

Pragmatic Features of Fake News in Uzbek and English: Manipulative Strategies and Means of Linguistic Influence

Hayitova Xurshida Ibodullayevna

+998 97 384 52 53

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АННОТАЦИЯ:

This article examines the pragmatic features of fake news in Uzbek and English, focusing on manipulative strategies and linguistic means of influencing audiences. The rapid development of digital technologies and social media has facilitated the spread of false and misleading information, making the pragmatic analysis of media discourse increasingly important. The study explores the communicative intentions behind fake news, including emotional manipulation, persuasion, the use of evaluative language, presupposition, implicature, rhetorical questions, exaggeration, and appeals to authority. Particular attention is given to how linguistic choices shape readers' interpretations, influence their emotions, and encourage them to accept or share information without sufficient verification. A comparative approach is used to identify similarities and potential differences in the pragmatic strategies employed in Uzbek and English. The study draws on pragmatic, discourse, and comparative analysis to investigate the relationship between linguistic forms, communicative intentions, and audience responses..

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technologies and social media has transformed the production and distribution of news. Information can now reach millions of people within seconds, creating new opportunities for communication and public participation. However, these technologies have also facilitated the spread of fake news, including fabricated stories, misleading headlines, distorted facts, and information presented without sufficient context. Fake news can influence public perceptions, shape attitudes, and undermine trust in

information sources. From a pragmatic perspective, the study of fake news involves more than examining the literal meanings of words and sentences. Pragmatics investigates how meaning is produced and interpreted in particular communicative contexts. It considers the intentions of speakers or writers, the assumptions shared with audiences, and the ways linguistic expressions influence interpretation. Fake news may use various pragmatic strategies to encourage readers to accept a particular claim. For example, presupposition can present an assumption as if it were already established. Implicature can encourage an audience to draw a conclusion that is not explicitly stated. Emotional appeals may create fear, anger, excitement, or sympathy, while rhetorical questions can guide readers toward a preferred interpretation. Other strategies include appeals to authority, collective pronouns such as “we” and “they,” expressions of certainty, and language that creates a sense of urgency. These features may encourage readers to trust a message, identify with a particular group, or share information before verifying its accuracy. Such strategies are not inherently deceptive. They also appear in reliable journalism, political communication, advertising, and everyday conversation. Their significance in fake news depends on how they are used, whether claims are supported by evidence, and whether the message misrepresents facts or conceals relevant information.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the pragmatic features of fake news in Uzbek and English and to compare the manipulative strategies and linguistic means that may influence audience interpretation.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What pragmatic strategies are used in fake news in Uzbek and English?
2. How do presupposition, implicature, emotional appeals, and modality contribute to the interpretation of potentially misleading messages?
3. What similarities and differences can be identified in the pragmatic strategies used in Uzbek- and English-language fake news?

METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive and comparative approach to the pragmatic analysis of fake news in Uzbek and English. The proposed analytical framework focuses on communicative intention, contextual meaning, implied information, and the potential effects of linguistic choices on audiences. The material for analysis should consist of Uzbek- and English-language news items that have been independently verified as false or misleading. Potential sources include publicly accessible online news platforms, social media posts, and fact-checking websites. Each item should be examined in its original context to avoid misinterpreting irony, quotation, satire, or statements taken out of context. The analysis focuses on the following pragmatic categories.

Presupposition. This category examines assumptions presented as already known or accepted. For example, a question such as “Why is the government hiding the truth?”

presupposes that information is being hidden, even though the question itself does not establish that claim.

Implicature. This category examines meanings that readers may infer from a message without those meanings being explicitly stated. A headline may suggest a causal relationship between two events even when the available evidence does not demonstrate causation.

Emotional appeals. This category identifies expressions that seek to evoke fear, anger, hope, sympathy, or surprise. The analysis considers whether emotional language is proportionate to the facts presented.

Appeals to authority. This category examines references to experts, officials, institutions, or unnamed sources. Particular attention is given to whether the source is identifiable, relevant, and supported by verifiable evidence.

Modality and certainty. This category examines linguistic expressions that communicate possibility, probability, obligation, or certainty, including words such as “must,” “may,” “certainly,” and “apparently,” as well as their Uzbek equivalents in context.

Pronouns and group identity. This category explores the use of expressions such as “we,” “they,” “our people,” and their Uzbek equivalents to establish group solidarity, distinguish insiders from outsiders, or assign responsibility.

Rhetorical questions and urgency. This category examines questions that guide interpretation and expressions that encourage immediate action or sharing without adequate verification.

The comparative method is used to identify shared pragmatic functions and language-specific patterns. The analysis should distinguish between the linguistic form itself and the communicative function it performs in a particular context. If numerical claims are included, the researcher should report the dataset size, coding criteria, and frequency of each category.

RESULTS

The proposed analytical framework identifies several pragmatic categories that can be used to investigate manipulative strategies in Uzbek and English fake news. The examples below illustrate the categories for analysis; they are not presented as findings from an already completed empirical corpus study.

Presupposition can influence interpretation by presenting an unverified assumption as established information. For example, the question “Why are they concealing the real situation?” assumes that concealment is taking place. Readers may focus on the alleged reason for concealment rather than question whether it has occurred. A comparable Uzbek example is “Nega ular haqiqiy vaziyatni yashiryapti?” Both examples presuppose concealment. However, whether this strategy is manipulative depends on the evidence and context. Implicature works differently because the suggested meaning is inferred rather than directly asserted. A message may place two events next to each other in a way that encourages readers to assume a causal connection. Pragmatic analysis can reveal how this implied relationship is constructed and whether it is supported by the available information.

Emotional appeals may influence readers by encouraging an immediate response. Words associated with danger, betrayal, injustice, or catastrophe can frame an event in a particular way. In Uzbek, expressions such as “dahshatli haqiqat” or “xalqdan yashirilgan sir” may evoke strong reactions. English expressions such as “shocking truth” or “a secret hidden from the public” can perform comparable functions. These expressions should not automatically be classified as manipulative. The analysis must establish whether the emotional framing is justified, whether important context is omitted, and whether the language encourages an interpretation that goes beyond the evidence.

References to authority can increase the perceived credibility of a message. Expressions such as “experts confirm” or “official sources reveal” may encourage readers to trust a claim. Similar expressions occur in Uzbek, including “mutaxassislar tasdiqlashicha” and “rasmiy manbalarga ko‘ra.” Such expressions become problematic when the sources are anonymous, misrepresented, irrelevant, or impossible to verify. The pragmatic function of an appeal to authority therefore needs to be evaluated alongside source reliability and factual evidence.

Modal expressions can communicate different degrees of certainty. Statements such as “This must be true” present a stronger commitment than “This may be true.” In both Uzbek and English, certainty markers can influence how readers evaluate a claim. If strong certainty is expressed without adequate evidence, it may encourage unjustified confidence. Pronouns can also shape the relationship between the message and its audience. The use of “we” may create a sense of solidarity, whereas “they” may distance a group or suggest opposition. Similar functions can be observed in Uzbek expressions such as “biz” and “ular.” Nevertheless, their interpretation depends on the participants, topic, and broader context.

Rhetorical questions may direct readers toward a preferred conclusion without explicitly making an argument. For example, “Can we really trust them?” invites suspicion, although it does not provide evidence that the people being discussed are untrustworthy. The Uzbek equivalent, “Ularga haqiqatan ham ishonish mumkinmi?”, can produce a similar pragmatic effect. Expressions that create urgency, such as “Share this before it disappears,” may encourage rapid distribution and discourage verification. Their significance lies not only in their grammatical structure but also in their communicative purpose and the circumstances in which they appear.

Both Uzbek and English offer linguistic resources for expressing presupposition, implication, emotion, certainty, group identity, and urgency. The potential differences between the languages may involve the choice of expressions, grammatical realization, culturally specific references, and conventions of online communication. However, these differences cannot be established reliably without analyzing authentic examples from both languages. A balanced dataset and consistent coding procedures are necessary to distinguish language-specific tendencies from differences caused by topic, platform, source, or audience.

DISCUSSION

The proposed analysis demonstrates the importance of pragmatics in understanding how fake news may influence audiences. Whereas lexical analysis focuses on word choice and semantic analysis examines meaning, pragmatic analysis investigates how messages function in context and how readers may interpret information beyond its literal content. Presupposition and implicature are particularly relevant because they can communicate assumptions or suggestions without presenting them as explicit claims requiring evidence. Emotional appeals and evaluative expressions can influence readers' reactions, while appeals to authority may shape judgments of credibility. Modality can affect perceived certainty, and pronouns can establish group identity or encourage division between social groups. These strategies may interact. For example, a message can refer to an unnamed authority, use highly certain language, and imply that information is being concealed. Together, these features may encourage readers to accept a claim without sufficient verification. Nevertheless, the presence of these features does not prove that a message is false or deliberately manipulative. The interpretation must be supported by contextual and factual analysis. The comparison of Uzbek and English is important for understanding both shared pragmatic mechanisms and language-specific forms of expression. It may also help identify how cultural references and communication conventions influence the interpretation of misleading information. These questions require further investigation using a clearly defined and verifiable dataset. The study has practical implications for media literacy. Readers can be encouraged to question assumptions embedded in headlines, distinguish explicit claims from implied meanings, check the identity and reliability of cited sources, and evaluate whether expressions of certainty are supported by evidence. They should also examine emotional appeals and requests to share information urgently before accepting or distributing a message. A major limitation of the present framework is the absence of a reported empirical corpus and measured audience responses. Consequently, the examples illustrate analytical categories rather than establish the frequency or effectiveness of specific strategies. Future research should use a balanced collection of verified Uzbek and English examples and, where possible, examine how readers interpret these messages.

CONCLUSION

This study presents a pragmatic framework for examining fake news in Uzbek and English, focusing on presupposition, implicature, emotional appeals, appeals to authority, modality, pronouns, rhetorical questions, and urgency. These strategies can shape audience interpretation by influencing assumptions, emotions, perceived credibility, and judgments of certainty. The comparative perspective offers a way to investigate shared pragmatic functions and possible differences in how they are expressed in Uzbek and English. However, such differences must be established through systematic analysis of authentic data rather than assumed in advance. Since pragmatic strategies also occur in legitimate communication, they should not be treated as independent indicators of false information. Their interpretation requires attention to communicative context, source credibility, and factual evidence. Further

empirical research may strengthen understanding of manipulative media discourse and contribute to the development of critical reading and media literacy skills.

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