

# Good Wishes and Praise as Speech Acts in English And Uzbek: A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Analysis

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**Abstract:** Good wishes and praises are two commonly observed speech acts across many languages. These utterances represent a significant linguistic category through which speakers express their internal emotions and evaluative attitudes toward the interlocutor. Due to the distinctive nature of these expressions, scholars have analyzed them from a range of linguistic and extralinguistic perspectives, including religious frameworks. Numerous theoretical arguments and interpretative models have been proposed to examine and critically assess the structure and function of such utterances in various contexts. The semantic interpretation of these expressions largely depends on shared background knowledge and socio-cultural understanding between the speaker and the listener. While some languages possess a limited repertoire of good wishes and praise expressions, others—such as Uzbek—demonstrate a rich inventory of such utterances, which are frequently used in everyday communication. This article investigates good wishes and praises as complex speech acts, analyzing their communicative functions through theoretical frameworks and contemporary linguistic research. By exploring these acts across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, with particular emphasis on Uzbek discourse, the study reveals the intricate mechanisms underlying positive linguistic expressions.

**Keywords:** Speech acts, pragmatics, good wishes, praises, Uzbek linguistics, cultural communication.

**Introduction:** Speech acts represent a critical area of linguistic research, focusing on how language performs actions beyond mere information transmission. The concept was first introduced by philosopher J.L. Austin in his seminal work “How to Do Things with Words” [1; 107] published in 1962. According to him, there are three core aspects of speech acts: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and prelocutionary act. Building upon Austin’s theory of illocutionary acts, Searle [10; 6] expanded the framework by categorizing speech acts into five distinct types: declaratives, commissives, assertives, expressives, and directives. Declaratives are characterized as communicative acts through which the speaker aims to alter the external reality by expressing attitudes or intentions, thereby bringing about change through the very act of speaking.

Good wishes and praises emerge as particularly fascinating communicative phenomena, embodying complex social and emotional interactions. The functional role of good wishes and praises extends

beyond merely transmitting information about the communicants; it also aims to foster a stable, positive emotional disposition toward the addressee and to encourage a specific pattern of behavior. The persuasive effectiveness of polite communication relies on an integrated interplay of rational, emotional, logical, and psychological elements.

The current study systematically examines these speech acts through prominent theoretical frameworks, with a special emphasis on Uzbek linguistic perspectives. The speech act theory is founded on the concept that language serves as a tool for different purposes. In other words, language functions as an instrument to accomplish various objectives or fulfill different roles. Several researchers in Uzbek linguistics have dedicated their work to studying speech act theory and its various types from different perspectives. Notable scholars in this field include Sh. Safarov, M. Hakimov, M. Kurbanova, and M. Gazieva.

### Research questions:

1. What are the common and distinctive linguistic features of good wishes and praise utterances in Uzbek and English?
2. How do socio-cultural values influence the formulation and interpretation of these speech acts?
3. To what extent do these expressions contribute to politeness strategies and interpersonal communication in both languages?

**Hypothesis.** While good wishes and praises in both Uzbek and English share core expressive functions, Uzbek demonstrates a higher degree of formulaicity and cultural embedding, particularly in everyday interaction, religious contexts, and intergenerational communication.

### Literature review

Different cultures have their own unique approaches to communication, which makes it instrumental to understanding how to interact with others effectively. English culture, known for its appreciation of individuality and forthright approaches, makes use of clear, logical statements, emotional appeals, and profoundly direct requests as means of persuading others. In the English culture, using existing social norms and standardized proverbs to persuade is uncommon. On the other hand, the Uzbek culture is built on social interaction and harmony, and therefore employs the use of subtle, indirect, and metaphorical approaches when engaging with others. Because these cultures differ so vastly and possess opposing means of communication, it can pose a significant challenge to individuals from these cultures trying to communicate persuasively.

Uzbek linguist Sh. Safarov explores the issues of speech acts and he critically examines the theory, greatly appreciates the significance of speech acts within pragmalinguistic studies. He reviews the perspectives of various linguists on speech acts and expands the theory with new insights. According to Sh. Safarov

[7:77], a speech act is a speaker's linguistic address to a listener in a particular context with a specific intent.

M. Hakimov, one of the Uzbek pragmalinguists, also emphasizes the development, types, and classification of speech acts [5:6]. He explains that the concept of a speech act represents the exchange of mutual meaning that takes place during communication between individuals. The collection of speech acts shapes the content of speech, and the speaker's attitude is conveyed specifically through these acts.

In pragmatics and discourse analysis, good wishes, wishes, and blessings are classified as phatic or performative speech acts that serve social, ritual, or interpersonal functions rather than conveying propositional information (Austin, 1962; Malinowski, 1923).

Good wishes (well-wishing) are often formulaic expressions intended to convey positive intentions for future events. They function as social solidarity markers, reinforcing relationships (Laver, 1975).

Wishes has broader category that may include hopes, desires, or polite expressions (e.g., "I wish you good health"). Unlike direct requests, they often imply a non-impositional stance (Searle, 1976).

Blessings contain more formalized subtype, frequently tied to religious or cultural conventions (e.g., "God bless you"). They carry illocutionary force, invoking supernatural or institutional authority (Ferguson, 1982).

Some linguists including J. Searle classify wishes as expressives, while others argue they have a weak directive element (e.g., "I wish you would listen").

Ferguson [4:96] distinguishes personal blessings (e.g., a parent's "Be blessed") from ritualized blessings (e.g., clerical benedictions), where institutional authority alters their pragmatic force.

Here below we present comparative table of wishes and blessings.

Feature	Wishes	Blessings
Structure	Often secular, flexible	Frequently formulaic, ritualized
Function	Social bonding, politeness	Authority-conferring, sacred
Agency	Speaker expresses hope	Speaker invokes higher power

Example	Wishing you success!	May God bless you.
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Meanwhile, the distinction between “praise” and “compliment” remains a subject of debate among linguists. Some scholars, such as Kampf and Danziger [7; 23], for example, argue that the two terms represent different labels for the same speech act, both functioning as positive evaluative statements. Others, for example, Herbert [221], Lorenzo-Dus and Izura, on the other hand, however, contend that “praise” encompasses a broader semantic and pragmatic scope than “compliment”. And to Tannen [68], “compliments are a conventional form of praise, and exchanging compliments is a common ritual”.

Specifically:

- Praise may refer to any expression of approval, including formal recognition of merit (e.g., “Your performance was outstanding”), often carrying hierarchical or authoritative undertones.
- Compliments, in contrast, are typically interpreted as a subset of praise — more formulaic, socially strategic, and focused on personal attributes (e.g., “You look wonderful today”), primarily serving interpersonal functions (Holmes, 1988; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1987).

## METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative, cross-cultural pragmatic approach to examine the use of good wishes and praises as speech acts in Uzbek and English. The primary data consists of selected 20th-century literary works: stories by Abdulla Kaxkhkhar for Uzbek and Ernest Hemingway for English, chosen for their concise style and rich cultural context. The selection of these texts is informed by their representation of social norms and communicative practices pertinent to their respective cultures. The analysis focuses on identifying instances of good wishes and praises, categorizing them according to Searle’s taxonomy of speech acts—specifically, commissive and expressive acts. Each identified instance is examined for its linguistic structure, degree of formulaicity, and pragmatic function within the narrative context.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding, the study also considers the sociocultural factors influencing the use of these speech acts. This includes examining the role of politeness strategies, social hierarchy, and cultural values in shaping the expression and interpretation of good wishes and praises. The comparative analysis aims to highlight both universal patterns and culture-specific nuances in the realization of these speech acts.

The methodology aligns with established practices in cross-cultural pragmatics, drawing on frameworks that emphasize the interplay between language, culture, and social interaction. By focusing on literary texts, the study captures naturally occurring language use that reflects the communicative norms of the respective societies during the 20th century.

## RESULTS

In my article published in the *Mental Enlightenment* scientific-methodological journal, I examined blessings in Uzbek as speech acts. The analysis focused on their linguistic structure, cultural significance, and social functions, conceptualizing blessings as expressive acts that convey goodwill, gratitude, or divine invocation. The examination highlighted the pivotal role blessings play in Uzbek communication.

The study highlights their structural consistency (e.g., interjections, noun phrases invoking divine names) and multifunctional purposes (e.g., encouragement, problem-solving wishes). It also explores how blessings reflect Uzbek cultural values, social dynamics, and idiomatic language use, stressing the need for cultural context to interpret their meaning. Examples like *Xudo yorlaqasin* (God bless you) and *Baxtli bo’lg’in* (Be happy) illustrate their practical application.

Uzbek speakers typically employ more direct forms in speech acts, reflects cultural values of social hierarchy and collective responsibility contrasts with English strategies that prioritize linguistic mitigation.

Good wishes and praises can be examined as speech acts since they serve specific communicative purposes, including expressing intentions, performing social actions, and conveying attitudes. Speech acts are utterances that go beyond merely transmitting information; they perform an action and can be analyzed based on their illocutionary force (the speaker’s intended meaning) and perlocutionary effect (the impact on the listener).

- Good wishes (e.g., “I wish you have a wonderful day! – Kuningiz hayrli o’tsin”) function as commissive speech acts, in which the speaker expresses a desire or hope for a favorable outcome, usually for the listener’s benefit.
- Praises (e.g., “You did an excellent job! – Yashang, qoyil qildingiz”) are classified as expressive speech acts, where the speaker conveys admiration or approval of the listener’s actions or qualities.

In this framework:

- Good wishes function as illocutionary acts that express hope or desire for the listener's well-being.

- Praises serve as illocutionary acts that communicate admiration or approval.

Although Paul Grice's theory primarily addresses conversational implicature rather than speech acts per se, it is relevant for understanding how listeners interpret good wishes and praises. According to the "Cooperative Principle"[4;41], speakers generally aim to be clear, relevant, and informative, and listeners interpret utterances based on these expectations.

- Good wishes are interpreted as genuine expressions of goodwill, reflecting the speaker's positive intentions.

- Praises are understood not only as compliments but also as implicit reinforcements of social or personal approval.

Brown and Levinson argue that speech acts are influenced by politeness strategies aimed at preserving face—a person's social self-image. According to their theory [3;312]:

- Good wishes function as a positive politeness strategy, enhancing the listener's self-image by expressing care and goodwill.

- Praises similarly contribute to positive face, reinforcing the listener's sense of self-worth and social validation.

In Uzbek culture these speech acts are deeply tied to social norms, religious beliefs, and interpersonal relationships. They reflect shared cultural values and

often use idiomatic expressions that require contextual understanding. Good wishes and praises serve as unique linguistic strategies, they demonstrate the intricate relationship between language and cultural norms, highlight the role of hospitality in linguistic communication.

The speech acts of the good wishes, both in Uzbek and English, are characterized by the following features:

1. Orientation toward the addressee (they exist only within the framework of interpersonal communication between participants);

2. Aiming at a perlocutionary effect (they are intended to influence the recipient);

3. Use for expressing the speaker's feelings and emotions;

4. Regulation of speech behavior in specific communicative situations.

These utterances emerge as complex communicative acts that transcend simple informational exchange. They reflect deep cultural and social mechanisms. Furthermore they demonstrate the intricate relationship between language, culture, and communication. Good wishes and praises provide insights into human social interaction beyond linguistic boundaries.

**Findings.** Analysis of the selected examples from Uzbek and English literary texts reveals key pragmatic and cultural differences in the realization of good wishes and praises as speech acts:

Category	Uzbek (Hoshimov)	English (Hemingway)
Direct Praise	<i>O'zing yaxshi bolasan-ku!, Baraka topgur!, Voy, og'zingga shakar!</i>	<i>You were marvellous, darling, You shot damn well!, Good work!</i>
Good Wishes	<i>Iloyo baxting ochilsin, Umring uzoq bo'lsin, To'ylar muborak bo'lsin!</i>	<i>You're a fine woman, You're the most complete man I've ever known</i>
Blessings	<i>Senlargayam yaxshi joylardan ato qilsin, Tuz-nasibang uzilmasin, Boshing toshdan bo'lsin</i>	Rarely used explicitly as blessings, but conveyed through admiration

Cultural Richness	Use of metaphors ( <i>Boshing toshdan bo'lsin</i> ), collectivism ( <i>Biz ham omon-eson yetib olaylik</i> )	Emphasis on individual achievement or relationship ( <i>marvellous, darling</i> )
Religious Overtones	Frequent use of <i>Iloyo...</i> , ( <i>Xudoga</i> ) <i>shukur</i>	Absent or secular in tone ( <i>Good God</i> is emotional, not spiritual)

## DISCUSSION

As for speech act functions, both corpora contain expressive and commissive speech acts. In Uzbek, good wishes often include a benedictional function rooted in religious and communal norms. Phrases like *Iloyo umring uzoq bo'lsin* simultaneously praise and pray, reflecting high-context culture. Hemingway's English uses concise, admiration-based praises, focusing more on the individual's competence or emotional value, with minimal communal framing.

Cultural and contextual values in Hoshimov's praises are interpersonal glue — social, emotional, often familial, and richly metaphorical. For instance, *Sendan boshqa o'lmasin!* uses hyperbole to show extreme affection. Hemingway's are functional and moment-based, such as admiring a good shot or acknowledging bravery. They are short, performance-based evaluations with limited spiritual context.

Emotion and intimacy of Uzbek speech acts show emotion as obligation — praising is not optional, especially during rituals or meetings. Even a new clothing ("ohorlik") or a meal invites a verbal blessing. Hemingway uses praise to navigate masculinity, love, and courage, often laced with tension or irony. For example, *You're the most complete man I've ever known* is emotionally deep but contextually tragic.

Linguistic realization of Uzbek good wishes and praises are mainly exclamatory, rhythmical, often using formulaic or poetic constructions: *To'ylar muborak bo'lsin*, *Baraka top*.

In English we met declarative, emotionally weighted, less formulaic phrases: *That was a good shot*, *You were marvellous*.

## CONCLUSION

From the researches conducted so far, it is clear that the studying and analyzing good wishes and praises as speech acts requires a systematic approach, particularly for cross-linguistic comparisons between Uzbek and English. Good wishes and praises are essential components of communication that serve

both linguistic and social functions. From the perspective of speech act theory, good wishes primarily function as commissive acts, while praises are classified as expressive acts. Various linguistic frameworks, including those of Austin, Searle, Grice, and Brown & Levinson, provide insight into how these speech acts operate, how they are interpreted, and how they contribute to effective social interaction.

This comparative analysis underscores the pragmatic richness and cultural embedding of speech acts in both languages. In Uzbek, good wishes and praises are communal, emotional, and spiritual acts, serving not only to uplift but to preserve social harmony and tradition. In English (as exemplified by Hemingway), praises are more individualistic and situational, highlighting merit or intimacy without the ceremonial or spiritual dimension.

These findings suggest that speech act theory must account for cultural pragmatics, where the function, force, and frequency of an utterance depend heavily on social norms. For learners and translators, this means that literal translation is insufficient — one must translate the context, not just the words.

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