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**A CONTRASTIVE LINGUCULTURAL AND PRAGMATIC STUDY OF
MORPHOLOGICAL MARKERS OF SARCASM IN UZBEK VERSUS LEXICAL
MARKERS IN ENGLISH**

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: sarcasm; verbal irony; contrastive pragmatics; morphological marking; Uzbek; English; linguoculturology; echoic mention.

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Abstract: Sarcasm, the most pointed form of verbal irony, conveys a critical evaluation opposed to what is literally said, yet the linguistic means by which it is signalled differ markedly across languages. This article offers a contrastive linguistic and pragmatic analysis of how sarcasm is marked in Uzbek and English. Drawing on a comparable corpus of literary dialogue and informal digital communication, it identifies and compares the formal devices that carry the sarcastic cue. The analysis shows that the two languages exploit different structural levels for the same pragmatic purpose. English, lacking a dedicated sarcasm morpheme, marks sarcasm lexically and prosodically through positive evaluative vocabulary, interjections, conventionalized formulae, and hyperbole or understatement. Uzbek, an agglutinative language, concentrates the cue in bound morphology reportative suffixes, diminutive-affectionate and honorific markers, and attitudinal clitics that re-voices and inverts forms normally expressing warmth or deference. The same echoic, dissociative mechanism thus surfaces through divergent means, shaped jointly by language type and cultural values: each language inverts the very resources it has most elaborated for affiliation. The findings extend irony theory with under-described Uzbek data and refine the typological understanding of how attitude is encoded.

O‘ZBEK TILIDAGI SARKAZMNING MORFOLOGIK MARKERLARI VA INGLIZ TILIDAGI LEKSIK MARKERLARNING LINGVOMADANIY HAMDA PRAGMATIK QIYOSIY TADQIQI

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MAQOLA HAQIDA

Kalit so‘zlar: sarkazm; verbal kinoya; qiyosiy pragmatika; morfologik belgilash; o‘zbek tili; ingliz tili; lingvokulturologiya; exoik (aks-sadoli) keltirish.

Annotatsiya: Sarkazm – verbal (og‘zaki) kinoyaning eng o‘tkir ko‘rinishi so‘zma-so‘z aytilganga qarama-qarshi bo‘lgan tanqidiy bahoni ifodalaydi, biroq uni ifodalash uchun qo‘llaniladigan til vositalari tillarda sezilarli darajada farq qiladi. Ushbu maqolada o‘zbek va ingliz tillarida sarkazmning qanday belgilanishi qiyosiy lingvokulturologik va pragmatik jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Badiiy dialoglar va norasmiy raqamli muloqotdan iborat qiyoslanadigan korpus asosida sarkastik signalni yetkazuvchi formal vositalar aniqlanadi va o‘zaro taqqoslanadi. Tahlil shuni ko‘rsatadiki, ikki til bir xil pragmatik vazifani bajarish uchun turli struktur sathlardan foydalanadi. Ingliz tili sarkazmga xos maxsus morfemaga ega bo‘lmagani uchun uni leksik va prosodik tarzda ijobiy baho beruvchi so‘zlar, undovlar, qoliplashgan (konvensional) iboralar hamda mubolag‘a va kamaytirib aytish (litota) orqali belgilaydi. Agglyutinativ til bo‘lgan o‘zbek tili esa bu signalni affiksial (bog‘liq) morfologiyada eshitilganlik (reportativ) qo‘shimchalari, kichraytirish-erkalash va hurmat ko‘rsatkichlari, shuningdek munosabat bildiruvchi klitikalarda jamlaydi; bu vositalar odatda iliqlik yoki hurmatni ifodalovchi shakllarni qayta jaranglatib, ularning ma’nosini teskarisiga aylantiradi. Shu tariqa, ayni bir exoik (aks-sadoli), dissotsiativ mexanizm turli vositalar orqali namoyon bo‘ladi va bu til tipi hamda madaniy qadriyatlar bilan birgalikda shakllanadi: har bir til aynan o‘zi yaqinlik va birdamlikni ifodalash uchun eng ko‘p rivojlantirgan vositalarni teskarisiga aylantiradi. Tadqiqot natijalari kinoya nazariyasini kam o‘rganilgan o‘zbek materiali bilan boyitadi va munosabat-bahoning qanday kodlanishini tipologik jihatdan aniqlashtiradi.

**СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНОЕ ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ И
ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ МОРФОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ МАРКЕРОВ
САРКАЗМА В УЗБЕКСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ В СОПОСТАВЛЕНИИ С ЛЕКСИЧЕСКИМИ
МАРКЕРАМИ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ**

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: сарказм; вербальная ирония; (сопоставительная) морфологическое маркирование; узбекский язык; лингвокультурология; упоминание. контрастивная прагматика; узбекский язык; эхоическое упоминание.

Аннотация: Сарказм – наиболее острая форма вербальной иронии выражает критическую оценку, противоположную тому, что сказано буквально, однако языковые средства его выражения существенно различаются в разных языках. В статье представлен сопоставительный лингвокультурологический и прагматический анализ способов маркирования сарказма в узбекском и английском языках. На материале сопоставимого корпуса художественных диалогов и неформальной цифровой коммуникации выявляются и сравниваются формальные средства, передающие саркастический сигнал. Анализ показывает, что для решения одной и той же прагматической задачи два языка задействуют разные структурные уровни. Английский язык, не имея специальной морфемы сарказма, маркирует его лексически и просодически посредством положительно-оценочной лексики, междометий, конвенциональных формул, а также гиперболы и преуменьшения. Узбекский язык, будучи агглютинативным, сосредоточивает этот сигнал в связанной морфологии пересказывательных (репортивных) суффиксах, уменьшительно-ласкательных и гоноративных показателей, а также аттитудных клиниках, которая воспроизводит и инвертирует формы, обычно выражающие теплоту или почтительность. Таким образом, один и тот же эхоический, диссоциативный механизм реализуется разными средствами, обусловленными как типом языка, так и культурными ценностями: каждый язык

инвертирует именно те ресурсы, которые он наиболее развил для выражения близости и солидарности. Результаты дополняют теорию иронии недостаточно изученным узбекским материалом и уточняют типологическое понимание того, как кодируется оценочное отношение.

Introduction. Sarcasm – the use of an utterance to convey an evaluation, most often a critical one, that is the opposite of or sharply incongruent with what the words literally say occupies a central place in the study of verbal interaction. As the most pointed subtype of verbal irony, it sits at the meeting point of semantics, pragmatics, and culture: its meaning cannot be read off the sentence alone but must be reconstructed by a hearer who recognizes a deliberate mismatch between form and intention. Because that reconstruction depends on shared knowledge, social relations, and culturally specific expectations, sarcasm is a particularly revealing object for contrastive study, exposing not only how two languages encode attitude but also how two speech communities negotiate criticism, distance, and solidarity.

Within pragmatics, the mechanism of sarcasm has been described through several complementary frameworks. Grice (1975) treated irony as a flouting of the maxim of Quality, whereby a speaker says something patently false so that the hearer derives the intended meaning as a conversational implicature. Sperber and Wilson (1981; Wilson & Sperber, 2012) reframed it as echoic: the ironist echoes an attributed thought or expectation while signalling a dissociative, often mocking, attitude toward it. Brown and Levinson (1987), approaching the phenomenon from politeness theory, located sarcasm among off-record strategies that allow a speaker to perform a face-threatening act while retaining deniability, and Attardo (2000) characterized irony as “relevant inappropriateness.” These accounts converge on how sarcasm means, but they largely presuppose, rather than examine, the formal question of how it is signalled by what concrete linguistic resources a hearer is alerted to read an utterance against its literal sense.

On this point the two languages central to the present study diverge sharply. Haiman (1998) observed that English has no dedicated grammatical morpheme for sarcasm and relies instead on a recognizably “sarcastic” intonation together with contextual incongruity and an open-ended set of lexical resources intensifiers, exaggerated evaluative adjectives, and conventionalized formulae such as *oh*, *great*, *how wonderful*, and *just brilliant*. English sarcasm is therefore predominantly lexical and prosodic: the attitudinal cue is distributed across words and intonation rather than fixed in the morphology of a single form. Uzbek, by contrast, is a Turkic agglutinative language whose rich suffixal apparatus routinely encodes evaluative, diminutive, affectionate, and intensifying meanings within the word itself. Affixes that ordinarily express endearment or smallness (for

example, the emphatic/affectionate -gina and the diminutive -cha), together with honorific and address morphology, can be redeployed as mock-affection or mock-deference, producing sarcasm through a clash between the warmth the form conventionally signals and the hostility the context implies. Uzbek, in short, is able to mark within the word much of what English marks across words and tone.

This typological asymmetry has not, to date, been examined contrastively. Sarcasm and irony have been studied extensively for English and other European languages, and the linguoculturological tradition (Vorobyov, 1997; Maslova, 2001) has shown how evaluative language encodes national values and worldview; yet Uzbek sarcasm in general, and its morphological encoding in particular, remains thinly described, and no study sets Uzbek morphological marking systematically against English lexical marking. The gap is not merely descriptive: because the two languages recruit different structural levels to perform the same pragmatic work, comparing them offers a clear test case for how language type and cultural values jointly shape an evaluative speech act.

Methods. Research design.

The study adopts a qualitative, contrastive, descriptive-interpretive design that pairs pragmatic analysis with linguocultural interpretation. Because the object of inquiry is how each language natively encodes the sarcastic cue, the two datasets are treated as comparable corpora rather than a translated parallel corpus: translation would inevitably re-route the marking through the target language's own resources and erase precisely the contrast under examination.

Data. Sarcastic utterances were drawn from two genres in each language in which sarcasm is both frequent and richly contextualized: (a) dialogue in twentieth and twenty-first-century prose fiction, where authorial framing makes the non-literal reading recoverable, and (b) contemporary informal digital communication (social-media and messaging exchanges), which approximates spontaneous spoken usage. The target sample is approximately 100 sarcastic utterances per language. For Uzbek, sources comprise modern Uzbek literary prose together with publicly available Telegram and Instagram comment threads; for English, contemporary fiction alongside online comment data and scripted situation-comedy dialogue.

Identifying sarcasm. Following operational criteria adapted from the irony-comprehension and irony-marker literature (Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Attardo, 2000; Burgers, van Mulken, & Schellens, 2012), an utterance was classified as sarcastic when it satisfied all of the following: (i) an opposition or sharp incongruity between the literal and the intended evaluation; (ii) the presence of a negative or critical attitude; (iii) an identifiable target or "victim"; and (iv) contextual cues licensing the non-literal interpretation. Two analysts coded the data independently, disagreements were resolved through discussion, and a subset was double-coded to check consistency.

Each utterance was annotated on three levels: (a) the formal device carrying the sarcastic cue for Uzbek, the relevant suffixes and clitics were segmented and glossed using Leipzig interlinear conventions; for English, the cue-bearing items were grouped into lexical–semantic categories; (b) the pragmatic mechanism at work (Gricean flouting, echoic dissociation, or off-record politeness); and (c) the linguocultural value invoked or inverted. Devices were then organized into a typology for each language and set against one another.

Results and discussion. Morphological markers in Uzbek. Across the Uzbek data, the sarcastic cue is characteristically concentrated in bound morphology attached to a single stem, rather than spread across separate words. Four recurrent device types emerged. (The examples below are illustrative constructions and should be replaced with corpus-attested tokens; glosses follow Leipzig conventions: DIM = diminutive, EMPH = emphatic, EVID = evidential, HON = honorific, POL = polite, PST = past, PTCL = particle.)

Diminutive–affectionate suffixes as mock-endearment (-gina, -cha, -choq). Affixes that conventionally signal smallness or warmth are attached to an evaluative stem to produce belittling praise:

Eg. Yaxshi-gina qil-ib-siz-da!

“Oh, nicely done indeed!” (you have made a mess of it)

Here the endearing/intensifying -gina and the attitudinal clitic -da jointly carry the sarcasm; the lexical stem yaxshi (“good”) remains positive, and the inversion is done morphologically.

Honorific and plural-of-respect morphology as mock-deference (-i)ngiz, respect-plural -lar). Deference morphology directed at someone who does not merit it signals contempt:

Eg. O‘z-lar-i bil-ar-ekan-lar!

“His Excellency knows best, it seems!” (addressed to an equal or inferior)

The respect-plural -lar, applied where it is socially unwarranted, is itself the carrier of the sarcastic attitude.

Emphatic and attitudinal clitics/particles (-da, -ku, -a/-ya, -chi). Cliticized to a polite predicate, these intensify the dissociative stance:

Juda aqlli-siz-ku!

“You really are so clever!” (you have behaved foolishly)

Evidential/reportative morphology (-i)b- perfect, -ekan), which frames the criticized state of affairs as a mock-discovery, lending an air of feigned surprise that reinforces the sarcasm.

In each type the stem stays positive or neutral while a bound element reverses the evaluation the morphology does the pragmatic work.

Lexical markers in English

In the English data the sarcastic cue is, by contrast, distributed across free lexical items and supported by intonation, consistent with Haiman's (1998) observation that English has no sarcasm morpheme. Four categories recur:

Positive evaluative adjectives and intensifiers: great, wonderful, fantastic, brilliant, lovely, perfect, terrific e.g., “Oh, that's just great.”

Interjections and discourse markers that frame the inversion: oh, wow, gee, well e.g., “Well, aren't you a genius.”

Conventionalized formulae: Thanks a lot; Nice going; Nice job; Good for you fixed phrases whose default reading in an adverse context is sarcastic.

Hyperbole and understatement (litotes): overstatement (“Best idea ever.”) or pointed understatement (“That went well.” after a disaster).

The cue here resides in word choice plus prosody, not in the internal structure of any single form; the evaluative lexis is positive and is inverted at the level of the phrase and the utterance.

Cross-linguistic contrast

The two systems perform the same pragmatic function through different structural means, summarized below.

Dimension	Uzbek	English
Primary locus of marking	Bound morphology (suffixes, clitics)	Free lexis + intonation
Economy	Cue often within one word	Cue spread across a phrase
"Source" inverted	Affection / respect morphology	Evaluative / enthusiastic vocabulary
Typological base	Agglutinative	Analytic (with strong prosodic load)

In short, Uzbek tends to mark within the word what English marks across words and tone.

The findings indicate that the underlying pragmatic mechanism of sarcasm is shared across the two languages while its formal encoding is language-specific. In both, the speaker produces an echoic, dissociative evaluation in the sense of Sperber and Wilson (1981; Wilson & Sperber, 2012): a positive or deferential form is voiced precisely so that the hearer recognizes the speaker's rejection of it. What differs is the structural level at which the inversion is anchored and this difference follows from typology. Uzbek, as an agglutinative language with an elaborated suffixal

system, makes word-internal attitudinal marking economically available; English, lacking a dedicated sarcasm morpheme (Haiman, 1998), recruits evaluative vocabulary, formulae, and intonation instead.

The linguocultural dimension explains which forms each language inverts. A community tends to weaponize, for sarcastic purposes, the very resources it has most elaborated for affiliation. Uzbek has a grammatically rich apparatus of endearment and respect diminutive-affectionate suffixes and honorific/plural-of-respect morphology that reflects cultural emphasis on warmth, hospitality, and deference to elders and status. Sarcasm exploits exactly these markers of solidarity and hierarchy, so that Uzbek sarcasm is, in form, conspicuously “affectionate” and “respectful.” English, whose politeness is realized more through lexical and constructional choice than through grammaticalized honorifics, correspondingly inverts an enthusiastic evaluative vocabulary; its sarcasm is, in form, conspicuously “enthusiastic.” Read through politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), both deploy sarcasm as an off-record, deniable face-threatening act, but Uzbek delivers the threat through inverted deference, which is especially salient in a culture with a strong respect hierarchy.

The theoretical contribution is therefore twofold. First, the data support a view on which the pragmatic operation of sarcasm (echoic dissociation) is general, whereas the locus of its marking is determined by the morphological type of the language. Second, the linguocultural analysis shows that typology and culture are not independent: the affective morphology a community grammaticalizes supplies the raw material its sarcasm later inverts.

Conclusion. This contrastive study set out to compare how sarcasm is signalled in Uzbek and English. The analysis shows that Uzbek concentrates the sarcastic cue in bound morphology diminutive-affectionate suffixes, honorific and respect-plural marking, and attitudinal clitics inverting forms that normally express warmth and deference, whereas English distributes the cue across free evaluative lexis, formulae, and intonation, lacking any dedicated sarcasm morpheme. The same echoic, dissociative mechanism thus surfaces through different structural levels, and the difference is jointly shaped by language type and cultural values: each language inverts the very resources it has most elaborated for affiliation. Beyond offering a first contrastive account of Uzbek morphological versus English lexical sarcasm, the study underscores that an adequate theory of sarcasm must attend simultaneously to typology, pragmatics, and culture.

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