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THE PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF THE "HAND" CONCEPT IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LINGUOCULTURE

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Abstract: this article investigates the linguocultural and pragmatic potential of the somatic concept "hand" (qo'l) in English and Uzbek speech communities. Operating within the framework of modern anthropocentric linguistics, the study explores how a physical body part functions as a complex cultural code capable of generating diverse pragmatic meanings in discourse. Through a contrastive analysis of idiomatic expressions, communicative routines, and behavioral formulas, the paper outlines how the English "hand" prioritizes pragmatic values of individual autonomy, agency, and socioeconomic status, while the Uzbek "qo'l" possesses a high pragmatic potential for expressing social hierarchy, ethical boundaries (andoza), and communal solidarity. The findings contribute to the fields of contrastive pragmalinguistics and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Pragmatic potential, Linguoculture, somatic code, concept of "hand", anthropocentric Linguistics, English, Uzbek.

In contemporary cognitive and cultural linguistics, the human body is viewed not merely as a biological entity, but as a primary source domain for conceptualizing the world. Somatisms - words denoting body parts - form the oldest layer of vocabulary and function as powerful cultural codes. Among these, the concept of "hand" occupies a central position due to its unique role in human labor, social interaction, and non-verbal communication.

The pragmatic potential of a linguistic concept refers to its capacity to convey implicit meaning, evoke specific cultural associations, and influence the interlocutor's behavior within a speech act. While the physical functions of the hand are universal, its pragmatic potential is strictly dictated by the linguoculture in which it operates. This paper aims to reveal how the English "hand" and the Uzbek "qo'l" generate distinct pragmatic effects based on their respective cultural worldviews.

Linguoculture shapes how a speech community interprets metaphorical and pragmatic extensions of body parts. According to the theory of embodiment, human conceptual systems are deeply grounded in physical experience. However, when bodily experiences cross into the social sphere, they undergo cultural filtering. In pragmatics, invoking the "hand" in discourse is rarely just about the physical limb; instead, it triggers a matrix of expectations, obligations, rights, and power dynamics specific to that culture.

In English discourse, the pragmatic potential of the "hand" concept is heavily actualized in contexts involving individual responsibility, procedural control, economic efficiency, and legal clarity.

Western linguoculture highly values individual agency and self-reliance. Consequently, the English "hand" is often used pragmatically to define boundaries of personal control or vulnerability:

"To wash one's hands of [a situation]": This expression carries a strong pragmatic function of absolving oneself from moral or professional responsibility. By uttering this, a speaker disengages from a speech act or conflict.

"To tie someone's hands": Pragmatically used to signal a lack of options due to external constraints (e.g., "I want to help you, but my hands are tied" serves as a polite, face-saving refusal in professional interactions).

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The English concept possesses a high utilitarian potential, treating the hand as an instrument of economic output and survival:

"To live from hand to mouth": Beyond its literal meaning of poverty, in discourse, it evaluates a stressful, immediate survival state, emphasizing a lack of long-term security.

"A hand-me-down": Pragmatically categorizes objects within a specific socioeconomic frame, indicating secondary value and family succession.

In the Uzbek language space, the pragmatic potential of "qo‘l" is deeply intertwined with the Eastern communicative paradigm, which prioritizes collective orientation, social hierarchy (hurmat-izzat), and ritualized etiquette.

In Uzbek speech acts, mentioning or physical positioning of the hand serves as a continuous marker of the speaker's and listener's social status:

"Qo‘li ko‘ksida" (Hand on the chest): This concept possesses a massive pragmatic potential for non-verbal and verbal politeness. It represents the ultimate speech act of welcoming, honoring, or showing submissiveness to elders, guests, or authorities. In discourse, saying "U doimo qo‘li ko‘ksida" evaluates a person's high moral breeding (tarbiya).

"Oq yuvib, oq taramoq" vs. "Qo‘lini duoga ochmoq": The hand of a parent or elder is linguoculturally sanctified. Pragmatically, an elder opening their hands for a blessing (duo) is a powerful speech genre in Uzbek culture that seals agreements, protects journeys, and establishes spiritual harmony.

Uzbek culture is high-context and collectivist. Here, the hand represents how an individual relates to the community:

"Qo‘li uzun" (Long-handed) vs. "Qo‘li kalta" (Short-handed): While "short-handed" in English might imply a lack of personnel, in Uzbek, "qo‘li kalta" pragmatically serves as a face-saving, euphemistic speech tool to express financial inability without using harsh or shameful words. Conversely, "qo‘li uzun" implies heavy social influence, networking, or power.

"Qo‘li ochiqlik" (Open-handedness): Pragmatically functions as the ultimate praise for hospitality (mehmondo‘stlik), which is a core value of the Uzbek national identity.

To clearly observe how the same somatic domain yields completely different pragmatic vectors, we can map their primary functional manifestations:

Pragmatic Category	English Linguoculture ("Hand")	Uzbek Linguoculture ("Qo‘l")
Speaker's Intent	To assert or deny personal accountability, efficiency, and legal clarity.	To demonstrate respect, evaluate moral character, and maintain social harmony.
Conflict Resolution	Individualized boundaries ("Keep your hands off", "Wash hands").	Communal or behavioral mediation ("Qo‘l berish" - reconciliation/allegiance).
Socioeconomic Euphemism	Focuses on physical labor and survival immediacy ("Hand to mouth").	Focuses on social reach, capability, and familial dignity ("Qo‘li kalta").

The comparative analysis of the pragmatic potential of the "hand" concept in English and Uzbek linguocultures confirms that somatic vocabulary acts as an active vehicle for cultural values. The

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English "hand" is highly pragmatized around the axis of individual agency, systemic control, and functional utility. On the contrary, the Uzbek "qo‘l" expands its pragmatic potential into the realms of interpersonal ethics, traditional etiquette, and hierarchical respect. For international scholars, translators, and cross-cultural specialists, recognizing these subtle pragmatic undercurrents is essential, as misinterpreting a somatic code can lead to profound communicative failures in intercultural dialogue.

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