CULTURAL MODELS OF SINCERITY: COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOR IN ANGLO-AMERICAN AND UZBEK SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT: Sincerity is often treated as a universal moral ideal, yet it is enacted through culture-specific communicative conventions. This article compares Anglo-American and Uzbek models of sincerity by examining how speakers frame candid opinion sharing, praise, disagreement and social support. Drawing on a 180 000-word corpus of British and U.S. radio phone-ins and television debates, paired with a 175 000-word corpus of Uzbek talk shows and online advice programmes, the study combines corpus-driven collocational analysis with ethnographically informed discourse interpretation. Results indicate that the Anglo-American model foregrounds the individual speaker's obligation to personal authenticity and relies heavily on transparency metaphors, while the Uzbek model embeds sincerity in relational warmth, expressed through heart-based metaphors and kinship terms.

Keywords: Sincerity; Anglo-American discourse; Uzbek discourse; pragmatics; intercultural communication; corpus linguistics.

INTRODUCTION

Sincerity occupies a privileged place in Western moral philosophy, from Augustine's confessional introspection to Rousseau's celebration of the transparent self and Austin's felicity conditions for speech acts. It is commonly conceptualised as the congruence between inner state and outward expression. Yet cross-cultural pragmatics has shown that communicative values travel poorly across linguistic borders. Speech communities may share the lexical label "sincere" while diverging in what counts as an appropriate display of candidness, how much emotion ought to be revealed and whether relational harmony can override speaker authenticity.

Anglo-American societies, shaped by Reformation ideals and liberal individualism, valorise the forthright self who "speaks their mind." Everyday discourse is peppered with markers such as honestly, frankly, or let me be clear, which presuppose a moral duty to verbalise internal convictions. At the same time, politeness constraints temper bluntness through mitigation devices, balancing authenticity with concern for the interlocutor's negative face. Uzbek communicative culture, informed by Islamic ethics, Turko-Persian literary traditions and collectivist social organisation, likewise prizes samimiylik—a term blending warmth, benevolence and truthful intent. However, the path to this value is relational rather than individual; the sincere speaker is one who nurtures and protects social bonds, not one who simply externalises inner feelings.

Scholars have examined sincerity in East Asian, Germanic and Romance contexts, yet Central Asian perspectives remain under-represented. Existing Uzbek studies focus on semantic definitions or literary rhetoric, leaving everyday pragmatics largely unexplored. Conversely,

Anglophone pragmatics has documented sincerity strategies but rarely juxtaposed them with typologically distant languages. Addressing this gap, the present study asks: How do Anglo-American and Uzbek speakers lexicalise and metaphorise sincerity? How are sincerity markers distributed across praise, criticism and disagreement? What moral assumptions underwrite their pragmatic deployment? By integrating corpus methods with ethnography, the article develops a culturally grounded account of sincerity as communicative practice.

Two spoken corpora were built between April 2023 and February 2025. The Anglo-American corpus comprises ninety BBC Radio 4 "Any Answers?" phone-ins, forty-five NPR "On Point" call-ins and twenty televised town-hall debates, totalling 180 243 words after transcription and cleaning. The Uzbek corpus contains seventy-eight episodes of the talk show "Ochiq Suhbat," twenty-seven family advice podcasts and twelve live-streamed round-tables, amounting to 175 587 words. All data were orthographically transcribed and annotated for speaker turn, gender and discourse activity (compliment, complaint, disagreement, narrative, or support).

Keyness analysis using the log-likelihood statistic ($p < 0.001$) identified lexical items strongly associated with sincerity. Concordance lines were then manually coded for pragmatic function. To reveal underlying imagery, metaphor identification followed the MIPVU protocol, tracing source-domain patterns such as CLARITY, STRAIGHTNESS or HEAT. Quantitative distributions of sincerity markers across speech activities were tested with χ^2 statistics.

Complementing the corpus work, thirty bilingual informants (fifteen Uzbek nationals living in the U.K. and fifteen U.K./U.S. nationals living in Uzbekistan, balanced for age and gender) participated in semi-structured interviews. Questions probed personal definitions of sincerity, memorable incidents of perceived honesty or insincerity and strategies for resolving misunderstandings. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically coded. Field observations at Uzbek wedding khutbas and U.S. community forums provided additional contextual insight.

Anglo-American data show high keyness for honest, honestly, frank, genuine, and straightforward. Collocates cluster around transparency and linearity: clear answer, straight talk, open admission. Metaphorically, sincerity aligns with visual clarity—light penetrating fog—or spatial straightness. In contrast, Uzbek texts feature samimiy, samimiyat, chin dil(da), ko'ngildan, and ochig'ini aytmoq. Collocates invoke tactile warmth and kinship: iliq samimiyat (warm sincerity), aka-uka samimiyati (brotherly sincerity). Metaphor analysis reveals a HEAT and HEART schema: sincerity "radiates" or "flows" from the heart, producing warmth in relationships.

In praise events, the pattern reverses. Uzbek compliments incorporate sincerity markers in 64 % of cases, as in sizga chin dildan rahmat (heartfelt thanks), compared with 35 % in Anglo-American compliments. Here sincerity operates as affective intensifier, reinforcing solidarity.

Complaints show nuanced use: Anglo-American complainants employ sincerity markers to foreground legitimacy ("I'm honestly disappointed"), whereas Uzbek complainants adopt empathy-laden formulations ("Samimiy gapirsam, siz ham qiynaldingiz"), aligning with the listener's presumed feelings.

Anglo-American informants equated sincerity with "saying what you really think," emphasising internal–external congruence. Several reported discomfort with Uzbek colleagues who "praise too effusively," interpreting exuberant compliments as flattery. Uzbek informants defined samimiylik as "truth from the heart that does not hurt," stressing relational intention. They

found Anglo-American bluntness "cold," perceiving repeated honesty disclaimers as rhetorical shields rather than genuine openness.

The evidence supports the claim that sincerity is culturally modelled along different moral axes. In Anglo-American discourse, sincerity is epistemic—concerned with the veridicality of information and alignment of words with beliefs. Transparency metaphors invoke vision and linear path metaphors evoke unobstructed movement from inner conviction to outer speech. Pragmatically, speakers weaponise sincerity to licence critical evaluation, signalling that truth-telling trumps social harmony. This aligns with a Protestant-liberal heritage that elevates individual conscience.

Uzbek samimiylik, by contrast, is affective and relational. Heart-heat metaphors frame sincerity as an emotional quality that can be felt by both parties, embedding truth in warmth. Speakers deploy samimiy markers to deepen solidarity, especially when celebrating achievements or offering moral support. When correcting or dissenting, they invoke sincerity sparingly and combine it with kinship address to avoid relational chill. These practices echo collectivist ethics stressing communal responsibility and face preservation.

Pragmatic divergence explains intercultural tensions. Anglo-American straightforwardness may breach Uzbek expectations of caring tone, being interpreted as brusque or indifferent. Conversely, Uzbek effusive praise may raise Anglo-American suspicion of ulterior motives. Educational programmes that explicate underlying metaphors and moral orders could reduce misinterpretation.

Methodologically, corpus evidence anchored in spontaneous interaction proves invaluable for revealing embedded norms that elude introspective judgements. The triangulation with interviews illuminates participants' metapragmatic awareness, confirming that speakers reflect explicitly on sincerity yet remain guided by tacit models.

Sincerity is not an abstract constant but a culturally configured communicative value. Anglo-American societies privilege a transparency model that justifies frank truth-telling, while Uzbek society cultivates a warmth model that merges honesty with relational care. Recognising these distinct models is essential for translators, diplomats and language educators who mediate between the two spheres. Future research should extend the corpus to digital comment threads and employ experimental designs to test listener perceptions of sincerity cues across languages.

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