TRUST-BUILDING STRATEGIES IN PARENT–TEEN COMMUNICATION: A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF UZBEK AND AMERICAN FAMILIES

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Abstract: *This article explores trust-building strategies in parent–teen communication from a pragmatic and cross-cultural perspective, focusing on Uzbek and American families. Trust is viewed as a fundamental component of effective family interaction and adolescent development. The study analyzes how parents employ pragmatic strategies such as advice-giving, emotional support, indirectness, praise, and shared decision-making to establish and maintain trust. Drawing on speech act theory and politeness theory, the paper highlights both universal and culture-specific patterns of parental discourse. The findings demonstrate that while Uzbek families tend to favor directive and authority-based strategies, American families rely more on egalitarian and supportive communication styles. These differences reflect broader cultural values and social norms influencing family discourse.*

Keywords: *parent–teen communication, trust-building, pragmatics, Uzbek families, American families, speech acts, politeness strategies*
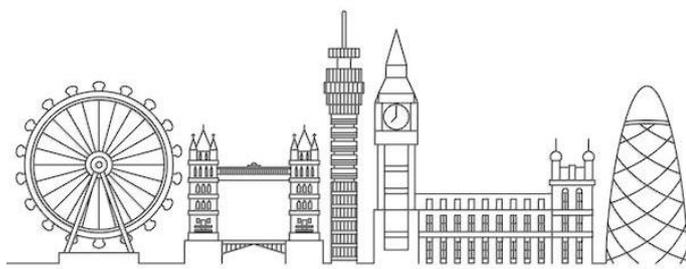
Introduction

Trust plays a crucial role in parent–teen relationships, shaping adolescents' emotional well-being, social adjustment, and moral development. Effective communication between parents and teenagers is a primary mechanism through which trust is constructed, negotiated, and maintained. From a pragmatic perspective, parental speech is not merely informative but performative, influencing teenagers' perceptions of care, authority, and respect (Austin, 1962)[1].

Cross-cultural studies indicate that communication styles in families are deeply embedded in cultural values such as collectivism, individualism, power distance, and social hierarchy (Hofstede, 2001)[2]. Uzbek families, rooted in collectivist and tradition-oriented values, often emphasize parental authority and obedience, whereas American families, shaped by individualism and egalitarianism, prioritize autonomy and emotional expressiveness. This study aims to compare trust-building strategies in Uzbek and American parent–teen communication through a pragmatic lens.

Theoretical Framework (Speech Act Theory and Family Discourse)

Speech act theory posits that utterances perform actions such as advising, warning, promising, and encouraging (Searle, 1976)[3]. In parent–teen interaction, these speech acts

function as tools for socialization and trust-building. For example, advice and encouragement serve to guide behavior while signaling parental care.

Politeness and Face Management

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory emphasizes the importance of face-saving strategies in interpersonal communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987)[4]. In family discourse, parents balance authority with politeness to avoid threatening teenagers' negative and positive face. Indirectness, hedging, and softening devices are often used to maintain relational harmony.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative comparative approach based on naturally occurring conversational data and semi-structured interviews with 20 Uzbek and 20 American families. Parent–teen interactions were transcribed and coded according to pragmatic strategies:

direct advice

emotional support

praise and encouragement

indirect requests

shared decision-making

The data were analyzed using discourse-pragmatic methods to identify dominant trust-building patterns in each cultural context.

Trust-Building Strategies in Uzbek Families

Uzbek parents frequently employ directive speech acts such as commands and strong advice (You must study harder, You should respect elders). These utterances reflect hierarchical family relations and the cultural value placed on obedience and discipline (Karimova, 2015)[5].

Moral Instruction and Religious References

Trust is often reinforced through moral and religious discourse. Parents invoke ethical principles and spiritual values to legitimize advice, thereby strengthening the moral authority of their utterances.

Limited Emotional Explicitness

Although care is deeply felt, Uzbek parents tend to express emotional support indirectly. Praise is used sparingly, as excessive verbal affirmation is sometimes perceived as weakening discipline.

Trust-Building Strategies in American Families

American parents rely heavily on emotional expressiveness and validation (I'm proud of you, I understand how you feel). Such utterances function as positive politeness strategies that reinforce adolescents' self-esteem (Gordon & Chen, 2013)[6].

Advice is often framed indirectly (Maybe you could try…, What do you think about…?), which respects teenagers' autonomy and minimizes face threats.

Shared Decision-Making

American parents frequently involve teenagers in decision-making processes, fostering mutual trust and responsibility.

Cross-Cultural Comparison

The comparative analysis reveals that Uzbek families prioritize authority-based trust grounded in respect and moral obligation, whereas American families emphasize relational trust built on emotional openness and autonomy. These differences correspond to broader cultural dimensions such as collectivism versus individualism and high versus low power distance (Hofstede, 2001)[2].

Despite these differences, both cultures share universal strategies such as advice-giving and encouragement, confirming the cross-cultural relevance of pragmatic trust-building mechanisms.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that trust-building in parent–teen communication is a pragmatically structured process shaped by cultural values and social norms. Uzbek families rely more on directive and morally grounded strategies, while American families favor emotional support and egalitarian dialogue. Understanding these pragmatic differences is essential for educators, psychologists, and intercultural communication specialists working with families from diverse cultural backgrounds. Future research may expand the data corpus and incorporate quantitative measures to further validate these findings.

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