PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF UZBEK FOLK TALES: A CASE STUDY OF "SUSAMBIL"

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Abstract. *This article examines the pragmatic features of the Uzbek folk tale "Susambil" through a qualitative analysis of selected communicative episodes in the English translation prepared for this study. The research focuses on how characters use language not merely to exchange information but also to request assistance, invite others to join a journey, express needs and feelings, formulate collective plans, give advice, issue commands, and commit themselves to future actions. The analysis is informed by Speech Act Theory and pragmatic approaches to meaning, particularly the classification of illocutionary acts into assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives. The study demonstrates that pragmatic meaning in "Susambil" is closely connected with the development of the plot and the relationships among the characters. Requests lead to acts of sharing, invitations construct a travelling community, repeated descriptions of Susambil create a shared image of freedom and prosperity, and collective planning allows the characters to respond to danger. The dialogue of the wolves provides a contrasting communicative pattern in which direct commands reflect hierarchical relations. The analysis also shows that figurative expressions, repetition, forms of address, and culturally recognizable references contribute to pragmatic interpretation. From a translation perspective, preserving the communicative force of the original utterances is as important as preserving their propositional meaning. The findings suggest that pragmatic analysis provides a useful framework for understanding Uzbek folk narratives and their translation into English.*

Keywords: *pragmatics, Uzbek folk tale, Susambil, speech acts, directives, commissives, assertives, translation, communicative strategies*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada o'zbek xalq ertagi "Susambil"ning pragmatik xususiyatlari tadqiq qilinib, tadqiqot uchun tayyorlangan inglizcha tarjimadagi tanlangan kommunikativ vaziyatlar sifat jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda qahramonlarning tildan faqat axborot almashish vositasi sifatida emas, balki yordam so'rash, safarga taklif qilish, ehtiyoj va his-tuyg'ularni*

ifodalash, jamoaviy rejalar tuzish, maslahat berish, buyruq berish hamda kelajakdagi harakat uchun majburiyat olish vositasi sifatida foydalanishi o‘rganiladi. Tahlil nutq aktlari nazariyasiga hamda pragmatik ma’no yondashuvlariga, xususan, illokutsion aktlarning assertiv, direktiv, komissiv va ekspressiv turlariga asoslanadi. Tadqiqot natijalari “Susambil” ertagida pragmatik ma’no syujet rivoji va qahramonlar o‘rtasidagi munosabatlar bilan chambarchas bog‘liqligini ko‘rsatadi. Yordam so‘rash oziq-ovqat bilan bo‘lishishga, takliflar sayohatchilar jamoasining shakllanishiga, Susambil haqidagi takroriy tasvirlar esa erkinlik, farovonlik va osoyishtalik haqidagi umumiy tasavvurning shakllanishiga xizmat qiladi. Bo‘rilar ishtirokidagi dialoglarda esa bevosita buyruqlar orqali ierarxik munosabatlar namoyon bo‘ladi. Shuningdek, takror, murojaat shakllari, obrazli ifodalar va madaniy jihatdan tanish birliklar pragmatik mazmunni shakllantirishda muhim rol o‘ynaydi. Tarjima nuqtayi nazaridan, asliyatdagi gaplarning faqat mazmunini emas, balki ularning kommunikativ va illokutsion kuchini ham saqlash muhimligi aniqlanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: *pragmatika, o‘zbek xalq ertagi, “Susambil”, nutq aktlari, direktivlar, komissivlar, assertivlar, tarjima, kommunikativ strategiyalar*

Аннотация. *В данной статье исследуются прагматические особенности узбекской народной сказки «Сусамбир» посредством качественного анализа отдельных коммуникативных эпизодов в английском переводе, подготовленном для настоящего исследования. Основное внимание уделяется тому, как персонажи используют язык не только для передачи информации, но и для просьб о помощи, приглашения к совместному путешествию, выражения потребностей и эмоций, формирования коллективных планов, выражения совета, отдачи приказов и принятия обязательств относительно будущих действий. Теоретической основой исследования являются теория речевых актов и прагматические подходы к значению, в частности классификация иллокутивных актов на ассертивы, директивы, комиссивы и экспрессивы. Результаты показывают, что прагматическое значение в сказке «Сусамбир» тесно связано с развитием сюжета и взаимоотношениями между персонажами. Просьбы приводят к взаимопомощи, приглашения способствуют формированию сообщества путешественников, а повторяющиеся описания Сусамбира создают общее представление о свободе, благополучии и безопасности. В диалогах с волками, напротив, прямые приказы отражают иерархический характер отношений. Кроме*

того, повтор, формы обращения, образные выражения и культурно значимые ссылки участвуют в формировании прагматического значения. С точки зрения перевода сохранение коммуникативной силы высказываний является не менее важным, чем передача их пропозиционального содержания. Исследование показывает, что прагматический анализ может служить эффективным инструментом для изучения узбекских фольклорных текстов и их переводов на английский язык.

Ключевые слова: *прагматика, узбекская народная сказка, «Сусамбир», речевые акты, директивы, комиссивы, ассертивы, перевод, коммуникативные стратегии*

INTRODUCTION

Folk tales are not only narrative texts that preserve traditional plots, characters, and cultural values; they are also forms of communication in which characters use language to perform particular social and interpersonal actions. A character may ask for help, make a promise, give an order, offer advice, invite another character to join a group, or express fear and happiness. Therefore, the interpretation of a folk tale requires attention not only to what is said but also to what speakers accomplish through their utterances.

This relationship between language and action is central to pragmatics and Speech Act Theory. Austin (1962) established an important foundation for the study of utterances as actions, distinguishing different dimensions of what speakers do through language. Searle (1976) subsequently developed a classification of illocutionary acts that includes representatives or assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Pragmatic interpretation also concerns the relationship between an utterance and its context, including communicative intentions, interpersonal relations, implied meanings, and principles governing interaction. Leech (1983), for example, connects pragmatic interpretation with communicative goals, politeness, indirectness, and the relationship between linguistic form and pragmatic force.

The Uzbek folk tale “Susambil” provides a particularly useful text for pragmatic investigation because its plot is developed through frequent interactions among anthropomorphized animals. The donkey, ox, rooster, mice, bees, and wolves do not merely participate in events; they communicate their problems, negotiate relationships, make decisions, invite one another, formulate strategies, and react to threats.

The English translation prepared for the present research makes these communicative actions accessible to contemporary readers. However, translation involves more than transferring lexical and grammatical meanings from one language into another. A translator must also consider the pragmatic force of an utterance. Newmark (1988), in his discussion of translation, emphasizes the importance of communicative considerations when transferring meaning between languages.

The present study therefore focuses on the following research questions:

1. What types of speech acts are prominent in the dialogue of "Susambil"?

2. How do requests, invitations, advice, commands, and commissive expressions influence the development of the narrative?

3. How does repeated description of Susambil construct a shared communicative ideal?

4. How do social relationships influence the pragmatic interpretation of the characters' utterances?

5. What aspects of pragmatic meaning should be preserved when the tale is translated into English?

The aim of the study is to identify and interpret the major pragmatic features of "Susambil" by examining authentic utterances from the English translation prepared for this research.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative pragmatic analysis based on close reading of the English translation of "Susambil." The translation itself serves as the textual corpus for the analysis. Rather than examining individual words in isolation, the research considers utterances within their communicative situations.

The analysis follows the principle that the pragmatic interpretation of an utterance depends on several interconnected factors: the speaker, the addressee, the communicative situation, the intended action, the expected response, and the subsequent effect on the narrative.

The principal theoretical framework is Speech Act Theory. Following Searle's classification, the analysis distinguishes among assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives, while questions and invitations are examined according to their contextual function.

***Table 1**- The following analytical categories were used:*

Pragmatic category	Main function	Example from "Susambil"

Directive / request	Attempts to make the hearer perform an action	"Please, can you give me some of your food!"
Directive / invitation	Encourages participation in a joint activity	"Come along!"
Question	Requests information or opens decision-making	"What should we do?"
Advice	Recommends a particular course of action	"It is better not to run."
Directive / command	Directly controls another character's action	"Stop fighting!"
Commissive	Commits the speaker to future action	"Leave the rest to me!"
Assertive	Presents information or belief	"There is plenty of thick, green grass and clean, clear water there."
Expressive	Communicates emotional evaluation	"How unfair this is!"

The study also considers repetition, forms of address, figurative language, and culturally marked references. These elements are important because pragmatic meaning may be produced cumulatively rather than by a single utterance.

Particular attention is given to the repeated description of Susambil. The donkey describes the destination to different groups of animals, and this repetition contributes to the formation of a common image of the desired destination.

RESULTS

Requests and Expressions of Need

One of the clearest pragmatic patterns in "Susambil" is the use of requests to establish interpersonal cooperation.

When the ox meets the donkey and explains his situation, he says:

"Hey, my friend. I am very hungry. Don't you feel sorry for me? Please, can you give me some of your food!"

This utterance contains several communicative functions. First, "I am very hungry" functions as an assertive because the ox describes his condition. Second, "Don't you feel sorry for me?" appeals to the donkey's sympathy and has an

interpersonal function. Finally, "Please, can you give me some of your food!" functions as a directive request.

The expression "my friend" is also pragmatically significant. It establishes familiarity and reduces interpersonal distance. The request is consequently not presented as a purely transactional demand. It is framed as an appeal from one suffering companion to another.

The narrative response confirms the pragmatic success of the utterance: the donkey feels sorry for the ox and shares his food. Thus, the speech act directly produces a change in the narrative situation.

Invitations and the Construction of Solidarity

Invitations represent another important pragmatic feature. When characters meet during the journey, the donkey repeatedly invites them to join the group.

For example:

"Of course! I was alone, but now there will be two of us. Come along!"

Later, after the ox joins the journey, the donkey says:

"Of course! It's good that you came. We were two, and now we are three. Come along!" – Albatta, kelganing yaxshi bo'libdi, 2 ta edik, 3 ta bo'ldik, yuraver!

The imperative "Come along!" is grammatically direct, but its pragmatic force is not aggressive. It functions as an invitation to participate in a common activity.

The repeated numerical progression—two, three, and later five—also has a narrative and pragmatic function. Each new character is linguistically incorporated into the group. The journey therefore becomes not simply physical movement toward Susambil but the gradual construction of a community.

This demonstrates that a directive form does not necessarily express authority. Its pragmatic interpretation depends on the social context. Among the travelling animals, the directive is associated with inclusion and solidarity.

Repeated Description of Susambil as a Shared Ideal

The donkey repeatedly describes Susambil to animals who are considering joining the journey:

"Susambil is a wonderful place. There is plenty of thick, green grass and clean, clear water there. Everyone lives freely, and nobody bothers anyone else. There is no suffering or sadness. There is plenty of food, and you can always have a full stomach."

Although these sentences are primarily assertive in form, their pragmatic function extends beyond information transmission.

The description contrasts Susambil with the characters' previous experiences:

- hunger → abundance of food;
- oppression → freedom;
- suffering → happiness;
- insecurity → peaceful living.

Consequently, Susambil becomes a shared communicative ideal. The characters are not simply told where to go; they are given a reason to desire the destination.

The repetition of this description strengthens its persuasive function. Each new group hears a similar account and becomes interested in joining the journey. The pragmatic meaning is therefore cumulative: repetition gradually transforms Susambil from a geographical destination into a symbol of collective well-being.

Questions and Collective Decision-Making

Questions in the tale frequently function as mechanisms for organizing collective action.

When the travelling animals encounter the wolves, they ask:

"What should we do? Should we run away or stay here?"

The question is not simply an attempt to obtain factual information. It opens a process of collective decision-making.

The donkey then responds:

"If we run, they will chase us and catch us. It is better not to run."

The first sentence presents a predicted consequence and therefore has an assertive function. The second sentence functions as advice. Rather than issuing an unexplained command, the donkey provides a reason for his recommendation.

The dialogue subsequently develops into a coordinated strategy. Each animal is assigned a different role. The rooster will hide in a tree, the mice will dig a hole, the donkey will bray, and the bees will attack the wolves.

Thus, questioning becomes part of a larger pragmatic sequence:

question → reasoning → advice → planning → coordinated action.

This sequence demonstrates how dialogue functions as a mechanism for moving the plot forward.

Directives and Commissives in Collective Planning

The collective strategy is reinforced by the following utterance:

"Then you bees should sting them with all your strength! Leave the rest to me!"

The first clause is a directive. The ox tells the bees what action they should perform.

The second clause, "Leave the rest to me!", has a commissive function. The speaker commits himself to performing the remaining part of the plan.

Table 2 — *The two speech acts therefore complement one another:*

Utterance	Speech act	Pragmatic function
"You bees should sting them…"	Directive	Assigns responsibility
"Leave the rest to me!"	Commissive	Assumes responsibility

This combination is significant because successful collective action requires both task allocation and commitment. The dialogue does not merely describe the plan; it performs the social work necessary to organize it.

Commands and Power Relations among the Wolves

The communicative behavior of the wolves contrasts with that of the travelling animals.

When the wolf king sees his subordinates fighting, he says:

"Hey, you fools! Stop fighting! Both of you go and bring them here!"

The imperatives "Stop fighting!" and "go and bring them here!" are direct directives. Unlike the invitations used among the travelling animals, these directives express authority.

The wolf king does not negotiate with the other wolves or present alternative possibilities. He directly determines their behavior.

Later, he says:

"Then get ready! We are leaving!"

Again, the imperative expresses authority and immediately changes the behavior of the group.

Table 3 — *The contrast can therefore be summarized as follows:*

Group	Typical directive function	Social relationship
Travelling animals	Invitation, cooperation, task coordination	Relatively cooperative
Wolves	Command, control, obedience	Hierarchical

This contrast shows that the same grammatical form—especially the imperative—can acquire different pragmatic meanings depending on the social relationship between participants.

Figurative Language and Cultural Interpretation

The wolves' description of their encounter with the animals demonstrates another important pragmatic feature. One wolf says:

"One of them was like Munkar and Nakir, the two angels who question people after death."

Another character compares one of the animals to Azrael, the angel of death.

These comparisons cannot be interpreted purely literally. They reflect the wolves' frightened perception of the events.

The cultural references are particularly significant because Munkar and Nakir and Azrael belong to a religious-cultural knowledge system familiar to the intended cultural audience. The comparisons transform ordinary animal behavior into something supernatural and frightening.

The pragmatic meaning therefore emerges from the interaction between:

literal event + cultural knowledge + speaker's emotional interpretation.

For an English-language reader who may not share the same cultural background, the reference may require contextual support. This demonstrates one of the challenges involved in translating culturally embedded pragmatic meaning.

Translation and Pragmatic Equivalence

Translation of folk narratives involves not only lexical equivalence but also the transfer of communicative functions. Newmark's work on translation emphasizes the importance of communicative meaning in the translation process.

In "Susambil," several pragmatic functions should remain recognizable in translation:

"Please, can you give me some of your food!" should remain a request;

"Come along!" should retain its inviting function;

"What should we do?" should continue to open collective decision-making;

"It is better not to run." should retain its advisory force;

"Stop fighting!" should remain a direct command;

"Leave the rest to me!" should preserve its commissive force.

The repeated description of Susambil also deserves particular attention. Since repetition gradually constructs the image of an ideal place, excessive variation in the translation could weaken this cumulative pragmatic effect.

Therefore, pragmatic equivalence involves preserving not only what an utterance says, but also what the utterance does in the communicative situation.

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrate that pragmatic features in "Susambil" are closely integrated with narrative structure. Speech acts are not decorative elements added to the story; they frequently constitute the mechanisms through which events occur.

The ox's request leads to the sharing of food. The donkey's invitations enlarge the travelling group. Questions initiate collective decision-making. Advice contributes to the formation of a defensive strategy. Directives distribute responsibilities. Commissives establish individual responsibility. Commands among the wolves reveal hierarchical organization.

These findings correspond with the central insight of Speech Act Theory that language can function as action. Austin's work established the theoretical foundation for considering utterances in terms of the actions performed through them, while Searle systematized major illocutionary categories.

The analysis also supports a broader pragmatic understanding of meaning. Leech (1983) treats pragmatic interpretation in relation to communicative goals and social interaction, which is particularly relevant to the dialogue of "Susambil."

Another important finding concerns solidarity. The travelling animals do not form a community through a single declaration. Their community develops gradually through repeated invitations, shared problems, mutual assistance, and collective planning. Language consequently reflects and constructs social relationships at the same time.

The repeated descriptions of Susambil have a similar cumulative effect. At first, Susambil is introduced as a place with food and water. Through repetition, however, it becomes associated with freedom, safety, happiness, and freedom from suffering. The destination thus functions as both a physical place and a shared communicative representation of a better life.

The wolf episode provides a useful contrast. Among the travellers, directives are generally associated with cooperation and task-sharing. Among the wolves, directives are connected with authority. This contrast demonstrates that pragmatic meaning cannot be determined by grammatical form alone. Context and interpersonal relations are essential.

The analysis additionally highlights the importance of cultural knowledge in interpreting figurative language. References to Munkar and Nakir and Azrael depend on cultural associations that extend beyond literal lexical meaning. Such references may therefore create a pragmatic challenge in translation because the target reader may not automatically possess the same background knowledge.

From a translation perspective, the findings suggest that the translator should pay attention to at least four dimensions:

illocutionary force — whether an utterance is a request, command, invitation, advice, or commitment;

interpersonal relationship — whether the speakers are cooperating, negotiating, or exercising authority;

repetition and discourse cohesion — whether repeated expressions contribute to a developing pragmatic meaning;

cultural references — whether culturally specific expressions retain their communicative significance in the target language.

Grice's work on conversational meaning is also relevant because pragmatic interpretation frequently requires readers to infer more than is explicitly stated. The meaning of the characters' utterances consequently depends on contextual assumptions, shared knowledge, and the consequences of what they say.

The study is limited by its focus on one folk tale and on the English translation prepared for the research. A more extensive investigation could compare the Uzbek source text directly with the English translation and examine cases of pragmatic preservation, modification, explicitation, and loss.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of "Susambil" demonstrates that pragmatic meaning plays a central role in the organization of the folk-tale narrative. The characters' utterances perform concrete communicative actions that influence both interpersonal relationships and the development of the plot.

Requests function as mechanisms of assistance and sympathy; invitations construct solidarity and gradually expand the travelling community; questions open processes of collective decision-making; advice provides reasons for particular actions; directives distribute responsibilities; and commissives express commitment to future action. The wolf episode demonstrates that commands can also reflect hierarchical social relations.

The repeated description of Susambil has a broader pragmatic function. Through repetition, the place becomes associated with freedom, abundance, safety, happiness, and collective well-being. Susambil therefore operates not only as the destination of the journey but also as a shared communicative ideal.

The study further demonstrates that pragmatic interpretation depends on context, interpersonal relations, cultural knowledge, and figurative meaning. Consequently, the translation of a folk tale requires attention not only to lexical

and grammatical equivalence but also to the communicative force of individual utterances and larger discourse patterns.

Overall, the case of "Susambil" demonstrates the usefulness of pragmatic analysis for the study of Uzbek folk narratives. Speech acts provide a particularly productive framework for examining how characters communicate, construct relationships, organize collective action, and express culturally meaningful values. Further research comparing the original Uzbek text with its English translation could reveal how pragmatic meanings are preserved, modified, or lost during translation and could contribute to a broader understanding of pragmatic features in Uzbek folklore.

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