

PHONETIC FEATURES OF CONGRATULATIONS AND WISHES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Nargiza Ernazarova

Independent researcher, UzSWLU

e-mail.: nargizaernazarova1111@gmail.com

Abstract

Congratulatory and well-wishing speech acts are organized not only by their semantic content but also by a distinctive sound–phonetic patterning that carries their emotional force and aesthetic value. This study offers a contrastive analysis of the phonetic realization of congratulations and wishes in English and Uzbek, two languages whose phonological systems differ typologically. Drawing on a corpus of English and Uzbek congratulatory texts, the analysis examines alliteration, assonance, rhyme, vowel harmony and phonetic parallelism. The results show that English congratulations rely predominantly on rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and assonance, whereas Uzbek congratulations are shaped by vowel harmony, alliteration, melodiousness and parallelism. The findings support the view that etiquette speech acts are phonetically motivated and function as culturally shaped formulae.

Keywords: congratulation; wish; speech act; phonetics; alliteration; assonance; rhyme; vowel harmony; contrastive linguistics.

1. Introduction

The minimal unit of phonology is the phoneme. Deriving from the Greek phoneme ‘sound, voice’, the phoneme is the smallest indivisible sound unit of a language, one that shapes words and morphemes and serves to distinguish their meanings; phonology, in turn, studies the phoneme system of a given language and the distinctive features by which its phonemes are opposed. [2:54]

Congratulatory and well-wishing speech acts are characterized not only by their semantic content but also by a distinctive sound–phonetic organization. The phonetic

level is the most fundamental plane of the material expression of speech: through intonation, rhythm, stress, phonetic repetition, alliteration, assonance and rhyme, it secures the emotional force and aesthetic value of the congratulation. As Formanovskaya observes, etiquette speech acts - congratulations and wishes among them - are realized through phonation, that is, through their sound-melodic form. [1:187]

Because the phonetic systems of English and Uzbek differ typologically, the phonetic realizations of their congratulatory discourse likewise differ sharply. The present study sets out to identify and contrast the principal phonetic devices through which congratulations and wishes are constructed in the two languages.

2. Materials and Methods

The analysis is based on a corpus of English and Uzbek congratulatory and well-wishing texts. The English material was drawn from the greeting-card tradition and from published collections of birthday and wedding wishes issued by card publishers such as Hallmark and American Greetings and by widely used English-language sources. The Uzbek material was drawn from published congratulatory texts and from well-wishing texts circulated through Uzbek-language media, including thematic Telegram channels.

The texts were examined using the contrastive method combined with phonetic-phonological description. Each sub corpus was analyzed for the following devices: alliteration, assonance, rhyme, vowel harmony and phonetic parallelism. Instances were identified, classified by device and by the sound involved, and then compared across the two languages in order to establish points of convergence and divergence.

3. Results

3.1. Phonetic features of English congratulatory discourse

3.1.1. Alliteration

In English congratulations, alliteration - the repetition of a consonant - is an important means of expressivity and memorability.

Repetition of /f/: “*Best wishes **f**or a **f**un-**f**illed **f**uture together*”. [3]

Repetition of /s/: “***S**ending you **s**mile**s** for every moment of your **s**pecial day...*”

Repetition of /w/: “*Sending you a birthday **w**ish **w**rapped **w**ith all my love. Have a very happy birthday!*”; “***W**ishing you a beautiful day **w**ith good health and happiness forever.*”

Repetition of /h/: “*Happy birthday!*”; “*Here’s to another year of good **h**ealth and **h**appiness. I **h**ope it’s a great day!*” [4]

In these examples the recurrence of /h/, /s/, /w/ lends melodiousness to the congratulatory text.

3.1.2. Assonance

Assonance -the repetition of vowels - is an important device that generates rhyme and rhythm in English congratulations.

/ə/: “Happy birthday! You’re **older**, **wiser** and **stronger** than ever.” [7]

/e/: “May this **next** trip around the sun be your **best** one yet!” [6]

/eɪ/, /aɪ/: “Happy birthday, my friend! May your **day** be as **bright** and amazing as the **light** you bring into my life....” [4]

The recurrence of these vowels reinforces rhythmic cohesion and the bright, positive tonality of the congratulation, endowing it with melodiousness.

3.1.3. Rhyme

Rhyme is one of the most salient phonetic features of English congratulations. “Count not the **candles**... see the lights they **give**. Count not the **years**, but the life you **live**. Wishing you a wonderful time ahead. Happy birthday.” [4]; “Although your birthday only comes once a year, my love for you will last **forever**. Today is your special day. I am glad we are spending it **together**.” [5]

Rhyme is the principal poetic mechanism of the English greeting-card industry: publishers such as Hallmark and American Greetings issue congratulations in the form of rhymed verse. In these examples rhyme functions as the structural–rhythmic support of the English congratulation, shifting the text into a poetic register. It emerges as an important pragmatic device that lends the genre aesthetic ornamentation, enhances the mnemonic efficacy of the wish and converts it into a cultural formula.

3.2. Phonetic features of Uzbek congratulatory discourse

Uzbek is an agglutinative and vowel-harmonic language. Vowel harmony - the law by which vowels assimilate to one another - is an important phonetic feature of congratulatory discourse and is entirely absent from English.

3.2.1. Vowel harmony

The operation of vowel harmony can be seen in congratulatory affixes: *Tug‘ilgan kuningiz muborak bo‘lsin!* [u–u–i–u–o–i] “Happy birthday to you!” *Bayramingiz qutlug‘ bo‘lsin!* [a–a–i–u–u–o–i] “May your holiday be blessed!” Here the concord of the vowels creates melodiousness and rhythm.

3.2.2. Sound repetition and alliteration

In Uzbek congratulations, alliteration and sound repetition appear in connection with national poetic traditions.

Repetition of /b/: “*Tug‘ilgan kuning muborak **bo**‘lsin! **B**archamiz uchun ajoyib **bo**‘lgan ushbu ayyom kunida senga sihat-salomatlik va **b**axt-saodat tilab qolamiz! ...*” (“Happy birthday! On this day, wonderful for us all, we wish you health and happiness...”).

Repetition of /q/: “*Qadamlaringiz qutlug‘ bo‘lsin, qo‘sha qaringlar*” (“May your steps be blessed; may you grow old together”).

3.2.3. Rhyme

Rhyme also occupies an important place in Uzbek congratulations and wishes, and is especially conspicuous in verse:

Qalbingiz hayotbaxsh nurlarga to'lsin, / Umr yo'llaringiz gullarga to'lsin, / Sizni tark etmasin mudom baxt-omad, / Tavallud kuningiz muborak bo'lsin. Dunyoda g'am ko'rmang hech vaqt, hech qachon, / Oshufta qalbingiz tuymasin armon, / Bor bo'ling, sog' bo'ling doim qadrdon, / Tavallud kuningiz muborak bo'lsin. [9]

Here the rhyme has a distinctive morphological-grammatical character rooted in the classical traditions of Turkic versification. In Uzbek, rhyme functions not only as an aesthetic-phonetic device but also as a functional-semantic one: the suffix -sin simultaneously expresses the modality of the wish and provides the rhyming repetition, so that the propositional content of the wish and its sound form are fused within a single morpheme.

3.2.4. Phonetic parallelism

Phonetic parallelism is also frequent in Uzbek congratulations.

Bir-biringizga mehr ehson qiling, / Qalbni ochib, ko'nglingizni Rahmon qiling, / Beshik to'ylar qilganda ham mehmon qiling, / Mana bugun ostonalar tillo sizga, / Baxtingizni bergan bo'lsin Alloh sizga. [9]

"...qizim, tug'ilgan kuning muborak bo'lsin. Bugun dunyoga kelib qalbimizni quvonchga to'ldirgan kuning. Senga barcha ezguliklar hamroh bo'lsin. Umring bahordek go'zal, baxting osmondek cheksiz, qalbing quyoshdek nurafshon bo'lsin..." [10]

In these examples the recurrence of the optative suffix *bo'lsin* at the end of successive lines creates a marked parallelistic patterning.

4. Discussion

The analysis shows that the two traditions rest on different phonetic foundations. English congratulations are built on rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance and melodic patterning, whereas Uzbek congratulations foreground vowel harmony, alliteration, melodiousness and parallelism. The principal points of divergence are the following. First, the subordination of Uzbek congratulations to the law of vowel harmony secures their phonetic distinctiveness - a feature with no counterpart in English. Second, Uzbek congratulations are constructed on melodiousness and parallelism, and the multi-line wishes ending in the suffix -*bo'lsin* produce a meditative, ceremonial impression. Third, although alliteration operates in both languages, it is realized through different consonants - /w/, /s/, /h/ in English and, in most cases, /b/, /q/ in Uzbek. Finally, the two traditions surface in different genres: the printed greeting card in English and

poetic well-wishing discourse in Uzbek, each constituting the linguistic reflex of its respective culture.

5. Conclusion

Congratulatory and well-wishing speech acts in English and Uzbek are phonetically motivated and culturally formulaic. Their sound organization is not incidental ornamentation but a constitutive dimension of the genre: in English it is carried chiefly by rhyme, assonance and consonant alliteration within the greeting-card register, whereas in Uzbek it rests on vowel harmony, alliteration and the morphologically grounded rhyme and parallelism of the optative -sin form within a poetic register. The contrast confirms that the phonetic realization of etiquette speech acts is typologically conditioned and culturally specific, and it points to phonetic patterning as a productive dimension for the further contrastive study of congratulatory discourse.

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