

A COGNITIVE-PRAGMATIC MODEL OF NEGATIVE EMOTION VERBALIZATION: EVIDENCE FROM ENGLISH AND UZBEK MEDIA DISCOURSE

Baxramova Zamira Rahimovna

Independent researcher, Bukhara State Technical University, Uzbekistan

Abstract. This article proposes a five-stage cognitive-pragmatic model for analysing negative-emotion verbalization in English and Uzbek media discourse. The model—emotional situation → conceptualization → linguistic verbalization → pragmatic modification → discursive result—was developed from qualitative analysis of authentic television, interview, podcast, print and social-media materials collected for a comparative PhD study. It integrates cognitive framing, linguistic encoding and discourse-pragmatic function without treating the sequence as a universal psychological processing claim. Representative examples show that emotional meaning may be directly named, metaphorically construed, intensified, mitigated, contextually loaded or evaluatively reframed. The model explains how similar negative experiential domains can acquire different linguistic profiles in English and Uzbek and provides an analytical matrix for distinguishing lexical-semantic correspondence from pragmatic equivalence.

Keywords: cognitive-pragmatic model; negative emotions; verbalization; conceptualization; media discourse; English; Uzbek; pragmatics.

1. Introduction

Linguistic studies of emotion increasingly recognize that emotional meaning is not exhausted by naming a feeling. An emotional event is cognitively appraised, conceptually organized, encoded through linguistic resources, pragmatically adjusted to a communicative situation and interpreted by an addressee. Media discourse makes these relations especially visible because it combines personal experience, public evaluation and audience-oriented communication. The present article proposes a five-stage cognitive-pragmatic model for describing this process in English and Uzbek media discourse.

The model is formulated as emotional situation → conceptualization → linguistic verbalization → pragmatic modification → discursive result. Its purpose is not to claim a universal psychological sequence. Rather, it is an analytical model that integrates observations from the dissertation material into a transparent linguistic procedure. It links the event or condition that triggers affect with the way it is construed, the form selected to verbalize it, the pragmatic resources that recalibrate its force, and the communicative effect produced in discourse.

The research problem arises from the limitations of purely lexical description. Negative emotions may be named directly, but they can also be invoked through metaphor, phraseology, evaluation, grammar, intensification, mitigation or contextual implication. A single item may change pragmatic value across situations, and an apparently neutral expression may acquire negative affective meaning through discourse. The model therefore

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seeks to explain not merely which words denote negative emotion but how negative emotional meaning develops across interacting cognitive and pragmatic stages.

2. Conceptual Foundations of the Model

Cognitive linguistics provides the first theoretical pillar. Emotion concepts are structured through frames, metaphorical mappings and culturally informed conceptual models (Kövecses, 2000, 2014). Speakers do not simply retrieve labels; they construe an experience from a particular perspective. Appraisal research provides a second pillar by showing that evaluation can be graded and negotiated through linguistic resources (Martin & White, 2005; Bednarek, 2009). Discourse-pragmatic research provides the third pillar: emotional meaning is socially situated and shaped by interaction, stance and communicative purpose (Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2019).

The model also reflects the distinction between explicit and implicit emotion. A speaker may explicitly say nervous, sad or uyat, but emotion may also be inferred from figurative imagery, evaluative predicates, discourse markers or contextual contrast. Schwarz-Friesel (2015) emphasizes that implicit emotional meanings depend on inference and culturally shaped knowledge. Thus the transition from conceptualization to verbalization is not a one-to-one mapping between an emotion concept and a single lexical item.

Media discourse adds an important pragmatic dimension. Emotionalization is not only a matter of private feeling but also a public communicative resource (Zappettini et al., 2021). Speakers may intensify emotion to foreground seriousness, mitigate it to reduce interpersonal risk, metaphorize it to make an experience vivid, or reframe it to change its evaluative direction. The model therefore includes pragmatic modification as a separate analytical stage between verbal form and discursive outcome.

3. Materials and Analytical Procedure

The model was developed from a comparative PhD dataset consisting of English and Uzbek television programmes, interviews, podcasts, print media and social-media discourse. The material contains direct emotion terms, phraseological units, evaluative vocabulary, metaphors, grammatical markers, intensifiers, mitigators and discourse markers associated with negative affect. Representative English examples include kind of, bittersweet sad, freaked out, very nervous, freaking out, stressing out, nightmare and embarrassing. Uzbek examples include e'tiborsizlik, tashvish, adolatsizlik, nohaqlik, mehrsizlik, uyat and figurative constructions describing emotional burden.

The procedure is qualitative and reconstructive. For each fragment, the analysis begins with the communicative situation that makes an emotional interpretation relevant. It then identifies the conceptual frame through which the event is construed, the linguistic resources selected for verbalization, the devices that strengthen, soften or redirect the expression, and the observable discourse function. The final stage is described in terms of pragmatic outcome rather than psychological effect: for example, self-disclosure, empathy elicitation, criticism, alignment, warning, blame or social evaluation. No unobserved mental reaction is claimed.

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4. Stage One: Emotional Situation

The first stage is the emotional situation: an event, memory, social condition or interactional problem that makes negative affect relevant. In the English material, presenting at an awards ceremony provides the situation for “I was very nervous to present”; turning forty provides the situation for “freaking out” and “stressing out”; a difficult fight provides the situation for nightmare, embarrassing and tough. In the Uzbek material, perceived lack of attention, injustice, lack of affection and social pressure provide situations in which *e'tiborsizlik*, *adolatsizlik*, *nohaqlik* and *mehrsizlik* become salient.

This stage is necessary because the same linguistic expression can receive different affective values in different situations. Getting older, for instance, is not inherently a negative-emotion expression, yet in a context of anxiety about turning forty it becomes part of a negative emotional frame. Similarly, a reference to failure can evoke disappointment in one context but become positively reframed as a source of learning in another. Emotional interpretation therefore begins with situated relevance.

5. Stage Two: Conceptualization

Conceptualization concerns how the emotional situation is cognitively framed. The speaker may construe it as threat, loss, injustice, shame, pressure, interpersonal neglect or difficulty. This stage explains why semantically related items are not interchangeable. Freaking out and stressing out both relate to anxiety, but the former construes acute agitation whereas the latter profiles sustained pressure. *Adolatsizlik* and *nohaqlik* conceptualize emotional hurt through the frame of violated fairness rather than through direct naming of sadness or anger.

Metaphor is especially important at this stage. In “He must have been a nightmare to fight,” a difficult opponent is conceptualized through the NIGHTMARE frame. In the Uzbek expression “*o'zini dardiga, o'zini muammosiga qovurilib yuribdi*,” prolonged concern is construed through an embodied image of being consumed or scorched by one's own pain and problems. These examples show how conceptualization can supply emotional intensity before explicit grammatical intensification is added.

6. Stage Three: Linguistic Verbalization

The third stage is the selection of linguistic form. Negative emotion may be verbalized by direct lexical nomination, phraseology, metaphor, evaluative adjectives, grammatical constructions or discourse markers. English nervous, sad and terrible are relatively direct lexical realizations, while freaked out and stressing out are colloquial phrasal realizations. Uzbek *uyat*, *tashvish* and *mehrsizlik* directly name or categorize negative states and conditions, whereas figurative constructions extend the semantic representation.

The dissertation material demonstrates that verbalization is multi-level. Negative affect is not restricted to a list of emotion nouns or adjectives. Modal and grammatical resources, intensifiers, mitigating markers, phraseological units, metaphorical expressions, evaluative wording, syntactic repetition and discourse markers can all participate in its realization. This stage therefore records the linguistic package through which the conceptualized experience enters discourse.

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7. Stage Four: Pragmatic Modification

Pragmatic modification explains how the selected verbal form is recalibrated for the communicative situation. Mitigation reduces categorical force or interpersonal risk. In “kind of, bittersweet sad,” kind of makes the host’s emotional attribution tentative. Intensification has the opposite effect: very in very nervous and really in really tough increase the salience of the emotional assessment. Such resources modify not only degree but also the speaker’s stance toward the proposition and the addressee.

Metaphorization can also function pragmatically by making an experience vivid and memorable. Nightmare intensifies the construal of difficulty without explicitly saying extremely difficult. Uzbek figurative wording similarly increases expressive force and can invite empathy. Evaluative items such as terrible or xudbinlashib ketdi position the speaker in relation to the event and may invite the audience to share that evaluation. Pragmatic modification is thus the point at which linguistic form becomes strategically adapted to discourse purpose.

The same stage can include re-framing. The statement “failure is a wonderful teacher” takes a normally negative concept and changes its evaluative direction through metaphorical predication. This shows that pragmatic modification is not limited to increasing or decreasing intensity; it may reorganize the interpretive frame itself.

8. Stage Five: Discursive Result

The final stage is the discursive result, understood as the communicative function made available by the preceding stages. A negative-emotion expression may disclose vulnerability, elicit empathy, criticize behaviour, align with another participant, warn an audience, justify a position or evaluate a social problem. In the interview examples, very nervous and freaked out construct personal vulnerability. Terrible aligns with a preceding negative assessment. In the Uzbek examples, e’tiborsizlik and xudbinlashib ketdi move from personal feeling toward social criticism.

The model deliberately uses the term discursive result rather than psychological effect. Linguistic analysis can identify how an utterance is designed to invite empathy or strengthen criticism, but it cannot automatically prove the actual internal response of every audience member. This distinction makes the model methodologically cautious and suitable for qualitative media analysis.

9. Comparative Application to English and Uzbek

Applied comparatively, the model reveals both shared architecture and different realizational preferences. In both languages an emotional situation is conceptually framed, verbalized and pragmatically modified before acquiring a discourse function. The shared sequence reflects the analytical organization of emotional meaning rather than a claim that speakers consciously pass through five discrete steps.

Within the analysed English material, mitigation, gradation and indirect contextual loading are recurrent. Kind of negotiates emotional attribution, very and really grade intensity, and nightmare packages negative evaluation metaphorically. Within the Uzbek material, direct naming of socially meaningful negative conditions often combines with

figurative, evaluative and culturally resonant elaboration. The model allows these differences to be compared at the appropriate stage instead of treating all differences as lexical.

This is important for comparative linguistics because two expressions can be close at the level of emotion domain but different at the level of conceptualization or pragmatic modification. A translation equivalent may preserve the broad category of anxiety yet alter colloquiality, intensity, interpersonal force or cultural imagery. The five-stage model therefore provides a matrix for distinguishing semantic equivalence from pragmatic equivalence.

10. Scientific Contribution and Limitations

The scientific contribution of the model is integrative. It brings together cognitive framing, linguistic encoding and pragmatic function within one comparative sequence. Existing approaches provide powerful accounts of metaphor, appraisal, evaluation and discourse emotion, but the present model operationalizes these insights for the specific task of comparing negative-emotion verbalization in English and Uzbek media discourse. It also makes explicit the transition from contextual trigger to discourse function.

The model should be understood as an analytical heuristic derived from the dissertation material. It is not presented as a neurological or universal processing model, and it does not claim fixed temporal ordering in actual cognition. Some stages may overlap in naturally occurring speech. Its value lies in enabling systematic description and comparison. Future research can test the framework on a larger annotated corpus, additional media genres and other language pairs.

11. Conclusion

The proposed sequence—emotional situation → conceptualization → linguistic verbalization → pragmatic modification → discursive result—offers a structured account of how negative emotional meaning can be analysed in English and Uzbek media discourse. It explains why lexical meaning alone is insufficient: the emotional value of an utterance depends on the situation being construed, the conceptual frame selected, the linguistic resources used, and the pragmatic adjustments made for a particular communicative purpose.

The model also clarifies the comparative relationship between English and Uzbek material. Shared emotional domains do not guarantee identical verbal or pragmatic realization. The analysed English samples frequently display mitigation, gradation and indirect framing, whereas the Uzbek samples frequently combine direct nomination with figurative and evaluative expansion. By locating these tendencies within separate analytical stages, the model provides a more precise basis for comparative linguistics, pragmatics, translation studies and media discourse analysis.

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