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Prohibition in family and social relations in English and Uzbek literary discourse: A Linguocultural Comparison

Hojiyeva Marjona To‘lqinovna
PhD student of Bukhara State University
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Abstract. The article compares how prohibition is justified and expressed in family and social relations in English and Uzbek short stories. The material consists of utterances from stories by Katherine Mansfield and W. Somerset Maugham, and by Abdulla Qahhor, O‘tkir Hoshimov and Erkin A’zam. The analysis covers four problems: the status of the person who forbids, the motive of care, the limit of interference in family affairs, and the social ground of the ban. In the English examples the source of prohibition is often an impersonal rule, while in the Uzbek examples it is usually an identifiable elder, a mediator or the community. The conclusions are limited to the analysed texts and are not presented as national characteristics.
Keywords: prohibition, directive speech act, linguoculture, English, Uzbek, family discourse

Introduction

Prohibition is a directive speech act in which the speaker restricts the addressee’s action (Searle, 1969). In family and social communication its form depends on the relative status of speaker and addressee (Saraykina, 2007), and Potapova (2010) treats the explication of prohibition as a status speech act. Prohibition also touches politeness, since it limits the addressee’s freedom of action and so requires strategies of mitigation (Leech, 1983). What remains less clear is how languages differ in presenting the source and the reason of a ban when the speakers are relatives or members of one community.

The article asks three questions. Who is presented as the source of the prohibition? What motive is given for it? Where is the limit of acceptable interference drawn? As a working hypothesis we use Hofstede’s opposition of individualism and collectivism and the notion of power distance, as presented in Usmonova (2019). The hypothesis predicts that individual, impersonal grounds should dominate in English and communal, personalised grounds in Uzbek. It is tested against the examples and is not taken as a conclusion in advance.

The material is drawn from short stories by Mansfield (“The Daughters of the Late Colonel”, “An Ideal Family”, “The Voyage”, “The Garden-Party”, “Life of Ma Parker”) and Maugham (“The Ant and the Grasshopper”) for English, and by Qahhor, Hoshimov and A’zam for Uzbek. The examples are quoted in the original form, and an English rendering is added in brackets for Uzbek examples only as a guide for the reader. The methods are contextual, pragmatic and comparative analysis. Because the corpus is small, the findings describe tendencies in these texts only.

Paternal status and family authority

Mansfield’s “The Daughters of the Late Colonel” shows the authority of a dead father that still governs behaviour:

(1) “Don’t shout!”

(2) “It had been a rule for years never to disturb father in the morning, whatever happened.”

(3) “No, don’t, Jug… Don’t let’s open anything.”

In example (2) nobody is named as the one who forbids. The ban is a rule with a history, expressed by never and an infinitive, and the daughters have taken it over as their own limit. Examples (1) and (3) are short negative imperatives between sisters, with the inclusive let’s, so that the ban is shared rather than imposed.

In the Uzbek stories the father's authority is voiced openly. Qahhor's "O'jar" contains an explicit rebuke and an instruction to accept the father's word without discussion:

(4) "Shaxmat o'ynamagin demabmidim?" (Didn't I tell you not to play chess?)

(5) "Undoq demagin, o'g'lim, dadang bir narsa degandan keyin darrov 'xo'p, bilmabman' deyishga o'rgan. Yaxshi emas." (Don't say that, my son; once your father has said something, learn to answer at once, "All right, I did not know." It is not good.)

The prohibition in (4) is a rhetorical question about the speaker's own earlier command, which treats the command as known and binding. In (5) the form -gin is combined with the affectionate address o'g'lim, and the final evaluation yaxshi emas replaces an argument. Hoshimov's "Sirli yulduz" shows the mother as mediator, who uses respect forms for the father and gives his tiredness as the reason:

(6) "Jim! Adang charchaganlar. Hozir urishib beradilar. Ana,uxlayaptilar." (Quiet! Father is tired. He will scold you now. Look, he is sleeping.)

Here the father's authority is not discussed but is protected by a third person. English offers a contrasting case in Mansfield's "An Ideal Family", where the father's will becomes a matter for debate among his daughters:

(7) "My dear Ethel, if father prefers to tire himself out, I really don't see what business of ours it is to interfere."

(8) "You ought to be stricter with him. He's very naughty."

In (7) the verb prefers turns the father's conduct into a preference, and the litotes about whose business it is limits the family's right to forbid. In (8) the roles are reversed: the father is treated as someone to be disciplined. In these texts, then, paternal authority in English is impersonal or open to question, and in Uzbek it is personal and not open to question.

Care as the motive of prohibition

Both literatures use care to justify bans, but the object of care differs. In Qahhor's "Asror bobo" and Hoshimov's "Nega? Nega?" the speaker conceals information in order to spare a close person:

"Endi bo'lar ish bo'ldi, Asrorqul otaga aytmang. Kampirning ham xohishi shu. Ota qarib qolgan, ko'tarolmaydi." (What is done is done; do not tell father Asrorqul. That is the old woman's wish too. He has grown old and cannot bear it.)

"Opamga aytmang, ada. Opamga aytmang..." (Do not tell my sister, father. Do not tell my sister...)

The prohibition here is addressed to others and aims to protect a third person from bad news. The reason is given at once, through age or through the addressee's feelings. Danger to life is also expressed through a causal clause, as in Hoshimov's "Urushning so'nggi qurboni", and the protection extends to the whole group:

"Hovliga chiqma, bolalar ham chiqmasin, o'ladi!" (Do not go out into the yard, and let the children not go out either, you will die!)

"Bo'kirma, Natashenkani qo'rqitib yuborasan." (Do not bellow, you will frighten Natashenka.)

In the Mansfield examples the object of care is the addressee's body or inner privacy:

(13) "Keep close to me, and mind you don't slip."

(14) "Please, please don't disturb her."

Example (13) warns about a physical risk to the hearer, and (14) asks for respect for another person's space. No reason clause is needed, because the prohibited act is treated as obviously harmful to an individual. This does not mean that English lacks caring prohibitions; it means that in these texts care is directed at the individual addressee, while in the Uzbek texts it is often directed at the family as a whole.

Family duty and the limit of interference

The question of how far an elder may interfere gets different answers. In Uzbek stories an older relative may forbid a younger one to neglect work in order to take the burden on himself:

(15) “Qo‘y, bolam, sen ishingdan qolma!” (Leave it, my child, do not fall behind with your work!)

(16) “Bor, ishingdan qolma, bu yog‘ini o‘zimga qo‘yib ber,” (Go, do not neglect your work, leave this part to me.)

(17) “Senga dardisar bo‘laman, deb qo‘rqamanda, mulla Akbar…” (I am afraid I shall become a trouble to you, Mulla Akbar...)

Examples (15) and (16) from Hoshimov and A’zam share a model: the ban protects the younger person’s duty and is expressed as an offer of help, with an address form (bolam) and an imperative of release. Example (17) shows that the speaker also bans himself from burdening others. In English the corresponding duty is expressed as a moral impossibility. In Maugham’s story the elder brother is told:

(18) “But you cannot allow your only brother to go to gaol.”

The modal cannot and the verb allow place the obligation in the addressee’s conscience, and the speaker does not act in his place. Mansfield’s examples (7) and (8) show the opposite pole, where interference is judged as intrusion in a private matter. The difference therefore lies in the way the limit is drawn: Uzbek speakers cross it in the name of kinship, English speakers appeal to a duty and leave the action to the addressee.

Social boundary: class, community and uyat

In Mansfield’s stories the ground of prohibition is often social position, and the agent is hidden in the passive voice:

(19) “When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch.”

(20) “She couldn’t possibly go back to the gentleman’s flat; she had no right to cry in strangers’ houses.”

(21) “And it’s not very sympathetic to spoil everybody’s enjoyment as you’re doing now.”

In (19) the passive were forbidden omits the one who forbids, and the reason concerns class distance and contamination. In (20) the servant Ma Parker applies the ban to herself with had no right, which shows how social position is internalised. In (21) the criticism is evaluative and softened by the litotes not very sympathetic, and its basis is the comfort of others.

In A’zam’s stories the speaker calls on onlookers and on shame:

(22) “Hay-hay, polvon, qo‘ying, uyat bo‘ladi.” (Hey, hey, wrestler, stop it, it would be shameful.)

(23) “Bas qil, jinni, qo‘shnilar eshitadi,” (Enough, you madman, the neighbours will hear.)

(24) “Ko‘na ko‘rma, qishloqqa borib gap qilishi mumkin!” (Do not judge him as one of the old ones; he may go to the village and gossip!)

(25) “Uyat bo‘ladi, inim, yuring…” (It would be shameful, my younger brother, come along...)

The community is both witness and judge: neighbours, the village and the notion of uyat stand behind the ban. The respect plural (qo‘ying, yuring) and the kinship address (inim) soften the prohibition without removing its force. In English the same boundary is presented as class and personal right, and in Uzbek it is presented as public opinion.

Comparative summary

Criterion	English material	Uzbek material
Source of prohibition	Often hidden: impersonal rule, passive (it had been a rule; were forbidden)	Often open: parent, elder, mediator (mother, guest), community

Criterion	English material	Uzbek material
Paternal authority	Present, but may be questioned ("An Ideal Family")	Stated as a norm not open to discussion ("O'jar", "Sirli yulduz")
Motive of care	Physical safety of the addressee; not interfering in another's grief	Hiding information to spare a close person (Qahhor, Hoshimov)
Limit of interference	Interference judged as intrusion into a private matter	Parents and even an elderly stranger may interfere with a ban
Ground of social ban	Class boundary, personal right (no right to), comfort of others	Public eye and shame (uyat bo'ladi; qo'shnilar eshitadi; gap qiladi)
Typical means	never + infinitive, don't, let's, mind you don't, cannot allow, litotes	-ma, -mang, -gin, respect plural, address and affection words, causal explanation

Conclusion

The analysis shows that the two groups of texts differ most in how they present the source and ground of a ban. English examples tend to use impersonal rules, passive constructions and modal expressions of duty, and to base the limit of interference on individual rights and class position. Uzbek examples tend to name an elder or mediator, to use imperatives with respect and affection forms, to give a causal explanation, and to rest the ban on family protection and public opinion. Two models recur across authors in the Uzbek material: hiding information to protect a close person, and forbidding a younger relative to neglect work. The appeal to uyat and neighbours is characteristic of A'zam's examples. These results partly agree with the hypothesis drawn from the individualism and collectivism opposition, but they do not prove it. The texts come from three English and three Uzbek authors, and literary dialogue is stylized speech. The findings should not be read as a description of the English or Uzbek national character. The practical value lies in translation, where the translator has to decide whether to restore a hidden agent or to hide an open one, in teaching pragmatics, and in building a parallel corpus of prohibitions for further testing.

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