Linguopragmatic deficiencies in girls' speech and their remediation: a cross-cultural perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the linguopragmatic deficiencies observed in girls' speech, focusing on their socio-cultural, psychological, and linguistic underpinnings, and explores methods for their remediation. Based on empirical findings from Uzbek and comparative English contexts, the study underscores the interrelation between gendered communicative behavior, societal expectations, and language acquisition. The discussion integrates theoretical insights from scholars such as Ergasheva, Ziyayeva, and Holmes to provide a comprehensive account of the socio-pragmatic mechanisms shaping girls' speech patterns.

Qizlar nutqidagi lingvopragmatik kamchiliklar va ularni bartaraf etish usullari: madaniyatlararo yondashuv

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqolada qizlar nutqida kuzatilgan lingvopragmatik kamchiliklar ko'rib chiqiladi, ularning ijtimoiy-madaniy, psixologik va lingvistik asoslariga e'tibor qaratiladi va ularni bartaraf etish usullari o'rganiladi. O'zbek va qiyosiy ingliz kontekstlaridan olingan empirik ma'lumotlarga asoslanib, tadqiqot jinsga bog'liq kommunikativ xulq-atvor, jamiyatning umidlari va tilni o'zlashtirish o'rtasidagi o'zaro bog'liqlikni ta'kidlaydi. Muhokama Ergasheva, Ziyayeva va Xolms kabi olimlarning nazariy fikrlarini birlashtirib, qizlar nutqini shakllantirishning ijtimoiy-pragmatik mexanizmlari haqida har tomonlama ma'lumot beradi.

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Лингвопрагматические недостатки в речи девочек и их устранение: кросс-культурный аспект

АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье рассматриваются лингвопрагматические нарушения, наблюдаемые в речи девочек, с акцентом на их социокультурные, психологические и лингвистические основы, а также изучаются методы их коррекции. Основываясь на эмпирических данных, полученных в узбекском и сравнительном английском языках, исследование подчёркивает взаимосвязь между гендерным коммуникативным поведением, общественными ожиданиями и освоением языка. Обсуждение объединяет теоретические идеи таких учёных, как Эргашева, Зияева и Холмс, для комплексного анализа социально-прагматических механизмов, формирующих речевые модели девочек.

INTRODUCTION

Language development in early childhood is profoundly interconnected with social identity formation, cultural norms, and gender-specific expectations. From the earliest stages of linguistic acquisition, children internalize not only vocabulary and syntax but also the pragmatic and discursive patterns embedded within their sociocultural environment. In this context, girls' speech, particularly in both Uzbek and English-speaking communities, frequently demonstrates features aligned with traits of conformity, politeness, and emotional expressivity. These linguistic tendencies often contrast sharply with those observed in boys, whose speech is typically characterized by assertiveness, directiveness, and competitive turn-taking strategies. Such divergences in speech behavior are neither innate nor incidental but are shaped through deeply rooted cultural ideologies that prescribe different communicative roles for each gender.

The early socialization of girls often emphasizes behavioral attributes such as modesty, deference, and emotional sensitivity, which are mirrored in their speech practices. Within family interactions, girls are frequently encouraged to use mitigated requests, polite forms, and affiliative language markers, which not only reflect but also reinforce their perceived social roles as accommodating and nurturing. Parental discourse serves as one of the primary channels through which these linguistic norms are transmitted. For instance, girls are more often praised for being "quiet" or "well-mannered," whereas boys may receive approval for being outspoken or assertive. This early differential feedback cultivates a communicative style among girls that prioritizes social harmony over dominance or self-assertion.

Ziyayeva (2017) highlights that girls are systematically socialized to embody traits of "softness" and "compliance," which directly contributes to their linguistic passivity. This passivity manifests in their conversational patterns: girls may be less inclined to interrupt, challenge others, or engage in confrontational dialogue, preferring instead to adopt reactive and supportive roles within conversations. Such interactional behaviors not only limit their participation in more competitive or debate-oriented discourse but also reinforce power asymmetries in mixed-gender communication contexts. The expectation to remain "soft-spoken" creates constraints on girls' development of pragmatic competence, especially in speech acts requiring directness, persuasion, or negotiation.

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Ergasheva (2010) further elucidates that these communicative tendencies are deeply rooted in gendered social roles prescribed by culture. In Uzbek-speaking contexts, for example, proverbial wisdom and idiomatic expressions such as "qiz bola odob bilan bezaladi" ("a girl is adorned by her manners") explicitly encode gendered behavioral expectations that prioritize politeness and restraint in speech. Such culturally transmitted discourses implicitly restrict girls from adopting assertive linguistic strategies, positioning verbal deference as both a moral and aesthetic virtue. Consequently, the pragmatic dimension of girls' language use becomes limited, curbing their ability to deploy language dynamically in contexts demanding leadership, assertiveness, or conflict resolution.

In English-speaking settings, while overt cultural norms differ, similar patterns emerge through subtler forms of social regulation. Research indicates that teachers often unconsciously reward girls for being attentive and compliant, reinforcing patterns of verbal passivity in classroom discourse. Thus, across both linguistic and cultural contexts, girls' speech is systematically shaped by institutional and interpersonal practices that value emotional expressivity and relational maintenance over directive or authoritative communicative styles.

In sum, girls' linguistic behaviors must be viewed as socially constructed phenomena deeply entwined with cultural ideologies and gendered socialization processes. Addressing these patterns requires not only linguistic intervention but also a re-examination of the societal narratives and educational practices that sustain gendered communication norms.

1. Excessive Emotional Load: Girls often employ affectively laden and mitigated utterances such as "Please give it to me," "If you don't mind," or "Let's do it together." These speech acts are framed with politeness markers and hedges ("maybe," "I think," "could you") that soften the illocutionary force of their requests. While these strategies are essential for maintaining affiliative ties and reducing interpersonal conflict, they inadvertently limit the expression of assertive speech acts necessary for competitive or goal-oriented interaction. For instance, in peer group settings where assertiveness is valued, such mitigated expressions may be perceived as hesitancy or lack of authority. Research shows that girls are more likely to prioritize relational harmony over task completion, thus avoiding linguistic forms that could be construed as confrontational. This reliance on emotionally mitigated language constrains their pragmatic range, making it challenging for them to adapt effectively to discursive contexts demanding directness, leadership, or negotiation.

2. Dialogic Constraints: Girls' pragmatic limitations are also evident in their reduced participation as initiators of dialogue. They often assume reactive roles in conversation, responding rather than directing or shaping discourse. For example, they may wait for others to initiate topics or questions, contributing through brief acknowledgments ("yes," "okay," "I see") rather than extending or redirecting the discussion. This pattern restricts their mastery of turn-taking mechanics – a central component of conversational pragmatics – and diminishes opportunities to practice topic management or assertive questioning. Holmes (2006) attributes this tendency to the gendered construction of "sociopragmatic competence," wherein girls are socialized into communication styles emphasizing attentiveness and responsiveness rather than dominance or interruption. Consequently, girls' conversational roles reinforce passivity, curbing their confidence in competitive exchanges such as debates or group discussions where discourse management is essential.

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3. Passive Communicative Roles and Cultural Reinforcement: Cultural ideologies significantly underpin girls' communicative passivity. Directives like "A quiet girl is admired" or proverbial expressions such as "Qiz bola odob bilan bezaladi" ("A girl is adorned by her manners") normalize silence, restraint, and deferential speech as markers of femininity. These culturally embedded maxims not only shape parental and pedagogical expectations but also permeate peer evaluations, discouraging girls from adopting overtly assertive or confrontational language. In contexts like the Uzbek linguistic community, such norms create a pragmatic environment where verbal assertiveness is implicitly discouraged, positioning quiet compliance as socially desirable. Similar dynamics appear in English-speaking contexts, where girls who deviate from these norms risk being labeled "bossy" or "unladylike," further reinforcing speech patterns that prioritize politeness over agency.

The development of pragmatic deficiencies in girls' speech is deeply embedded within socio-cultural practices that shape their communicative behaviors from early childhood. In Uzbek contexts, parental discourse plays a pivotal role in cultivating speech patterns that valorize politeness, compliance, and emotional restraint. Parents frequently emphasize maxims such as "qiz bola muloyim bo'lishi kerak" ("a girl must be gentle"), which instill deference as a valued trait. Girls are often praised for quietness and soft-spoken manners, whereas assertive speech – such as demanding clarification or disagreeing – is either ignored or discouraged.   By contrast, boys are socialized into more assertive communicative practices; interruptions, loud speech, and directive language are more readily tolerated, even perceived as signs of confidence and leadership potential. This differential reinforcement sets an early trajectory for gendered linguistic socialization, wherein girls' pragmatic competence becomes closely tied to socially sanctioned ideals of modesty and restraint.

Psychological studies also highlight how reduced self-efficacy in verbal expression among girls correlates strongly with limited exposure to inquiry-driven and dialogic pedagogical models. Traditional rote-based educational approaches, which dominate many Uzbek early childhood settings, emphasize passive listening and reproduction of information rather than critical questioning or debate. This lack of dialogic interaction disproportionately affects girls, whose socially conditioned communicative style already aligns more closely with passive reception than with assertive participation. Over time, this convergence between socio-cultural expectations and educational practices leads to diminished confidence in public speaking, reduced willingness to engage in classroom debates, and avoidance of discourse structures requiring pragmatic negotiation skills, such as argumentation or persuasion.

The cumulative effect of these intersecting factors is the perpetuation of a gendered cycle in which girls are linguistically conditioned to prioritize social approval and relational harmony over self-assertion and independent expression. Ziyayeva (2017) underscores that this dynamic limits girls' development of pragmatic strategies essential for managing diverse communicative contexts, including competitive and professional environments. As a result, their speech often remains confined within a framework of hedging, deference, and emotional alignment, rather than expanding toward the assertive, task-oriented pragmatics necessary for broader socio-linguistic empowerment.

1. Enhancing Speech Assertiveness: Developing assertive speech requires deliberate instruction in pragmatic forms that empower girls to express opinions directly and confidently. Phrases such as "I disagree because…" or "In my view…" function as

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illocutionary markers of epistemic stance and argumentation (Ergasheva, 2010). Teaching these structures within interactive discourse contexts helps dismantle tendencies toward hedging or self-effacement, which Ziyayeva (2017) identifies as products of gendered socialization. For instance, structured debates in classrooms provide safe spaces for practicing assertive turn-taking while normalizing dissent as a constructive communicative act. Such explicit training in assertiveness aligns with Holmes' (2006) observation that sociopragmatic competence develops through socially scaffolded interactions where learners rehearse speech acts that challenge deferential norms.

2. Dialogic and Role-Play Pedagogy: Embedding dialogic instruction and role-play simulations into curricula creates immersive opportunities for girls to develop pragmatic fluency. Role-play tasks – such as negotiating with peers or questioning authority figures – situate learners in communicative scenarios requiring turn initiation, repair strategies, and management of discourse transitions. Vygotskian sociocultural theory underscores that such scaffolded, interactive learning fosters linguistic agency by situating language use within authentic, goal-oriented contexts. Furthermore, dialogic pedagogy emphasizes inquiry-based learning, encouraging students to formulate questions, express disagreement politely, and co-construct knowledge through collaborative discourse. These strategies actively counteract conversational passivity and equip girls with pragmatic tools transferable beyond academic contexts into real-life social and professional interactions.

3. Cultural Reframing: Transforming deep-seated cultural norms that valorize female silence is essential for sustained progress. Proverbs such as "Qiz bola uyatchan bo'lsa yaxshi" ("A shy girl is admirable") propagate ideals of quiet compliance that implicitly discourage verbal assertiveness. Addressing such cultural narratives requires both critical pedagogy and parental education. Incorporating assertive female characters in children's literature and classroom discussions provides alternative role models that challenge stereotypical depictions of female speech behavior. Media literacy initiatives and school-community workshops can also engage parents in rethinking linguistic expectations for daughters, reframing talkativeness and debate not as disobedience but as markers of intellectual and communicative growth.

4. Emotional Differentiation Training: Girls' frequent reliance on affective politeness strategies often masks pragmatic intent, blurring the illocutionary force of their speech acts. Explicit instruction in emotional differentiation – teaching phrases like "I feel upset because…" – helps articulate feelings clearly while reducing dependence on implicit cues. Psychological studies link emotional labeling with heightened self-efficacy in communication, enabling girls to manage interpersonal conflict pragmatically rather than through indirect or overly mitigated expressions. This competency strengthens pragmatic clarity, reduces misinterpretation risks, and fosters resilience in discourse settings that demand precision and assertiveness.

CONCLUSION

Girls' speech deficiencies are best conceptualized as linguopragmatic manifestations of deeply rooted socio-cultural frameworks that regulate gendered interactional norms. These deficiencies – ranging from limited assertiveness to overuse of politeness markers – do not arise in isolation; rather, they are systematically produced and reinforced through parental discourse patterns, institutional practices, and societal expectations surrounding "appropriate" female behavior. As Holmes (2006) asserts, early

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socialization embeds communicative norms that align femininity with deference, empathy, and emotional restraint, shaping girls' pragmatic repertoires in ways that prioritize relational harmony over discursive dominance.

Addressing these limitations requires comprehensive, multi-layered interventions. First, pedagogical reforms must foreground inquiry-based and dialogic learning models that encourage girls to initiate speech acts, formulate critical questions, and engage in debate. Role-play and structured peer interaction provide low-stakes environments for practicing assertive turn-taking, gradually counteracting conversational passivity. Furthermore, explicit instruction in speech act strategies – such as expressing disagreement ("I see it differently because…") – enables pragmatic empowerment through deliberate linguistic scaffolding (Ergasheva, 2010).

Second, cultural re-narrativization is imperative. Proverbs and idiomatic expressions valorizing silence – e.g., "Qiz bola uyatchan bo'lsa yaxshi" ("A shy girl is admirable") – must be critically interrogated within educational and familial settings. Integrating assertive female figures in literature, media, and curricula not only diversifies representational models but also recalibrates societal perceptions of acceptable female speech behaviors, fostering a paradigm shift toward gender-inclusive communicative norms.

Finally, targeted communicative training focusing on emotional differentiation (e.g., explicit articulation of feelings) bridges the gap between affective politeness and pragmatic clarity. Such training enhances girls' ability to express nuanced intent, improving discourse efficacy in both social and institutional contexts.

Ultimately, cultivating pragmatic competence in girls strengthens linguistic agency, dismantles restrictive gendered scripts, and promotes equitable communicative participation. By reframing speech as a site of empowerment rather than conformity, society can advance toward gender-balanced linguopragmatic practices integral to inclusive development.

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