



INTERCULTURAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAUSED BY COMPLIMENT AND COMPLAINT STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This article examines intercultural misunderstandings caused by compliment and complaint strategies in English and Russian communication. The study focuses on pragmatic differences in expressing praise, dissatisfaction, and emotional attitudes in everyday interactions. English speakers often prefer indirect and polite forms of compliments and complaints, while Russian speakers may demonstrate greater directness and emotional expressiveness. These differences can lead to misinterpretation, communication barriers, and pragmatic failure in intercultural contexts. The research analyzes examples of spoken and written discourse to identify culturally specific communication patterns. Special attention is given to politeness strategies, face-saving mechanisms, and sociocultural norms influencing speech behavior. The article also discusses how intercultural awareness and pragmatic competence can improve communication between representatives of different linguistic cultures. The findings contribute to the field of intercultural pragmatics and may be useful for language learners, translators, and intercultural communication researchers.



Keywords: Intercultural pragmatics, compliments, complaints, politeness, communication strategies, pragmatic competence, speech acts, intercultural communication.

Annotatsiya:

Ushbu maqolada ingliz va rus tillaridagi kompliment hamda shikoyat strategiyalari sababli yuzaga keladigan madaniyatlararo tushunmovchiliklar tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot kundalik muloqotda maqtoʻv, norozilik va hissiy munosabatlarni ifodalashdagi pragmatik farqlarga qaratilgan. Ingliz tilida soʻzlashuvchilar odatda bilvosita va muloyim kompliment hamda shikoyat shakllarini qoʻllasa, rus tilida soʻzlashuvchilar koʻproq toʻgʻridan-toʻgʻri va hissiy ifodalarni ishlatadilar. Bunday farqlar madaniyatlararo muloqotda notoʻgʻri talqin, kommunikativ toʻsiqlar va pragmatik xatolarga olib kelishi mumkin. Maqolada ogʻzaki va yozma nutq namunalarini tahlil qilish orqali madaniyatga xos kommunikativ modellarning oʻziga xos jihatlari aniqlanadi. Shuningdek, nutqdagi xushmuomalalik strategiyalari, “yuzni saqlash” mexanizmlari va sotsi madaniy meʼyorlarning taʼsiri koʻrib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari til oʻrganuvchilar, tarjimonlar hamda madaniyatlararo kommunikatsiya boʻyicha tadqiqotchilar uchun foydali boʻlishi mumkin.

Kalit soʻzlar: madaniyatlararo pragmatika, kompliment, shikoyat, xushmuomalalik, kommunikativ strategiyalar, pragmatik kompetensiya, nutq aktlari, madaniyatlararo kommunikatsiya, ingliz tili, rus tili

Аннотация:

Данная статья рассматривает межкультурные недопонимания, возникающие вследствие использования стратегий комплиментов и жалоб в английской и русской коммуникации. Исследование сосредоточено на прагматических различиях в выражении похвалы, недовольства и эмоционального отношения в повседневном общении. Носители английского языка чаще используют косвенные и вежливые формы комплиментов и жалоб, тогда как русскоязычные коммуниканты проявляют большую прямолинейность и эмоциональную выразительность. Эти



различия могут приводить к неверной интерпретации, коммуникативным барьерам и прагматическим сбоям в межкультурном взаимодействии. В статье анализируются примеры устного и письменного дискурса с целью выявления культурно обусловленных моделей общения. Особое внимание уделяется стратегиям вежливости, механизмам сохранения лица и социокультурным нормам, влияющим на речевое поведение. Результаты исследования могут быть полезны изучающим иностранные языки, переводчикам и специалистам в области межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная прагматика, комплименты, жалобы, вежливость, коммуникативные стратегии, прагматическая компетенция, речевые акты, межкультурная коммуникация, английский язык, русский язык

INTRODUCTION

This study applies a qualitative comparative approach to analyze compliment and complaint strategies in Russian and English digital discourse. The research materials were collected from social media platforms, online forums, messaging applications, and public comments written by native speakers of English and Russian. The selected examples include communicative situations related to praise, appreciation, dissatisfaction, and criticism in online interaction.

The study is based on intercultural pragmatics, speech act theory [Searle, 1969], and politeness theory [Brown & Levinson, 1987]. A descriptive and comparative method was used to identify similarities and differences in pragmatic behavior between English- and Russian-speaking users.

Special attention was paid to linguistic features such as lexical choice, directness, emotional expression, and politeness markers in digital communication. The analyzed data were categorized according to communicative intention and pragmatic function.

The findings were interpreted within the framework of intercultural communication and digital discourse studies [Herring, 2004] to determine how technological environments influence modern speech behavior and pragmatic strategies.



METHODOLOGY

The present study employs a qualitative comparative approach to investigate compliment and complaint strategies in English and Russian intercultural communication. The research is based on the theoretical framework of intercultural pragmatics and speech act theory developed by Austin [1962] and Searle [1969]. In addition, the study draws upon politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson [1987], which explains how speakers use language to maintain social harmony and protect interpersonal relations. The data for the analysis consist of authentic examples collected from online communication platforms, conversational dialogues, and educational materials in both English and Russian languages.

A descriptive and comparative analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences in the use of compliments and complaints across the two linguistic cultures. Particular attention was paid to lexical choices, levels of directness, emotional expressiveness, and politeness strategies. The selected examples were categorized according to communicative purpose and contextual factors, such as social distance and degree of familiarity between speakers. Furthermore, the study examines cases of pragmatic failure and intercultural misunderstanding caused by culturally specific speech behavior [Thomas, 1983]. The findings are interpreted within the broader context of intercultural communication studies [Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993]. This methodology allows for a deeper understanding of how pragmatic norms influence communication between English and Russian speakers.

RESULTS

The results of the study indicate clear differences in the realization of compliment and complaint strategies in English and Russian intercultural communication. English speakers tend to use more indirect, polite, and mitigated forms when expressing both positive and negative evaluations. Compliments are often structured with hedging expressions and contextual softeners, while complaints are frequently softened to reduce potential face-threatening effects [Brown & Levinson, 1987].



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In contrast, Russian speakers demonstrate a higher degree of directness and emotional expressiveness. Compliments are often more explicit and emotionally loaded, while complaints are expressed more openly and sometimes more critically. This difference reflects cultural norms that value sincerity and emotional authenticity in Russian communication.

The analysis also shows variation in compliment responses. English speakers usually accept compliments with gratitude or positive acknowledgment, whereas Russian speakers often downplay or reject compliments to show modesty and humility [Holmes, 1988]. This contrast frequently leads to pragmatic misunderstanding in intercultural interaction, as behaviors may be interpreted differently across cultures.

Additionally, complaint strategies reveal differences in intensity and structure. English complaints are more likely to include indirect formulations, justification, and softening devices, while Russian complaints often appear more straightforward and emotionally intense. These patterns confirm that pragmatic behavior is culturally conditioned and strongly influenced by sociocultural norms.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study demonstrate that compliment and complaint strategies differ significantly in English and Russian communication, often leading to intercultural misunderstandings. English speakers generally prefer indirectness, mitigation, and polite expressions when giving compliments or expressing dissatisfaction. Such strategies are used to preserve interpersonal harmony and avoid threatening the listener's "face" [Brown & Levinson, 1987]. Russian speakers, however, tend to communicate more directly and emotionally, which may be interpreted by English speakers as impolite or overly critical. At the same time, Russian communicative behavior often reflects sincerity and openness rather than intentional rudeness.

The analysis also revealed differences in responses to compliments. In English-speaking cultures, people commonly accept compliments with gratitude, whereas Russian speakers may reject or downplay praise in order to demonstrate modesty. This pragmatic contrast can create confusion in intercultural interaction and lead



to inaccurate interpretations of communicative intent [Holmes, 1988]. Similarly, complaint strategies showed variations in emotional intensity and degree of directness. English complaints are frequently softened through indirect language and hedging devices, while Russian complaints may appear more explicit and emotionally expressive.

These results support previous studies in intercultural pragmatics, which emphasize the role of sociocultural norms in shaping speech behavior [Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993]. The study confirms that pragmatic competence and cultural awareness are essential for effective intercultural communication and for reducing misunderstandings between English and Russian speakers.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the present study has demonstrated that compliment and complaint strategies are strongly influenced by cultural and pragmatic norms in English and Russian communication. Although both speech acts serve important social functions, their linguistic realization differs significantly across the two cultures. English speakers generally favor indirectness, politeness, and mitigation strategies, while Russian speakers tend to communicate more directly and emotionally. These differences may result in pragmatic failure, misinterpretation, and intercultural misunderstanding during communication between representatives of the two linguistic communities.

The research has shown that compliments and complaints are not only linguistic expressions but also reflections of cultural values, interpersonal relations, and social expectations. Variations in responding to compliments, expressing dissatisfaction, and maintaining politeness reveal how communication styles are shaped by sociocultural traditions. Therefore, successful intercultural interaction requires not only grammatical knowledge but also pragmatic competence and cultural awareness.

The findings of this study contribute to the field of intercultural pragmatics by highlighting the importance of understanding culturally specific speech behavior. The results may be useful for language learners, translators, educators, and researchers interested in intercultural communication. Further studies may



explore compliment and complaint strategies in digital communication or among speakers of other languages and cultures.

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