

## CULTURE AND PRAGMATICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the interrelation between culture and pragmatics in foreign language teaching and their essential role in shaping learners' communicative competence. It explores the types of pragmatic failures caused by cultural differences and offers strategies to prevent such errors. Through practical examples, research insights, and methodological suggestions, the study highlights the real-world importance of teaching cultural sensitivity alongside linguistic proficiency.

**Key words:** Culture, Pragmatics, Language Teaching, Intercultural Communication, Pragmatic Competence, Cross-cultural Misunderstandings, Foreign Language Education

### INTRODUCTION

In modern education, language is not just a means of communication; it is a carrier of culture, values, and social norms. Language teaching goes beyond grammar and vocabulary — it involves teaching learners how to communicate appropriately within diverse cultural contexts. This requires the development of pragmatic competence, which is the ability to understand implied meanings, politeness strategies, and context-specific expressions. Thus, in today's language education, cultural awareness and pragmatic understanding are crucial components. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning. Teachers can invite students to discuss the formative process together. This practice mainly revolves around mid-

semester reflection and small group reflection sessions, where students reflect on the course and teachers respond to student concerns.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Language and Culture: An Inseparable Bond

Language reflects the cultural identity, traditions, and social values of its speakers.

Example 1: In Uzbek, welcoming expressions like “Yaxshi yuribsizmi?” or “Yuzko‘zingiz ochilibdi!” are culturally rich and lack direct English equivalents. Simply translating them as “Welcome!” misses the cultural depth.

Example 2: In Japanese and Korean, hierarchical relationships are embedded in language through honorifics. English, however, is relatively egalitarian in its forms of address.

Analysis: Understanding a language fully requires knowledge of the culture it represents.

### 2. Pragmatics: The Hidden Layer of Language

Pragmatics studies how language is used in real-life contexts. Meaning depends not only on words or grammar but also on context, social norms, and intention.

Example 3: “You must visit us sometime!” – in British English, this is a polite expression, not a literal invitation. A learner from Uzbekistan might misinterpret it as a genuine invitation.

Example 4: “Can I borrow your pen?” – “Well, it’s the only one I have.” This is an indirect refusal. Without pragmatic knowledge, a learner may misunderstand it as a “yes”.

### 3. Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failures and Their Consequences

Pragmatic failures occur when learners use language that is linguistically correct but culturally or socially inappropriate.

Example 5: In English, “What do you want?” sounds rude. In Uzbek, its equivalent “Nima istaysiz?” is a polite question.

Example 6: Uzbek learners may ask strangers personal questions like “How old are you?” or “What year were you born?” This is considered impolite in Western cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> Tog‘ayev, B. (2024). Formativ va summativ baholash va ularning tavsiflari. *Lingvospektr*, 2(1), 50–51. Retrieved from <https://lingvospektr.uz/index.php/Ingsp/article/view/100>

Example 7: In Western cultures, refusals are often direct. In Uzbek, indirect forms like “Maybe later” or “I’ll think about it” are used to soften rejection.

Conclusion: Pragmatic failures can lead to miscommunication, offense, and cultural misunderstanding.

#### 4. Methods to Develop Pragmatic Competence

To teach pragmatics effectively, teachers can use the following interactive strategies:

4.1. Role-plays: Students act out situations such as customer–shopkeeper dialogues.

4.2. Dialogue Analysis: Learners analyze dialogues for appropriate forms of politeness or indirect speech.

4.3. Film/TV Excerpts: Short clips from authentic media provide real examples of culture-specific expressions and politeness norms.

4.4. Cultural Comparisons: Students compare how expressions like “thank you” or “sorry” are used in English and Uzbek.

#### 5. Teaching Pragmatics in Uzbek as a Foreign Language

Pragmatic awareness is equally important when teaching Uzbek to foreigners.

Example 9: “Where are you from?” is a common question in Uzbek culture, but may feel intrusive to Western learners.

Example 10: “Xush kelibsiz!” means “Welcome!” in Uzbek, but learners might think it applies only when someone enters a house—not as a general greeting.

Suggestion: Include contextual usage of expressions, indirect speech, and polite formulas in Uzbek language curricula for non-native learners.

### CONCLUSION

Culture and pragmatics are central to effective language teaching. Learners must be taught not only how to say something, but also when and why to say it in a particular way. Incorporating pragmatic competence into the curriculum ensures learners are ready for authentic communication across cultures. Language educators and policymakers must work together to promote intercultural and pragmatic training in language education.

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