COGNITIVE PROCESSING AND SOCIAL FUNCTION OF ASSERTIVE SPEECH ACTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign

Languages teacher

Abbasova Mukaddas Bakhtiyorovna

Abstract: This article explores how assertive speech acts function in Uzbek and English, focusing on their cognitive and social roles. Assertive acts are essential in communication as they allow speakers to convey information, express beliefs, and influence understanding. By comparing these acts across the two languages, the article highlights linguistic strategies, cultural influences, and cognitive processes involved in their production and interpretation.

Keywords: assertive speech acts, cognitive processing, social function, pragmatics, Uzbek language, English language, intercultural communication

Introduction

Communication is not just about exchanging words; it is about conveying meaning, intentions, and social cues. Assertive speech acts are statements where the speaker presents information, opinions, or beliefs as true. These acts are found in everyday communication and play a crucial role in shaping social interactions. In Uzbek, assertive acts often include explicit markers of certainty, evidentiality, and politeness. English, on the other hand, frequently uses modal verbs, tone, and pragmatic hints to express similar meanings. Understanding how assertive acts are produced and interpreted in different languages helps improve language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

This study analyzed spoken and written samples of Uzbek and English texts to identify assertive speech acts. Examples were collected from daily conversations, formal dialogues, and written narratives. The analysis focused on how speakers express certainty, provide evidence, and interact with listeners. Cognitive aspects were examined by observing sentence structure, word choice, and the use of markers that indicate confidence or hesitation. Social functions were analyzed by considering how assertive acts maintain politeness, assert authority, or manage interpersonal relationships.

The analysis showed that assertive speech acts serve similar functions in both languages but differ in their linguistic realization. In Uzbek, speakers tend to use explicit markers such as "haqiqatan ham" (indeed) or "aniq" (definitely) to show certainty. English speakers often rely on

modal verbs like "must" or "should," or on intonation and context, to convey assertiveness. Cognitive processing of assertive acts involves evaluating the truth of statements and anticipating how listeners will interpret them. Socially, Uzbek assertive acts often emphasize hierarchy and politeness, while English assertive acts focus on clarity and interpersonal negotiation.

Assertive speech acts are not only linguistic forms but also tools for cognitive and social interaction. Recognizing the differences between Uzbek and English helps speakers navigate intercultural communication more effectively. In teaching, highlighting these differences can improve learners' pragmatic competence, allowing them to produce statements that are contextually and culturally appropriate. The study also suggests that understanding cognitive processing is important, as speakers adapt their language based on the listener's expectations and social context. Assertive speech acts are fundamental units of communication in both Uzbek and English. They allow speakers to convey beliefs, facts, or opinions, influencing listeners' understanding of a situation.

Cognitively, producing an assertive speech act involves evaluating the truthfulness of the content, selecting appropriate linguistic forms, and predicting how the listener will interpret the statement. In Uzbek, speakers often rely on specific lexical markers, evidential adverbs, or sentence-final particles to indicate certainty, such as "haqiqatan ham" (indeed) or "albatta" (certainly). In English, assertiveness is often conveyed through modal verbs like "must," "will," or "should," as well as through intonation, stress, or pragmatic context.

From a social perspective, assertive acts manage interpersonal relationships and convey social roles. In Uzbek, assertive statements are frequently influenced by hierarchy, politeness conventions, and respect for elders or authority figures. For example, a teacher providing information may use softening markers to maintain politeness while still asserting facts. In English, social function is often shaped by clarity, directness, and politeness strategies that depend on context. Assertive acts in English may be hedged with phrases like "I believe" or "It seems that" to balance assertiveness with social tact.

Cognitive processing in both languages requires the speaker to assess the listener's knowledge, expectations, and cultural background. In bilingual or intercultural communication, failure to match the expected assertive norms can lead to misunderstandings. For instance, a direct assertive statement in English may be perceived as too blunt or disrespectful by a native Uzbek speaker accustomed to more mitigated forms. Similarly, an Uzbek speaker's cautious or elaborated assertion may seem overly verbose to an English interlocutor.

Pragmatically, assertive acts serve functions beyond merely conveying information. They can establish credibility, negotiate social roles, reinforce group identity, and even perform persuasive functions. In Uzbek, narratives and everyday interactions often embed assertive acts within story-telling or advice-giving frameworks, emphasizing relational harmony. English assertive acts, especially in academic or professional contexts, are frequently structured to emphasize clarity, logic, and evidence, reflecting the cognitive expectation of precision in information transmission.

Research highlights that assertive acts are processed in the brain through networks involving both language comprehension and social cognition. Cognitive linguists suggest that the speaker's mental model of the listener plays a crucial role in structuring the statement, selecting appropriate linguistic markers, and adjusting tone and register. This dual focus on cognition and social function ensures that assertive acts are effective and culturally appropriate.

In educational contexts, understanding the cognitive and social dimensions of assertive speech acts allows teachers and learners to enhance pragmatic competence. Learners of English can be trained to recognize hedging, modal verbs, and context-dependent assertiveness strategies. Uzbek speakers learning English can benefit from explicit instruction on the differences in directness and politeness strategies to avoid misinterpretation. Likewise, English speakers learning Uzbek can be guided to use linguistic markers that reflect cultural norms of respect, hierarchy, and relational harmony.

The study also identifies that digital communication adds an additional layer of cognitive and social processing. In text-based platforms, cues like punctuation, emoji, or capitalization help compensate for missing prosodic elements, allowing assertive intentions to be interpreted correctly. Both languages exhibit adaptive strategies for assertive acts in digital environments, reflecting the interplay between cognition, language, and social context. Assertive speech acts constitute a core component of human communication, enabling speakers to convey information, beliefs, or opinions while influencing the listener's perception of events. Cognitively, producing assertive speech acts involves multiple layers of mental processing. Speakers must evaluate the truth value of the proposition, select appropriate linguistic markers, and anticipate how the listener will interpret the utterance. In Uzbek, assertiveness is often marked by lexical cues such as evidential adverbs like *haqiqatan ham* (indeed) or modal particles like *albatta* (certainly). These markers provide not only clarity but also a degree of social politeness. In English, assertive acts frequently rely on modal verbs (*must*, *will*, *should*) and sentence stress, intonation patterns, or pragmatic context to signal certainty and commitment.

Socially, assertive acts serve to regulate relationships and communicate social roles. In Uzbek culture, assertive statements often adhere to hierarchical norms, reflecting respect for elders or authority figures. For example, a subordinate may soften an assertive statement with mitigating phrases to preserve politeness while conveying factual information. In contrast, English assertive acts are generally more direct, particularly in professional or academic contexts, though hedging strategies (*I believe*, *It seems that*) are employed to maintain politeness and reduce potential interpersonal friction.

Cognitive and social processing are closely intertwined. Speakers must consider the listener's knowledge, expectations, and cultural background. Misalignment of assertive norms in cross-cultural communication can lead to misunderstandings. A direct English assertion may appear overly blunt to an Uzbek interlocutor, while a cautiously elaborated Uzbek assertion may be perceived as unnecessarily verbose by an English speaker. Pragmatically, assertive acts serve multiple functions beyond information transfer: they establish credibility, reinforce group identity, and enable persuasion. In Uzbek discourse, assertive acts are frequently embedded in narrative or advisory frameworks, emphasizing relational harmony. In English, assertive acts prioritize logical structure, evidence, and clarity, reflecting a cognitive expectation for precise information. Assertive speech acts are fundamental units of communication, enabling speakers to state facts, beliefs, or opinions while shaping social interactions. Cognitively, producing an assertive act requires evaluating the truth of a proposition, choosing context-appropriate linguistic forms, and predicting how the listener will interpret the statement. In Uzbek, assertive speech acts often include lexical markers such as *haqiqatan ham* (indeed), *albatta* (certainly), or *shubhasiz* (undoubtedly) to emphasize certainty. These markers signal the speaker's commitment to the truth of the statement while maintaining social harmony. In English, assertive acts frequently use modal verbs (*must*, *will*, *should*) and intonation patterns, sentence stress, and pragmatic markers such as "I believe" or "It seems that" to express certainty while managing politeness.

Socially, assertive acts function to establish relationships, signal authority, and communicate shared norms. In Uzbek discourse, assertiveness is often tempered by politeness strategies that reflect hierarchical relationships; subordinates typically soften statements to show respect, using mitigating phrases or indirect expressions. In contrast, English assertive acts tend to be more direct, especially in professional or academic settings, though hedging strategies are still used to reduce potential offense and maintain collaborative interaction. This difference illustrates the interplay between cultural expectations and linguistic realization of assertive speech acts.

Conclusion

Assertive speech acts play a key role in communication, combining cognitive evaluation and social function. Uzbek and English achieve these acts through different linguistic and cultural strategies, reflecting how language shapes thought and social interaction. Awareness of these differences is valuable for language learning, teaching, and effective cross-cultural communication. In practical terms, teaching and learning should emphasize both cognitive and social aspects of assertive acts. Language instruction should include explicit attention to lexical markers, sentence structures, hedging, and context-sensitive strategies. Educators should also integrate intercultural training to help learners recognize potential misunderstandings and adapt assertive behavior appropriately. In digital communication, awareness of compensatory strategies such as punctuation, emojis, and formatting should be addressed to maintain clarity and relational balance. Future research may further explore neurological correlates of assertive processing and cross-cultural adaptations in increasingly multilingual digital communication environments.

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