LINGUISTIC INDICATORS OF SINCERE AND INSINCERE APOLOGIES IN UZBEK INTERACTION: A PRAGMATIC ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. The article proposes a linguistic framework for distinguishing accountable and potentially evasive apologies in Uzbek interaction without claiming direct access to a speaker's inner sincerity. Based on apology research and interpersonal pragmatics, it examines explicit responsibility, reference to harm, excuses, repair offers, temporal commitments, and recipient-oriented follow-up. Constructed dialogue pairs illustrate why the same formula, including uzr and aybga buyurmang, may function differently across contexts. A six-parameter assessment matrix separates observable evidence from interpretive uncertainty. The paper argues that sincerity is an interactional inference supported by coherent speech and subsequent conduct, not a property mechanically encoded by a single word.

Keywords: apology; sincerity; insincerity; Uzbek pragmatics; accountability; discourse analysis

ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ПОКАЗАТЕЛИ ИСКРЕННИХ И НЕИСКРЕННИХ ИЗВИНЕНИЙ В УЗБЕКСКОМ ОБЩЕНИИ: ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЕ КРИТЕРИИ ОЦЕНКИ

Аннотация. В статье предложена модель анализа лингвистических индикаторов искреннего и потенциально неискреннего извинения в узбекском общении. В центре внимания эксплицитное признание ответственности, обозначение ущерба, характер оправданий, предложение исправления, обязательства на будущее и реакция адресата. Сконструированные диалоги показывают, что одна и та же формула uzr или aybga buyurmang может иметь различную прагматическую силу. Шестипараметрическая матрица разграничивает наблюдаемые признаки речи и неопределённость оценки внутреннего состояния говорящего. Искренность рассматривается как контекстная интерпретация, а не однозначно распознаваемое свойство отдельного слова.

Ключевые слова: извинение; искренность; неискренность; узбекская прагматика; ответственность; дискурс

O‘ZBEK MULOQOTIDA SAMIMIY VA NOSAMIMIY KECHIRIMNING LINGVISTIK INDIKATORLARI

Annotatsiya. Maqolada o‘zbek muloqotida samimiy va nosamimiy kechirimni baholashga xizmat qiluvchi lingvistik indikatorlar tahlil etiladi. Xatoni ochiq tan olish, yetkazilgan zararni nomlash, bahona mazmuni, tuzatish taklifi, kelgusidagi majburiyat va suhbatdosh javobi asosida olti mezonli tahlil matritsasi ishlab chiqiladi. Mualliflik dialoglari «uzr» yoki «aybga buyurmang» kabi bir xil formulalar vaziyatga qarab turlicha pragmatik ma’no olishini ko‘rsatadi. Samimiylik alohida so‘zdan bevosita aniqlanadigan xususiyat emas, balki nutq va keyingi harakat izchilligidan chiqariladigan ehtiyotkor xulosa sifatida talqin qilinadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: uzr so‘rash; samimiylik; nosamimiylik; pragmatika; mas’uliyat; nutqiy indikator

INTRODUCTION

An apology is often judged not merely by whether it was uttered but by whether it was meant. Yet sincerity is an internal evaluation to which a discourse analyst has no direct access. The observable material consists of linguistic choices, sequential responses, relevant context and, if ethically available, subsequent conduct. This distinction is particularly important in Uzbek communication, where conventional forms such as uzr, kechirasiz, aybga buyurmang and afv eting can perform several related functions. The lexicographic description of uzr includes both an appeal for pardon and an explanation or excuse, so identical forms need not perform identical actions [8].

The research problem is thus not to develop a detector of hidden feelings. It is to specify which publicly interpretable signs make an apology more or less accountable under particular circumstances. Established speech-act research identifies components of remedial speech and emphasizes the dependence of apology strategy on interactional setting [1] [2]. Building on that foundation, this article offers a six-parameter framework for examining consistency between acknowledgment of harm, responsibility and practical redress. Its contribution is methodological: it replaces categorical claims such as "the word lekin proves insincerity" with a structured assessment of discourse evidence and alternative interpretations. In this regard, the framework distinguishes between conventional politeness and substantive accountability. A speaker may use respectful expressions while avoiding direct responsibility, whereas a less elaborate apology may demonstrate accountability through explicit acknowledgment and corrective action. The analysis therefore examines the relationship between lexical form, communicative intention as inferred from context, and the recipient's response. It also considers how social hierarchy, familiarity and the seriousness of the offence shape the interpretation of apologetic expressions. By integrating these dimensions, the study aims to provide a context-sensitive account of apology practices in Uzbek discourse without treating individual linguistic markers as definitive evidence of sincerity.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND QUALITATIVE METHOD

The realization of apologies has been studied through explicit apology markers, explanations, acceptance of blame, promises of restraint and offers of repair [1]. Ogiermann's cross-cultural comparison shows that strategies carry culture-specific face implications rather than fixed global degrees of politeness [3]. The interactional aspect is equally important: the recipient may accept, reject, question or postpone a proposed repair. Face-work is therefore a joint accomplishment, even when responsibility rests asymmetrically with the offender [4]. A claim of sincerity must be anchored in this interpersonal sequence rather than derived from lexical politeness alone.

The present study is conceptual and qualitative. It relies on verified linguistic scholarship, dictionary entries and a set of author-constructed Uzbek utterances; the examples are demonstrations of possible contrasts, not recordings or a statistically representative dataset. Each pair is assessed for (1) specification of the wrong, (2) unambiguous assumption of responsibility, (3) acknowledgment of the recipient's experience, (4) explanation versus blame-shifting, (5) a feasible remedy or non-repetition commitment, and (6) the recipient's uptake and later follow-through. None of these indicators, alone or in combination, can establish the speaker's private mental state with certainty. Their value is to make analytic reasoning transparent and contestable [7]. Furthermore, the analysis compares how different apology formulations may influence the possibility of restoring interpersonal trust. Particular attention is given to the relationship between verbal acknowledgment and practical corrective action, since an apology may remain incomplete if it is not supported by subsequent behaviour. The qualitative approach also considers contextual factors, including social distance, age relations, family roles and communicative expectations. These dimensions help explain why identical expressions may produce different interpretations across situations. Thus, the proposed framework examines apologies not as

isolated speech acts, but as context-dependent communicative processes involving responsibility, emotional recognition and the potential reconstruction of social relationships.

LINGUISTIC INDICATORS AND CONTRASTIVE EXAMPLES

The first indicator is specificity. Compare «Uzr» with «Kecha yig‘ilishga kelmadim, sizlarni kutdirib qo‘ydim, uzr». The second utterance identifies an event and its consequence; it is therefore easier for an addressee to evaluate. However, a short conventional apology may be entirely appropriate after a minor accidental interruption. Brevity cannot be treated as guilt avoidance without information about the seriousness of the incident. The second indicator is responsibility: «Bu mening xatom edi» acknowledges agency, while «Xato bo‘libdi» uses a less agentive structure. The latter is not automatically dishonest; it may describe uncertainty or a shared process rather than personal evasion.

The third indicator is recognition of harm, rather than simple recognition of an event. «Sizning ishingiz kechikkanini tushunaman» names the affected party’s situation, while «Shunaqa bo‘lib qoldi» may leave it unnamed. This contrast matters when the injured person wants their experience acknowledged. The fourth indicator concerns explanations. A reason can clarify responsibility without erasing it: «Vaqtni noto‘g‘ri hisobladim, bu men tomondan xato» is compatible with accountability. The adversative particle in «Uzr, lekin men xabarni ko‘rmaganman» is not, by itself, evidence of insincerity. It becomes more problematic if a speaker uses it repeatedly to deny well-established responsibility or redirect blame to the injured party.

The fifth indicator is the repair commitment. A promise such as «Ertaga hujjatning to‘g‘rilangan nusxasini yuboraman» is more verifiable than «Boshqa bunaqa bo‘lmaydi» when the latter lacks a plan. Nevertheless, feasibility matters: an elaborate but unrealistic promise can undermine credibility. The sixth indicator is sequential coherence. An addressee may respond «Mayli, lekin avval hujjatni tekshirib olaylik», which neither wholly rejects the apology nor restores trust immediately. The analyst should track whether the promised remedy is completed rather than code the initial answer as full forgiveness. At the same time, recipients are not morally obliged to forgive solely because a speaker has made an apparently good apology [6].

Expressive cues also require caution. Downcast eyes, a quiet voice, pauses and emotional intensifiers may accompany regret, but they may also arise from anxiety, embarrassment, communication style or institutional pressure. In a text message, their absence says little. An exaggerated formula «Chin dildan ming bor uzr!» may be heartfelt in one relationship and formulaic in another. For this reason, the framework gives greatest analytical weight to reference to harm, responsibility, attainable redress and consistent follow-up, while treating prosody and intensification as contextual rather than decisive evidence [5] [9].

DISCUSSION: WHY BINARY DIAGNOSES FAIL

A binary sincere/insincere label conceals a spectrum of observable cases. One speaker may regret the injury but disagree about the factual explanation; another may apologize under organizational rules and later perform a genuine repair; a third may employ impressive emotional language without changing conduct. These cases cannot responsibly be classified on the basis of one conventional phrase. It is more defensible to annotate the interaction as showing high, moderate or limited discursive accountability and to record the grounds of that assessment. This terminology describes evidence rather than claiming psychological certainty.

For subsequent empirical research, participants should be asked how they interpreted specific turns rather than invited to guess another person’s “true heart.” Analysts could examine naturally occurring, consented conversations and annotate whether the offense was acknowledged, what remedy was proposed, and how that remedy unfolded over time. Cross-checking the interpretation with participants would help avoid outsider assumptions about culturally appropriate indirectness. A longitudinal design is especially valuable because behavioral follow-through cannot be evaluated at the

moment an apology is spoken [3]. The proposed framework demonstrates that apology assessment requires a multidimensional and context-sensitive approach. Although the six indicators provide a structured basis for examining linguistic and interactional evidence, they should not be interpreted as a universal checklist with identical weight in every situation. The seriousness of the offence, the relationship between participants and the communicative setting may influence which indicators become most relevant. For example, explicit responsibility may be particularly important when the speaker has caused direct harm, whereas a feasible corrective action may carry greater significance when material consequences are involved. Importantly, the recipient's refusal to accept an apology does not automatically establish that the apology was insincere. Similarly, accepting an apology does not necessarily mean that trust has been fully restored. These distinctions highlight the need to separate apology production, recipient response and subsequent relational outcomes. The framework therefore offers researchers a practical instrument for describing degrees of discursive accountability while preserving the complexity of human interaction and avoiding unsupported judgments about individual intentions.

Table 1. **Six-parameter framework for accountable apology analysis**

Analytical indicator	**Potentially accountable form**	**Possible warning sign**	**Necessary qualification**
Specificity	Names event and consequence	Only generic formula	Generic can fit minor offense
Responsibility	"Bu mening xatom"	Repeated impersonal blame	Responsibility may be shared
Recipient's harm	Acknowledges inconvenience	Minimizes injury	Impact may be disputed
Explanation	Explains without deflecting	Blames addressee	Valid reasons are legitimate
Repair	Feasible, testable action	Vague or impossible pledge	Later action must be checked
Uptake	Responds to addressee's concern	Demands immediate pardon	Acceptance is not compulsory

CONCLUSION

Uzbek apologies can be analysed for sincerity-related evidence only through context-sensitive and explicit criteria. The six proposed parameters distinguish accountability, orientation to harm and practical repair while preserving room for uncertainty. No single lexical marker including uzr, lekin or chin dildan reliably identifies an internal moral state. The framework is best used for qualitative discourse interpretation and, after empirical validation, for coding interpersonal repair sequences. Its ethical implication is to assess what people say and do without presenting linguistic inference as psychological proof. Furthermore, the proposed approach highlights the importance of examining apologies as dynamic communicative processes rather than isolated verbal expressions. The relationship between the speaker's acknowledgment of responsibility, the recipient's reaction and subsequent corrective behaviour provides a more comprehensive basis for interpretation. In Uzbek interaction, cultural expectations, social hierarchy, interpersonal distance and situational context may also influence how apologetic expressions are formulated and understood. Therefore, researchers should avoid applying universal assumptions without considering locally established communicative practices. Future studies may expand this framework through corpus-based investigations, recorded

interpersonal interactions and interviews with participants. Such research would help identify frequently occurring apology strategies, examine their pragmatic functions and test the applicability of the six parameters across different social contexts. Ultimately, the framework contributes to Uzbek pragmatics by offering a systematic and ethically responsible approach to analysing apology, accountability and interpersonal relationship repair.

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