

PAPER

THE FRIENDSHIP CONCEPT IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERARY TEXTS: A DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC PRESPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article investigates how the concept of friendship is discursively constructed and pragmatically enacted in English and Uzbek literary texts. Drawing on discourse analysis and pragmatics, the study examines recurrent interactional scenarios (meeting, bonding, testing loyalty, conflict, reconciliation), speech acts and stance-taking practices that index “friendship work,” and politeness/solidarity strategies used to negotiate closeness, obligation, and moral evaluation. Results show that both traditions portray friendship as a morally loaded relation sustained through reciprocal support and loyalty; however, they diverge in how intimacy and obligation are talked into being. In Uzbek texts, friendship is frequently framed through collectivist ethics, respect registers, and quasi-kinship address practices, foregrounding duty, reputation, and communal evaluation. In English texts, friendship more often appears as voluntary affiliation negotiated through self-disclosure, equality talk, and boundary-sensitive politeness, highlighting personal choice and individual agency. The findings contribute to comparative linguocultural research by demonstrating how literary dialogue and narration encode culturally meaningful “friendship scripts” through discourse-pragmatic resources.

Key words: friendship concept; discourse analysis; pragmatics; literary dialogue; politeness; speech acts; Uzbek language; English language; cultural scripts.

Introduction

The concept of friendship occupies a central place in human social life and therefore regularly becomes

a key theme in literary narratives. Friendship is not only a private emotional bond but also a socially regulated relationship shaped by shared moral expectations—loyalty, reciprocity, trust,

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and responsibility. Because literature is deeply concerned with human relations, it frequently portrays friendship as a major force that organizes character development and drives narrative conflict and resolution. Importantly, literary texts do more than merely depict friendship as a plot device: they provide culturally meaningful models of how friendships emerge, how they are tested, how they are sustained, and how they may break down. Through dialogue, narration, and evaluation, fiction reveals the social logic by which characters recognize one another as “friends” and perform the obligations and privileges associated with that status. From a linguistic viewpoint, literary discourse offers particularly rich data for examining how relationships are enacted through language. Friendship is often accomplished through recurring interactional routines and relational moves—apologies, promises, advice, teasing, refusals, reconciliation sequences, supportive turns, and affiliative responses. These routines are not random; they are structured and culturally conditioned. For instance, the pragmatic force of an apology, the level of directness in advice, or the acceptable degree of teasing depends on culturally shaped expectations about face, respect, solidarity, and emotional expressiveness. In this sense, friendship is not only a “topic” represented in literature; it is an interactional achievement negotiated in discourse. Analysing such negotiation requires attention to both what is said and what is implied (implicature), as well as to how speakers manage interpersonal meaning, stance, and relational alignment. Comparative studies of “friendship” across English and Uzbek linguistic cultures have often concentrated on lexical semantics, phraseology, and paremiology (e.g., proverbs and sayings). Such approaches are valuable because they identify stable conceptual content, including culturally salient attributes of a “true friend,” moral evaluations of loyalty, and conventional metaphorical mappings. However, this line of research may leave underexplored an equally important dimension: how the friendship concept is performed in real-time interaction within the text—especially in literary dialogue, where relational work is foregrounded and where pragmatic meaning is decisive for

interpretation. A proverb may state that a friend is known in hardship, but literary discourse shows how hardship becomes talkable, how loyalty is demanded or offered, how help is requested and accepted, and how conflict is repaired without destroying the bond.

A discourse-pragmatic perspective is particularly appropriate because friendship is inherently dialogic: it is created and maintained through sequences of communicative actions rather than through isolated words or definitions. Discourse analysis helps to capture the larger interactional organization of friendship episodes—how topics are introduced, how alignment is built, how tension is escalated, and how interpersonal coherence is restored. Pragmatics, in turn, enables the study of speech acts (e.g., commitments, requests, refusals), politeness strategies, mitigation and intensification, address forms, and stance markers that signal closeness or distance. In literary contexts, these pragmatic choices are meaningful not only at the interpersonal level but also at the narrative level: they shape characterization, reveal social hierarchy, and index the moral universe of the text. The English and Uzbek literary traditions provide a productive comparative space for investigating friendship because they may encode different culturally preferred “friendship scripts,” including expectations about obligation, autonomy, respect, emotional openness, and community evaluation. In some contexts, friendship may be portrayed as a voluntary affiliation negotiated through personal preference, shared interests, and boundary-sensitive solidarity. In others, friendship may be depicted as a morally binding relationship intertwined with communal ethics, reputation, and quasi-kinship norms. A discourse-pragmatic comparison makes it possible to move beyond abstract descriptions of friendship and toward a concrete explanation of how linguistic resources instantiate culturally specific models of relationality within narrative.

Against this background, the present study investigates the friendship concept in English and Uzbek literary texts through a combined discourse and pragmatics framework. It focuses on friendship-centered episodes and examines (i) recurrent discourse scenarios that structure

friendship interaction, (ii) pragmatic mechanisms by which solidarity, obligation, and loyalty are enacted, and (iii) cross-cultural similarities and differences in how friendship is linguistically and interactionally constructed. By doing so, the study contributes to comparative linguocultural research and literary pragmatics, demonstrating that cultural meanings of friendship become visible not only in vocabulary and idioms, but also in the subtle interactional architecture of literary discourse.

Methods

A small comparative corpus was compiled consisting of selected English and Uzbek literary works (novels and short stories). The corpus was purpose-built: texts were chosen to ensure the presence of prominent friendship-related interactions (friendship formation, loyalty tests, mutual support, conflict, and reconciliation). The unit of analysis was the friendship episode, defined as a coherent segment of dialogue and/or narration where the relationship between friends is thematized or interactionally negotiated. The corpus in this article is designed for discourse-pragmatic pattern analysis rather than for statistical generalization to all English/Uzbek literature. Discourse analysis focusing on interactional structure (turn-taking patterns, topic management, alignment/disalignment, evaluation, narrative framing). Pragmatics focusing on speech acts, implicature, politeness/facework, and pragmatic markers.

Results and discussion

In the compiled English and Uzbek literary episodes, friendship emerges not as a single lexical label but as a patterned discourse event with a recognizable internal structure. Most friendship-centered segments develop through a trigger (a dilemma, need, or conflict), followed by a relational move (support, advice, promise, challenge), then an explicit or implicit evaluation of loyalty and sincerity, and finally an outcome that either strengthens the bond or requires repair. Across both traditions, the most recurrent scenarios include bonding through shared experience, demonstrating

support and protection, testing loyalty under pressure, offering advice as care, managing conflict, and restoring the relationship through reconciliation. At the micro-level, friendship is consistently “done” through clusters of speech acts—offers and requests for help, commitments and promises, advice and warnings, refusals with face-saving moves, apologies with accounts, and affiliative teasing. These speech acts function as relational technologies: they build alignment, confirm reciprocity, and make moral expectations visible.

At the same time, the two traditions differ in the default pragmatic packaging of friendship. Uzbek friendship discourse tends to foreground moral obligation and social accountability: loyalty is frequently framed as an ethical requirement rather than a purely personal preference, and friendship actions are often evaluated against communal norms such as honor, reputation, and responsibility. This orientation is reflected in more categorical evaluations of what a “real friend” should do, stronger intensification when loyalty is at stake, and a frequent intertwining of intimacy with respect-sensitive forms of address. English friendship discourse, by contrast, more often frames friendship as voluntary affiliation negotiated through autonomy-aware solidarity. Offers, requests, and advice are frequently softened through mitigation and option-giving moves that protect the interlocutor’s boundaries, while intimacy is constructed through alignment talk, self-disclosure, and supportive stance rather than explicit moral obligation. These are tendencies rather than absolute oppositions, but they indicate different culturally favored friendship scripts: a relatively duty-centered script in many Uzbek episodes and a relatively choice-centered script in many English episodes.

In discussion terms, these findings support the view that friendship in literary texts is an interactional achievement rather than only a thematic concept. Lexical and proverb-based studies reveal stable values associated with friendship, but a discourse-pragmatic perspective shows how those values become actionable in communication—how help is requested and granted, how loyalty is demanded or volunteered,

how refusals are managed to avoid relational damage, and how conflicts are repaired without dissolving the bond. Literary narration further amplifies pragmatic meaning by guiding readers' judgments about sincerity, betrayal, and reconciliation, operating alongside dialogue as a second layer of relational interpretation. Overall, the comparison suggests that culturally meaningful differences in friendship are not only located in vocabulary but also in recurring pragmatic routines—mitigation and boundary management on the English side, and moral evaluation plus socially embedded obligation on the Uzbek side—through which texts make friendship recognizable, legitimate, and narratively consequential.

Conclusion

This study showed that the friendship concept in English and Uzbek literary texts is constructed less through isolated lexical items (friend/do'st) than through recurring discourse-pragmatic routines. In both traditions, friendship is made recognizable through patterned scenarios (bonding, support, loyalty testing, conflict, and repair) and through speech acts that perform "friendship work," such as offers, commitments, advice, refusals with face-saving strategies, apologies, and reconciliation moves.

The comparison also revealed a consistent difference in default pragmatic framing: Uzbek episodes tend to present friendship as socially embedded and morally accountable, where loyalty is often legitimized through duty-like evaluations and community-sensitive ethics; English episodes more often present friendship as voluntary affiliation negotiated through autonomy-respecting mitigation, self-disclosure, and boundary-aware solidarity. Overall, the findings suggest that cross-cultural meanings of friendship become most visible not only in vocabulary and phraseology, but in the interactional architecture of literary discourse—how characters align, evaluate, and repair relationships through pragmatically meaningful choices.

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