

EMOTIVE DEVICES AS PERSUASIVE AND COERCIVE TACTICS: A CONTRASTIVE PRAGMATIC STUDY OF HOSSEINI'S *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS* AND CHO'L PON'S *KECHA VA KUNDUZ*

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Abstract. *This study examines how emotionally charged speech operates as a strategic instrument of interpersonal control in two novels set in patriarchal domestic worlds: Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and Abdulhamid Cho'lpon's *Kecha va Kunduz* (1936). Through a contrastive pragmatic analysis grounded in emotive linguistics, the theory of communicative tactics, and politeness theory, it treats persuasion and coercion as paired poles of a single continuum and asks how characters mobilize flattery, euphemism, conditional tenderness, guilt, threat, and contempt to steer or constrain the choices of others. A close reading of selected family dialogues identifies structurally matched tactics across both texts despite their linguistic, historical, and cultural distance. The findings indicate that emotive devices function less as spontaneous expressions of feeling than as calculated face-work aimed at securing compliance, and that contempt and endurance emerge as the affective residue of these exchanges.*

Keywords: *emotive devices, persuasion, coercion, communicative tactics, face-threatening acts, contrastive pragmatics*

Introduction

Within the patriarchal households of Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and Cho'lpon's *Kecha va Kunduz*, speech among family members is seldom neutral. It pressures, soothes, shames, and flatters, doing work that plain description cannot. Readings of both novels have largely treated emotional language thematically, as a sign of suffering or resilience, rather than as deliberate communicative action aimed at a result. That emphasis obscures the listener's position—what a given utterance is trying to make the hearer do. This study reframes emotive language as tactical, treating persuasion and coercion not as separate phenomena but as two poles of a single continuum of influence along which emotive devices move the speaker. Three questions guide the analysis: which emotive devices recur in the family dialogues of both novels; how they realize persuasion as against coercion; and what patterns emerge when two texts of different languages and periods are read together. The novels are not counterparts, and the comparison does not treat them as equivalent; their separation by language, era, and culture is taken as an analytically productive asymmetry.

Method

The study uses contrastive pragmatic analysis of purposively selected dialogue episodes in which emotion is central to an act of influence. From Hosseini these are the co-wives' euphemistic pressure on Mariam, Jalil's evasive affection, Rasheed's conditional tenderness and emotion-policing, and Nana's guilt-and-threat sequence; from Cho'lpon, Qurvonbibi's flattery-based persuasion of Razzoq so'fi, the stepbrother's land-based appeal, and the so'fi's contemptuous epithets. The framework is layered: Shakhovsky's emotive devices identify the lexical machinery; Issers's communicative strategies and tactics supply each move's goal; Brown and Levinson's politeness theory characterizes face and face-threatening acts (FTAs); Safarov's and Toirova's ethnosociopragmatics situates appeals within culturally specific values; and Plekhanova frames dialogue as analyzable discourse. Each episode was coded for its emotive device, the tactic served, its orientation toward persuasion or coercion, and its effect on the addressee's face, after which the texts were compared. Quotations are kept short and paraphrased in context, and the most degrading epithets are described rather than reproduced. Hosseini is cited by chapter, as the e-text consulted lacks stable print pagination, while Cho'lpon is cited by page from the digital edition used; both locators let readers trace each example.

Results

At the cooperative end of the continuum stands Qurvonbibi, who secures Razzoq so'fi's permission for their daughter to travel not by demand but by patient, deferential framing. She opens the appeal "dadillik va bemalollik bilan" [boldly and at ease] and leans on the so'fi's regard for status, warning that to refuse an eshon's invitation would shame him: "Katta odam, uyat bo'ladi" [he is a great man; it would be shameful] (Cho'lpon, 1936, p. 17). Zebi names the tactic outright—her mother is "gapga usta" [skilled with words] and knows that invoking an eshon disarms him. The move is persuasion proper: positive politeness aimed at the hearer's face, and it works. Yet the narrator exposes its material base, since Qurvonbibi grasps that the favor came "pulning kuchi bilan" [by the power of money], the so'fi having just been paid (p. 18).

At the opposite end, Hosseini's speakers pursue compliance while masking the threat. Jalil's co-wives present a forced marriage to a stranger more than twice Mariam's age as good news, then frame submission as fortune: "You may not get another opportunity this good" (Hosseini, 2007, Chapter 7). The narrator strips the euphemism, naming their real aim—to erase the last trace of their husband's scandal. Rasheed works the same disguise more intimately: he pairs a gift of tuberoses, Mariam's namesake flower, with an immediate demand for return—"You can thank me then" (Hosseini, 2007, Chapter 9)—then polices permitted feeling, professing "no patience" for a woman's crying and ordering her to behave like a wife. Tenderness becomes conditional currency whose threatened withdrawal coerces.

Nana's coercion is barest of all. She escalates from scorn through mockery—a man's heart, she says, “won't bleed, it won't stretch”—to open blackmail: “I'll die if you go,” capped by “You are nothing!” (Hosseini, 2007, Chapter 5). Negative emotion is weaponized to foreclose Mariam's autonomy, and the single skill Nana bequeaths her, “Endure” (Hosseini, 2007, Chapter 3), supplies the title's second pole. Jalil, by contrast, neither persuades nor threatens but evades: begged to refuse the marriage, he avoids Mariam's eyes, fixes on a water pitcher, and finally groans “don't do this to me” (Hosseini, 2007, Chapter 7), recasting himself as the injured party so as to deflect an unwelcome appeal without an on-record refusal.

Cho'lpon supplies the mirror of both moves. The so'fi's stepbrother attempts an earnest appeal, urging him to sell the city house and farm together and grounding it in homeland and mortality: “Yerdan aziz hech narsa yo'q” [nothing is more precious than land] and “Shaharni tashlang!” [leave the city!] (Cho'lpon, 1936, p. 13). The so'fi evades precisely as Jalil does—admiring a colt, pleading the hour of prayer—and the appeal collapses; the brother departs “noumid” [disheartened] (p. 14). The failure is diagnostic, exposing a hearer loyal to status and ease rather than land. Where evasion fails him, the so'fi turns to contempt: to his wife and the girls he issues bald, on-record insults—a habitual derogatory nickname and a run of animal epithets (pp. 15–16)—that seek not compliance but degradation, the dominance answering Qurvonbibi's deference.

Discussion

Read through this framework, emotive language in both novels is tactical rather than merely expressive, and the persuasion–coercion continuum becomes legible. Positive-face appeals such as Qurvonbibi's flattery sit at one end; openly face-threatening pressure—guilt, blackmail, contempt—sits at the other; and euphemism and conditional tenderness occupy the middle, where coercion is disguised as care. Politeness theory explains the disguise, since speakers in unequal relationships redress or mask FTAs (face-threatening act) to preserve a veneer of solidarity. The most striking result is convergence across difference: two narratives separated by some seventy years, by language, and by culture deploy structurally matched tactics, and even share a device—evasion—in Jalil and the so'fi, who each deflect an earnest appeal rather than refuse it outright. This suggests that the emotive grammar of domestic control is broadly shared even where its cultural content—land, honor, piety, kinship—differs. The ethnosociopragmatic lens explains the one clear failure: the stepbrother's appeal collapses because it misreads its hearer's values. Contempt and endurance frame the whole: contempt is the affect of the speaker secure in dominance, endurance what the dominated are left to perform. The study's limits—a small corpus, translation, and interpretive judgment—are real, but the central finding holds: intimate speech here is an instrument of power.

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