circumstantial account whose relevance to the request the hearer is expected to compute, as in "Ertaga mehmonlar keladi" ("Guests are coming tomorrow") uttered in response to an invitation, which implicates a polite decline without ever expressing it. Similarly, the formulaic "Xudo xohlasa" ("God willing") appended to a promise weakens the commitment and generates an implicature of qualified rather than unconditional undertaking.

A further difference concerns conventional implicature in the sense of Grice (1975) and Potts (2005). English encodes it primarily lexically, through connectives and particles such as but, even, yet and still. Uzbek relies to a greater degree on morphological and syntactic means: the concessive form -sa ham, the emphatic particles -ku and -da, and the modal particles ekan and shekilli attach evaluative and evidential layers to the proposition that are not part of its truth-conditional content. Consequently, translation between the two languages frequently loses conventional implicature altogether, since the corresponding grammatical category is absent in the target system.

The comparison suggests that English implicature is on the whole more calculable, being anchored in lexical scales and in relatively explicit maxim violations, whereas Uzbek implicature is more heavily dependent on shared social knowledge and on the participants' relative status. This does not indicate a lower degree of systematicity in Uzbek, but rather a different distribution of the interpretative burden between linguistic form and cultural context.

6. Presupposition and the common ground: Presupposition differs from implicature in its resistance to negation. The utterance "Ali has stopped smoking" and its negation "Ali has not stopped smoking" both commit the speaker to the proposition that Ali previously smoked; the presupposition survives under negation, whereas an implicature would not. This constancy, formulated as a diagnostic by Strawson (1950) and operationalised by Levinson (1983), remains the most reliable criterion for identifying presuppositional content.

Both languages employ the standard inventory of triggers: definite descriptions, factive and change-of-state verbs, iteratives, cleft constructions, temporal subordinators and questions containing existential commitments. Their formal realisation, however, diverges considerably. English marks definiteness by means of the article, so that the mere presence of the in "the letter arrived" presupposes the existence and identifiability of a specific letter. Uzbek possesses no article and encodes the same distinction through the accusative marker -ni, through demonstratives, and through the order of constituents: "Xatni oldim" presupposes a specific, previously identified letter, whereas "Xat oldim" carries no such commitment. Definiteness in Uzbek is therefore a distributed rather than a localised category, and the presuppositional load is carried by case morphology and word order rather than by a dedicated functional word.

A second area of divergence concerns socially anchored presupposition. The Uzbek system of address and honorification presupposes propositions about the relative age, status and kinship of the participants before any descriptive content is communicated. The choice between the plural-polite siz and the singular sen, the use of the honorific suffix -jon or of kinship terms such as aka and opa towards non-relatives, and the addition of the respectful auxiliary in forms like keling presuppose a specific social configuration that the addressee is obliged to accept or explicitly renegotiate. English, having lost the thou–you distinction, marks such relations through comparatively optional lexical means — titles, address forms, modal politeness — and therefore places a lighter presuppositional burden on the grammar itself.

A third difference lies in the culturally specific content of the common ground in Stalnaker's sense (1974). Utterances that appear presuppositionally neutral within one culture may impose unacceptable commitments in another. An Uzbek question of the type "Farzandlaringiz nechta?" ("How many children do you have?") presupposes that the addressee has children and that the topic is legitimate in a first conversation, both of which may be problematic in an English-speaking setting. Conversely, an English question concerning an interlocutor's income or political preferences presupposes a domain of acceptable enquiry that Uzbek etiquette generally excludes. Presupposition failure of this kind is not a logical but a sociopragmatic phenomenon, and it constitutes one of the most frequent sources of intercultural friction.

7. Contrastive findings: The comparison of the three mechanisms across the two languages yields a consistent pattern. Uzbek concentrates implicit meaning in the social dimension of interaction and encodes it grammatically, while English concentrates it in the informational dimension and encodes it lexically. The principal parameters of this opposition are summarised below.

Table 1. Comparative parameters of implicit meaning in Uzbek and English speech

Parameter	Uzbek speech	English speech
Dominant function of silence	**Deference, indirect refusal, face protection, expression of grief**	**Marker of dispreference, hesitation, institutional right to remain silent**
Evaluation of silence	**Positively valued as restraint and maturity**	**Frequently perceived as awkward; minimised by hedging devices**
Most exploited maxim	**Relation and quantity, in the service of politeness**	**Quantity, in the service of informational precision**
Typical implicature type	**Socially anchored, status-dependent, context-heavy**	**Scalar and calculable, lexically anchored**
Conventional implicature marking	**Morphological and particle-based (-sa ham, -ku, -da, ekan, shekilli)**	**Lexical (but, even, yet, still)**
Definiteness presupposition	**Case morphology, demonstratives, word order**	**Definite article the**
Social presupposition	**Grammaticalised in**	**Optional, lexically**

	honorifics and address system	**expressed**
Locus of interpretative burden	**Shared cultural knowledge and participant status**	**Linguistic form and inferential calculation**

8. Conclusion: Silence, implicature and presupposition constitute three consecutive stages of a single mechanism of implicit communication: presupposition prepares the interpretative ground, implicature extends the message beyond its verbal form, and silence transmits illocutionary force without verbal form at all. All three are universal in their availability but culturally regulated in their distribution.

The contrastive analysis has shown that Uzbek speech grammaticalises social presupposition and assigns silence a positively evaluated, functionally differentiated role, whereas English speech concentrates implicit meaning in lexically anchored and readily calculable implicature while treating extended silence as interactionally problematic. Recognition of this asymmetry is a precondition for adequate translation, for successful intercultural interaction and for the pragmatically informed teaching of English in Uzbek educational contexts. Further research might profitably extend the comparison to digital communication, where the graphic representation of silence through delayed response and deliberate non-reply has produced new pragmatic conventions in both languages.

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