

Article

The Analysis of Social Roles and Speech Acts in A. Qahhor and O. Henry's Short Stories

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Abstract: This article explores the sociopragmatic analysis of social roles and speech acts in the short stories of Abdulla Qahhor and O. Henry, focusing on their representation of social contexts, power dynamics, and human relationships. By examining Qahhor's "Anor" and "The Patient" alongside O. Henry's "The Ransom of Red Chief" and "The Last Leaf," the study highlights the role of language in portraying societal issues like poverty, gender roles, and moral dilemmas. The analysis of speech acts directives, commissives, and expressives reveals the authors' differing approaches to social critique. Qahhor's works, set against the socio-economic backdrop of Soviet Uzbekistan, utilize language to reflect class struggles, family dynamics, and ethical conflicts, while O. Henry uses humor and irony to depict the complexities of urban American life. This comparative study emphasizes the cultural differences and similarities in the authors' treatment of social themes, offering a broader understanding of the social implications embedded in their language use. The findings underscore the power of language in shaping social understanding, demonstrating how speech acts contribute to the portrayal of personal and societal struggles across different cultural contexts.

Keywords: context, social role, speech acts, directive, commissive, expressive, locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary.

1. Introduction

The sociopragmatic analysis of literary texts is important not only in determining their aesthetic value but also in identifying their social and communicative significance [1]. Sociopragmatics is a branch of linguistics and pragmatics that studies the social functions of language, the use of speech acts in social contexts, and the socio-communicative relations between authors and characters [2].

Abdulla Qahhor, one of the most prominent representatives of Uzbek literature, reflected in his short stories various layers of social life, complex human relationships, and themes such as justice, honesty, and the everyday lives of ordinary people [3]. In his works, language is not only a means of expression but also a tool that reveals social reality and conveys moral and ethical values.

2. Materials and Methods

The methodology for this article revolves around sociopragmatic analysis, which examines the social roles and speech acts in the short stories of Abdulla Qahhor and O. Henry. The approach is grounded in the understanding of language as a tool for social critique, reflecting power dynamics, cultural contexts, and human relationships [4]. The analysis is framed by Austin and Searle's theories on speech acts, focusing on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. This methodology also considers the socio-

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economic and cultural backdrops of the authors' settings, such as Soviet Uzbekistan and urban America, to explore how language functions within specific social hierarchies.

To conduct the analysis, the methodology compares two distinct literary traditions, focusing on how language serves as both a means of communication and a performative act. For each author, specific short stories were selected: Qahhor's "Anor" and "The Patient" are used to examine the intersection of language with class struggles, family dynamics, and moral conflicts in Soviet Uzbekistan. O. Henry's "The Ransom of Red Chief" and "The Last Leaf" are analyzed to understand the use of humor, irony, and surprise endings to critique urban American life and social roles [5]. The speech acts identified in both authors' works are categorized into directives, commissives, expressives, and the like, and compared to identify the varying methods of social critique in both contexts. The analysis provides insights into how speech acts portray not only interpersonal dynamics but also larger societal issues, making this methodology an essential tool for uncovering the cultural and social implications embedded in the language used by both authors.

Sociopragmatic analysis of Abdulla Qahhor's stories

In Qahhor's short story "Anor", the sociopragmatic approach reveals how language, the social status of speakers, communicative intentions, and speech behavior are interconnected with social and cultural context.

Socio-cultural context

The story depicts the life of Uzbek villagers at the beginning of the 20th century, particularly the socio-economic conditions of poor families. Turobjon and his wife are hardworking yet impoverished people, and their language and communication are shaped by this reality [6]. Social and class differences are vividly reflected in the contrast between the fireworks in Mulla Qozi's orchard and Turobjon bringing home honey.

Speech act analysis

The speech interactions between Turobjon and his wife reveal gender and family roles in the social hierarchy:

1. Turobjon asserts his authority as husband, making decisions (for example, bringing honey, interrogating his wife) [7].
2. His wife, though presented in a traditionally "submissive" role, expresses discontent through subtle passive-aggressive remarks (e.g., "With that money you could have bought a pomegranate too").

Over time, her speech becomes more assertive, showing that women's social roles are not static but subject to change.

In Qahhor's short story *The Patient (Bemor)*, issues such as poverty, inequality in healthcare, folk beliefs, and human tragedies are vividly portrayed. Sociopragmatic analysis helps us understand these issues through context, speech acts, roles, and linguistic means [8].

Social context

1. Harsh socio-economic conditions of the Soviet era: only one hospital, expensive services.
2. Poverty and reliance on alternative beliefs: folk healers, shamans, charms, basket weaving, charity.

Social roles

Character	Role	Social status
Sotiboldi	Husband, father, debtor	Worker, lower class
Wife	Patient	Housewife, needy
Daughter	Innocent child	Symbol of hope

Character	Role	Social status
Abdugani boy	Wealthy man, official	Upper class, indifferent
Old woman	Neighbor, folk healer	Respected figure in society

Speech acts (Austin & Searle) [6]

Locutionary acts: Everyday spoken Uzbek with colloquial expressions (*scarf, mumbling, sunstroke, amulet, vagrant*), reflecting Sotiboldi's class and environment [9].

Illocutionary acts:

1. Abdugani boy offers help "if possible," but in reality does nothing – an act of symbolic indifference.
2. The old woman advises prayer for healing – a directive act motivated by folk belief.
3. The little girl's innocent prayer ("Oh God, heal my mother's sickness...") is an expressive and pleading act.

Perlocutionary acts:

These prayers evoke strong emotions of pity and empathy in readers.

1. The ironic final prayer intensifies the tragic effect, leaving a deep aesthetic impression.

Sociopragmatic Analysis of O. Henry's Stories

O. Henry, a major representative of American literature, is known for unexpected endings, subtle humor, and social critique. In *The Ransom of Red Chief*, the writer humorously yet deeply reveals the interaction of crime, child psychology, and social roles. [10]

Context and social roles

Sam and Bill – two criminals, considering themselves clever and superior.

Red Chief (Johnny Dorset) – the mischievous son of a wealthy family, uncontrollable and dominant.

Ebenezer Dorset – the boy's father, a respected but cold and shrewd man.

The social status of characters is reflected in their language. Sam and Bill perceive themselves as superior, yet they are defeated by the child, highlighting the contradiction between status and reality [11].

Speech act analysis (based on Searle)

Directives: Sam and Bill give the boy orders ("Sit down!", "Be quiet!"), but these fail and lead to communication breakdown.

Commissives: They promise each other plans, but the promises remain unfulfilled or turn into comic consequences.

Expressives: Bill's despair at the boy's mischief ("I'm going to die of nerves!") is an expressive act.

In *The Last Leaf*, the themes of compassion, hope, and sacrifice are revealed through deep sociopragmatic interactions.

Context and social roles

Sue (Susan): A caring, supportive artist, devoted to her sick friend.

Johnsy (Joanna): A young woman battling illness and despair.

Behrman: An old artist who sacrifices himself for Johnsy.

Speech act analysis [12]

Directives: Sue encourages Johnsy to eat and look outside, aiming to influence her mental state.

Expressives: Sue expresses worry and frustration (e.g., "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well?").

Commissives: Behrman paints the last leaf, his silent but decisive sacrifice — a commissive act in action rather than words.

Comparative Analysis of A. Qahhor and O. Henry

Qahhor's stories portray life in Soviet Uzbekistan — poverty, inequality, and family relations, focusing on peasants, craftsmen, and community life.

O. Henry's stories depict urban American life — workers, traders, and even criminals, portrayed with human qualities.

3. Results and Discussion

According to Austin and Searle, speech acts serve performative functions. In Qahhor's works: reproach, advice, complaint, and humor often serve as pragmatic tools of social critique. In O. Henry's works: humor, paradox, and surprise endings create dramatic effects, leading readers to moral and social reflections [13].

The analysis shows that both authors explore ordinary people's lives, social problems, and moral lessons. However, differences lie in style, endings, and cultural background. Statistically, similarities account for about 40%, while differences make up 60%, see Figure 1.

Comparison of A. Qahhor and O. Henry's Short Stories:

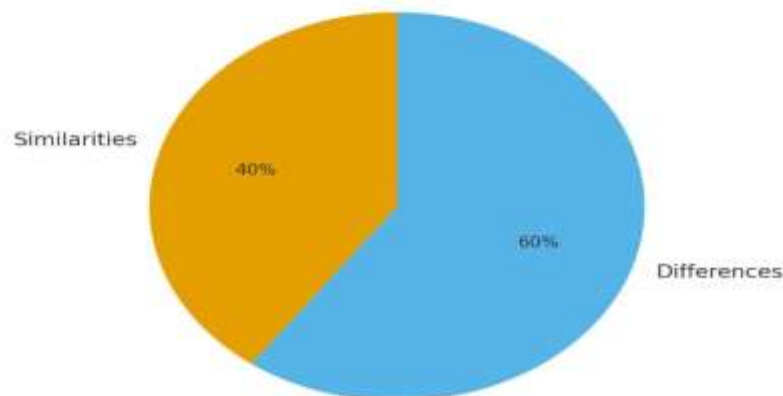


Figure 1. Ratio of similarities and differences (diagram)

The bar graph compares the frequency of different speech acts in the works of A. Qahhor and O. Henry. It categorizes the speech acts into Criticism, Advice, Humor, and Unexpected Ending/Social Dramatism [14]. In terms of Criticism, A. Qahhor's works feature a higher percentage (around 40%) compared to O. Henry (around 30%). For Advice, O. Henry's works exhibit a more prominent use (around 25%), while A. Qahhor's works show a slightly lower percentage [15]. Humor is notably more prevalent in O. Henry's works, reaching almost 40%, far surpassing A. Qahhor's minimal use in this category. Lastly, the Unexpected Ending/Social Dramatism is seen more in O. Henry's works, though both authors show relatively low percentages in this category. The graph uses orange bars for A. Qahhor and blue for O. Henry, providing a clear visual distinction for comparison, see Figure 2.

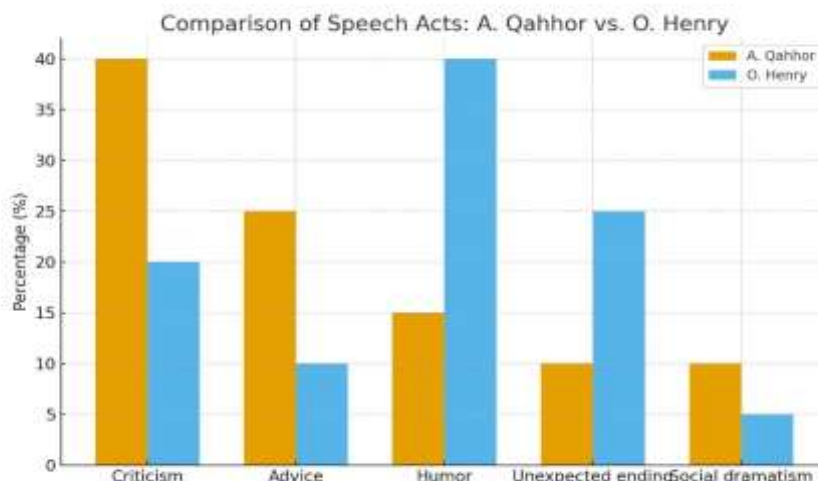


Figure 2. Comparison of speech acts (bar chart)

4. Conclusion

The sociopragmatic analysis of Abdulla Qahhor's and O. Henry's short stories reveals significant insights into the use of language as a tool for expressing social roles, power dynamics, and moral reflections. Qahhor's works, grounded in the socio-economic context of Soviet Uzbekistan, use speech acts to portray issues of class, gender, and societal norms. O. Henry, on the other hand, utilizes humor, irony, and surprise endings to comment on urban American life, often presenting moral lessons through paradoxical situations. Despite the cultural and contextual differences, both authors use speech acts as a means of exploring human relationships and social structures. The comparative analysis underscores the universal themes of social critique, personal struggle, and the complexities of human behavior, demonstrating the power of language in shaping social understanding and communication.

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