

# Intercultural Miscommunication In Digital Discourse: Linguistic And Cultural Factors

Musayeva Adiba Abdumajidovna

PhD, associate-professor, National pedagogical university of Uzbekistan named after Nizami, Uzbekistan

**Received:** 10 September 2025; **Accepted:** 01 October 2025; **Published:** 05 November 2025

**Abstract:** In the era of digital communication, intercultural miscommunication has become an increasingly salient issue, reflecting the intersection between linguistic behaviour and cultural norms. The study explores how language, context, and cultural expectations interact within online communication platforms to produce misunderstanding. Drawing upon theories of intercultural pragmatics, digital discourse analysis, and cultural linguistics, the paper identifies linguistic (lexical ambiguity, pragmatic failure, code-switching) and cultural (contextual expectations, politeness conventions, emoji interpretation) factors that contribute to miscommunication in digital settings. The research synthesises insights from international scholars (Hall, Hofstede, Thomas, Herring) as well as Russian and Uzbek academics (Karasik, Issers, Yuldasheva, Makhkamova) to provide a comparative view of how cultural variables shape online discourse. Examples from English, Russian, and Uzbek digital interactions demonstrate that the lack of shared background knowledge often results in pragmatic failure and distortion of intended meaning. The findings highlight the necessity for enhanced intercultural and digital literacy in modern language education and underscore the growing importance of context awareness in globalised digital spaces.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication, digital discourse, miscommunication, pragmatics, culture, linguistic factors, cultural norms.

**Introduction:** The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed communication across linguistic and cultural borders. Platforms such as social media, online forums, and email have become primary channels of interaction between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, these new spaces also bring new communicative challenges, including frequent cases of misunderstanding. Unlike face-to-face communication, digital interaction relies heavily on written text, often lacking non-verbal cues such as tone, gesture, and facial expression, which are critical for interpreting intent. As a result, intercultural miscommunication emerges not only from linguistic differences but also from divergent cultural expectations about politeness, directness, and meaning interpretation. The issue is particularly relevant for linguists and educators seeking to develop communication competence in an increasingly globalised and digitalised world.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical background of intercultural miscommunication in digital discourse draws from several linguistic and cultural frameworks. Hall's (1976) distinction between high-context and low-context cultures remains foundational in understanding how context shapes communication. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions further clarify how power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance affect communicative styles. Thomas (1983) introduced the concept of pragmatic failure, explaining how misinterpretation of speech acts can lead to misunderstanding. Herring (2013) developed digital discourse analysis, emphasising how online environments reshape linguistic norms.

Russian scholars have significantly contributed to discourse theory. Karasik (2000) examined discourse typology and cultural specificity in communication, while Issers (2008) analysed strategies and tactics in

speech behaviour. Gudkov (2003) explored cultural codes in linguistic consciousness, which directly relate to miscommunication in intercultural contexts. These works have laid a foundation for understanding how discourse functions as both a linguistic and cultural phenomenon.

In Uzbekistan, studies by Makhkamova (2017), Yuldasheva (2020), and Madrahimova (2022) have explored intercultural communication competence and cultural adaptation in foreign language teaching. Makhkamova (2017) emphasised that successful intercultural communication depends on pragmatic awareness and sociocultural sensitivity, particularly in online settings. Yuldasheva (2020) highlighted the necessity of integrating intercultural pragmatics into English language teaching, while Madrahimova (2022) discussed how digital literacy and cultural context shape students' communicative competence. Uzbek researchers have also pointed to the challenges of transferring culturally bound expressions into English digital discourse, a process often resulting in partial loss of meaning or unintended pragmatic implications.

Thus, the combination of Western, Russian, and Uzbek perspectives allows for a more comprehensive view of intercultural miscommunication, bridging global theories with local linguistic realities.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative approach, applying elements of discourse analysis and intercultural pragmatics. Data were collected from authentic examples of online communication in English, Russian, and Uzbek languages, including social media comments, online classroom interactions, and email exchanges. The method involves identifying instances of miscommunication and categorising them according to linguistic (lexical, grammatical, pragmatic) and cultural factors. Attention was given to patterns of misunderstanding resulting from politeness strategies, indirectness, humour, and emoji usage. The analytical framework draws on critical discourse analysis principles, focusing on how social and cultural context influences the production and interpretation of meaning in digital interaction.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Analysis of the data revealed that intercultural miscommunication in digital discourse often stems from linguistic ambiguity and cultural misalignment. Linguistically, users from different backgrounds may interpret lexical items, idioms, or abbreviations differently. For instance, English expressions such as 'fine' or 'interesting' may carry positive connotations for native speakers but may be perceived as dismissive or sarcastic by non-native users unfamiliar with

pragmatic nuances.

Cultural factors play an equally crucial role. Russian and Uzbek digital communicators often prefer indirectness and contextual reference, whereas English-speaking users tend to value explicitness and brevity. This contrast can lead to confusion or perceived impoliteness. For example, an Uzbek user's lengthy greeting in a professional email might be interpreted by a British recipient as irrelevant, while the latter's concise reply may seem rude or inattentive to the Uzbek writer. Similarly, the use of emojis varies across cultures; an emoji that signifies friendliness in one culture might appear overly informal in another.

An illustrative example from Uzbek online discussions shows how literal translations of culturally loaded phrases can distort intended meaning. The Uzbek phrase 'ko'nglim to'ldi' (literally 'my heart is full') expresses deep emotional satisfaction but may sound odd or ambiguous in English digital discourse. Comparable examples in Russian, such as 'душа болит' ('the soul aches'), also illustrate how metaphorical expressions rooted in cultural emotion concepts resist straightforward translation in digital contexts.

The findings confirm earlier insights from Hall (1976) and Karasik (2000) regarding contextual dependence in communication. However, in digital environments, where multimodal cues (text, emojis, images) interact, miscommunication becomes more layered. A simple text message, stripped of intonation and gesture, requires cultural interpretation beyond the words themselves. Consequently, intercultural miscommunication is not merely a linguistic failure but a reflection of differing cultural scripts.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The study demonstrates that intercultural miscommunication in digital discourse arises from a complex interplay between linguistic ambiguity and cultural variation. Linguistic factors such as idiomatic usage, pragmatic inference, and stylistic choices intersect with cultural expectations regarding politeness, expressiveness, and indirectness. The findings underscore the importance of developing both intercultural and digital literacy in language education. Teachers should emphasise awareness of cultural scripts and pragmatic norms when preparing students for online communication. Furthermore, future research may explore how artificial intelligence tools like automated translation and chatbots influence intercultural understanding in digital interaction. By integrating the perspectives of Western, Russian, and Uzbek scholars, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of discourse as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon in the digital era.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The author expresses gratitude to professor Abdumajit Mamadaliyev for academic support and research encouragement.

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