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SOCIOLINGUISTIC DIMENSIONS OF MILITARY DISCOURSE: COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK COMMAND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This article explores the sociolinguistic dimensions of military discourse, focusing on the English and Uzbek languages. Military discourse, as a highly institutionalized and hierarchical form of communication, reflects broader social structures and relationships. Through comparative analysis, this study examines how rank, politeness norms, gender roles, and group identity shape the construction and delivery of military language. Drawing on both authentic military documents and transcribed oral communication, the study highlights the linguistic features that reflect power dynamics, institutional norms, and social roles within military contexts. The findings reveal both universal features and culture-specific strategies in English and Uzbek military communication.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, military discourse, English-Uzbek comparison, hierarchy, command language, speech community.

Introduction

Language in the military is not simply a medium of instruction or information - it is a central mechanism for maintaining hierarchy, discipline, and group cohesion. Military discourse encompasses specialized vocabulary, institutional expressions, and command structures that reflect broader sociocultural values. This study investigates the sociolinguistic characteristics of military language through a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek discourse. Specifically, it

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examines how military identity, power dynamics, group membership, and gender roles influence communication within military settings. By analyzing both written texts and spoken interactions, this study aims to provide a sociolinguistic understanding of how military personnel construct and negotiate authority and solidarity through language.

Literature Review

Sociolinguistics explores the relationship between language and society, often focusing on how linguistic choices reflect and reinforce social roles and group identities (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). In military contexts, language is a powerful tool for maintaining institutional norms and executing coordinated action. Previous research (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Wodak, 2009) has demonstrated that military language is shaped by social variables such as rank, gender, and cultural expectations of formality.

In the Uzbek context, scholars such as Makhmudov (2010) and Saparniyozova (2019) have identified how sociocultural factors influence the use of polite forms, honorifics, and address strategies in institutional settings. Military discourse in Uzbek, therefore, provides a unique case for examining how a traditionally collectivist society constructs authority and solidarity through language.

The English military discourse has been analyzed for its formulaic expressions and pragmatic efficiency (Leech & Svartvik, 2013). However, studies addressing the sociolinguistic variation within command structures across cultures are limited. This paper aims to fill this gap by comparing English and Uzbek military discourse through the lens of sociolinguistic theory.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative sociolinguistic methodology, supported by elements of comparative discourse analysis. The study focuses on identifying the sociolinguistic features of military communication and their variation between English and Uzbek command language.

Data collection. Data were collected from English sources (U.S. Army/NATO training manuals, public military briefings, and command recordings) and Uzbek sources (defense ministry publications, televised field drills, and archival

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documents). A total of 100 command-based speech events were selected (50 in each language).

Analytical framework. Sociolinguistic variables examined included rank, age, gender, politeness norms, formal/informal register, and use of address terms.

Language features analyzed: honorifics, directness/indirectness, pronoun usage, and lexical variation across ranks.

Analysis followed a top-down approach, examining both macro-level institutional norms and micro-level linguistic features.

Results and discussions

a) **Rank and hierarchy.** In English discourse, rank is marked by formal address *(Sir, yes sir!; Captain, I recommend…)* and use of modal verbs *(may, shall).*

In Uzbek discourse, hierarchical respect is often shown through plural second-person forms *("siz"),* lexical politeness *(Xo'p bo'ladi),* and post-positional softeners like *"ku"* or *"-da".*

Higher-ranking officers in both languages use more direct language, while subordinates employ politeness markers, softened assertions or passive voice constructions.

b) **Group identity and solidarity.** Military personnel form tight-knit speech communities where shared jargon, abbreviations, and idioms reinforce in-group belonging. English examples: *"Copy that"; "On your six"; "Stand down".* Uzbek equivalents: *"Tayyorman, komandir"; "Buyruq bajarildi"; "Xuddi shunday".*

Markers of camaraderie *(inclusive pronouns, ellipsis, shared terminology)* are stronger in informal military contexts, such as training or barracks life.

c) **Gender and language use.** Although military communication is generally gender-neutral, subtle patterns emerge: In Uzbek military speech, women *(especially in media-facing roles)* tend to use softer tones and more elaborate phrasing. English discourse by female officers shows increased use of hedging strategies *(perhaps, it might be better if…),* though this varies by cultural setting and rank.

d) **Address terms and pronouns.** Uzbek military discourse relies on honorific pronouns *(siz, sizlar)* and specific titles *(komandir, boshliq)* to signal respect.

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English uses titles and surnames *(Lieutenant Jackson)* and standard second-person *(you),* relying more on context and tone for social distinction.

These differences highlight culturally embedded models of hierarchy and interpersonal distance.

Findings

1. Military discourse reflects institutional hierarchy through structured address, politeness and command styles.

2. Uzbek discourse encodes respect via grammar *(pronouns, suffixes),* while English uses more lexical and modal strategies.

3. Group identity is reinforced through shared terminology and speech routines across both languages.

4. Gendered variation is limited but observable, especially in formal media or advisory roles.

5. Sociolinguistic norms in military communication maintain discipline, clarify authority and promote cohesion.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that military discourse is a rich site of sociolinguistic activity where language operates as a social regulator - encoding rank, group identity and institutional norms. Comparing English and Uzbek command language reveals both universal strategies *(clarity, authority)* and culturally-specific forms of politeness, address and respect.

These findings suggest that understanding sociolinguistic variation is essential not only for linguistic theory but also for cross-cultural military cooperation, language policy in defense training and translation in peacekeeping missions.

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