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COGNITIVE AND PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF CONSENT IN FICTION²⁶**Maxmudova Komila Sobirjanovna***Assistant Lecturer at the Samarkand State**Institute of Foreign Languages**Samarkand, Uzbekistan**E-mail: mila.maxmudova277@gmail.com**ORCID ID: 0009-0003-5718-1519*

ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
This article comparatively examines the cognitive and pragmatic interpretation of consent in English and Uzbek fictional discourse. The research problem is that consent is often described only through explicit affirmative units such as “yes”, “I agree”, “mayli” or “roziman”, whereas literary discourse frequently constructs it through silence, pause, gesture, modality, interpersonal distance, the emotional state of a character and the narrator’s framing. The aim of the article is to describe consent as a speech act, a contextual implicature, a mental model and a culturally shaped concept. The methodological framework combines discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis, conceptual analysis and comparative interpretation. The findings show that consent in fiction may appear as direct affirmation, indirect acceptance, a politeness strategy, a mechanism of conflict avoidance and an index of social hierarchy. The article concludes that consent in fictional discourse is not a simple lexical unit of agreement but a layered cognitive-pragmatic process whose meaning is produced through intention, context, cultural norms and narrative evaluation.	Consent, fictional discourse, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, speech act, implicature, context, cultural concept, communicative intention. Received: May 21, 2026 Accepted: June 02, 2026 Available online: September 5, 2026

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BADIY DISKURSDA ROZILIKNING KOGNITIV-PRAGMATIK JIHATLARI

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ANNOTATSIYA	KALIT SO'ZLAR
Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek badiiy diskursida rozilik konseptining kognitiv va pragmatik talqini qiyosiy jihatdan o'rganiladi. Rozilik ko'pincha faqat ochiq tasdiq ma'nosidagi "ha", "mayli", "roziman", "I agree" kabi birliklar orqali izohlanadi, ammo badiiy matnda u sukut, pauza, imo-ishora, modal ifoda, ijtimoiy masofa, qahramon ruhiyati va muallif bayoni bilan ham shakllanadi. Maqolaning maqsadi rozilikni nutq akti, kontekstual implikatura, mental model va madaniy konsept sifatida tavsiflashdir. Metodologik asos sifatida diskurs tahlili, pragmatik tahlil, konseptual tahlil va qiyosiy talqin usullari qo'llanildi. Natijalar rozilikning to'g'ridan-to'g'ri javob, bilvosita qabul, xushmuomalalik strategiyasi, ziddiyatdan qochish mexanizmi va ijtimoiy iyerarxiyani ko'rsatuvchi belgi sifatida namoyon bo'lishini ko'rsatdi. Xulosa sifatida rozilik badiiy diskursda oddiy leksik birlik emas, balki niyat, kontekst, madaniy me'yor va narrativ baholash orqali talqin qilinadigan ko'p qatlamli kognitiv-pragmatik jarayon ekani asoslandi. Tadqiqot natijalari tarjima, matn tahlili va madaniyatlararo pragmatika uchun ham amaliy ahamiyatga ega bo'lib, rozilik ifodalarini faqat so'zma-so'z emas, vaziyatga bog'liq holda talqin qilish zarurligini ko'rsatadi.	Rozilik, badiiy diskurs, kognitiv lingvistika, pragmatika, nutq akti, implikatura, kontekst, madaniy konsept, kommunikativ niyat.

КОГНИТИВНО-ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ СОГЛАСИЯ В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

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АННОТАЦИЯ	КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА
В статье в сопоставительном плане исследуются когнитивные и прагматические особенности концепта согласия в английском и узбекском художественном дискурсе. Проблема, которой посвящено исследование, состоит в том, что согласие нередко объясняется только через прямые формулы подтверждения, например “да”, “согласен”, “mayli” или “I agree”, тогда как в литературном тексте оно часто передается молчанием, паузой, жестом, модальностью, социальным расстоянием, внутренним состоянием персонажа и авторским повествованием. Цель статьи заключается в описании согласия как речевого акта, контекстуальной импликатуры, ментальной модели и культурного концепта. В качестве методологической основы использованы дискурсивный, прагматический, концептуальный и сравнительно-сопоставительный методы анализа. Результаты показывают, что согласие в художественном тексте проявляется как прямой ответ, косвенное принятие, стратегия вежливости, способ предупреждения конфликта и маркер социальной иерархии. Делается вывод, что согласие является не простой лексической единицей, а многоуровневым когнитивно-прагматическим процессом, интерпретируемым через намерение, контекст, культурную норму и нарративную оценку. Полученные результаты имеют практическое значение для анализа художественного текста, перевода и межкультурной прагматики, поскольку показывают необходимость интерпретации согласия не только буквально, но и с учетом ситуации общения.	Согласие, художественный дискурс, когнитивная лингвистика, прагматика, речевой акт, импликатура, контекст, культурный концепт, коммуникативное намерение.

INTRODUCTION

The question of consent occupies an important place in contemporary linguistics because it connects language with intention, responsibility, interpersonal alignment and social interpretation. In ordinary communication people do not only exchange grammatical sentences; they accept, refuse, hesitate, soften their position and adapt themselves to the expectations of others. Fictional discourse is especially productive for observing these processes. Literary texts show what characters say openly, what they leave unsaid, what they imply through behaviour and how other participants interpret their actions. For this reason, consent in fiction cannot be reduced to the lexical equivalents of yes, agree, mayli or roziman. It is a discourse-based phenomenon that emerges from utterance, situation, character psychology and cultural expectation.

The relevance of the topic is connected with the anthropocentric orientation of modern linguistics. Pragmatics and cognitive linguistics treat meaning as the result of human action, mental representation and social context. Speech-act theory demonstrates that utterances do not merely describe reality; they perform actions within conventional and interpersonal conditions (Austin J. L., 1962, 1-12; Searle J. R., 1969, 22-25). Consent is one of these actions. When a character says “I agree,” accepts an invitation, follows a request or remains silent in a decisive situation, the text presents an act of communicative positioning. The act may be clear and stable, or it may remain open to inference and later reinterpretation.

The novelty of this article lies in approaching consent simultaneously as a pragmatic act and as a cognitive concept. Pragmatically, consent is connected with illocutionary force, conversational implicature, politeness, relevance of context and social interpretation. Cognitively, it includes evaluation, intention, emotional readiness and a mental model of interpersonal compatibility. In fiction these dimensions are rarely separated. A short affirmative phrase can express genuine acceptance, respectful obedience, emotional dependence, irony, resignation or concealed disagreement. Therefore, the same linguistic form may have different pragmatic meanings, while different forms may realize the same conceptual content.

The object of the research is English and Uzbek fictional discourse. The subject is the cognitive-pragmatic realization of consent in dialogic and narrative fragments. The aim is to identify how consent is verbalized, implied and interpreted in fiction, with attention to explicit and implicit forms, speech-act characteristics, cognitive mechanisms and cultural-pragmatic variation. The objectives are to clarify the theoretical status of consent as a cognitive-pragmatic category, to describe direct and indirect linguistic forms of consent, to explain how context and inference shape its interpretation and to compare the tendencies observable in English and Uzbek literary communication.

The research is significant because fictional texts model social interaction in a condensed and meaningful form. Characters often communicate under emotional pressure, family obligation, social hierarchy, romantic expectation or moral conflict. In such situations consent is rarely a neutral answer. It may become a sign of trust, compromise, politeness, dependence or hidden resistance. A cognitive-pragmatic analysis helps to distinguish these meanings and to explain why readers understand a character's consent even when the text does not present an explicit affirmative formula. Recent research on pragmatic interpretation in literary study also confirms that literature can develop sensitivity to indirect meaning and communicative intention (Munir E., Yavuz M. A., 2024, e39558).

MAIN PART

Consent in linguistic terms may be described as the speaker's acceptance of a proposal, request, judgement, plan, social role or communicative initiative. This definition, however, is too narrow for literary discourse if it is limited to direct verbal agreement. In a fictional text consent is usually represented through several layers: the verbal layer, the pragmatic layer, the cognitive layer and the narrative layer. The verbal layer includes markers such as yes, certainly, of course, I agree, ha, xo'p, mayli and roziman. The pragmatic layer concerns the communicative function of these markers. The cognitive layer includes the speaker's internal evaluation, while the narrative layer shows how the author directs the reader toward a particular interpretation.

From the point of view of speech-act theory, consent can be regarded as a responsive act because it usually reacts to a previous utterance or situation. At the same time, it may have commissive force when the speaker accepts a future obligation. For example, a character's "I will" in response to another person's request does more than report a possible intention; it commits the character to a course of action. Searle's classification of illocutionary acts is helpful in this respect, although fiction often complicates strict categories because one response may combine agreement, promise, obedience and emotional submission (Searle J. R., 1969, 57-62).

The pragmatic interpretation of consent depends on context. Grice's theory of conversational implicature explains why consent may be understood even when it is not directly stated (Grice H. P., 1975, 41-58). A character who does not object at a crucial moment, changes behaviour after a request or gives a minimal response may be interpreted as accepting the communicative initiative. Yet this interpretation is not automatic. Silence may mean consent, fear, politeness, confusion or resistance. The reader has to connect the utterance or non-utterance with the wider discourse situation and with the degree of freedom available to the character.

Politeness is another important dimension of consent. Brown and Levinson's account of face-work shows that speakers often choose indirectness, mitigation and respectful forms in order to preserve interpersonal harmony (Brown P., Levinson S. C., 1987, 61-68). In fiction, consent may serve the same function. A character may agree not because the proposition is fully accepted internally, but because open disagreement would threaten family authority, social hierarchy or emotional closeness. Such consent is socially meaningful even when it is psychologically unstable. The form sounds cooperative, while the narrative context may reveal pressure or inner conflict.

Cognitive linguistics contributes to the analysis by treating consent as part of conceptual organization rather than as a single word. Lakoff's theory of categorization and Fauconnier's mental-space theory show that meaning is built through conceptual frames, associations and mental connections (Fauconnier G.,

1994, 16-18; Lakoff G., 1987, 5-11). Consent in fiction may therefore be described as a frame that includes an initiating action, an evaluating subject, a possible alternative, a degree of acceptance, an expected consequence and a social relation between participants. When one of these elements' changes, the meaning of consent also changes.

In Uzbek communicative culture consent is frequently associated with respect, deference and relational harmony. Expressions such as “mayli”, “xo‘p bo‘ladi” and “siz aytgandek bo‘lsin” can convey agreement, but they may also indicate politeness, acceptance of authority or avoidance of confrontation. In English fictional discourse consent is often verbalized through more explicit agreement formulas, yet indirectness remains important in emotionally delicate situations. This contrast should not be simplified as a rigid opposition between “direct English” and “indirect Uzbek” communication. Both traditions use direct and indirect forms; the difference lies in the pragmatic conditions under which a form becomes socially appropriate.

Consent also has an emotional dimension. A character may agree willingly, reluctantly, ironically or under pressure. Wierzbicka's studies of culturally shaped key words show that emotional and evaluative meanings are not universal in their expression; they are connected with language-specific and culture-specific conceptualizations (Wierzbicka A., 1997, 1-24). In fiction this means that consent cannot be separated from a character's emotional state. A brief affirmative response may be accompanied by hesitation, lowered eyes, a pause, a sigh or an abrupt change in narration. These details guide the reader toward a more nuanced interpretation than the verbal expression alone would allow.

The following table presents the main forms of consent identified in the cognitive-pragmatic model used in this article. The classification is not mechanical; it is a working analytical scheme for examining how literary texts organize agreement, acceptance and compliance.

Table 1.

Cognitive-pragmatic forms of consent in fictional discourse

Form of consent	Typical linguistic or contextual signal	Pragmatic function	Cognitive component
Explicit consent	yes, I agree, certainly; ha, roziman, mayli	Removes ambiguity and confirms acceptance	Clear evaluation and decision
Indirect consent	modal forms, softened replies, partial answers	Maintains politeness and reduces face threat	Context-based inference
Silent consent	absence of objection, pause, nod, action after request	Allows agreement without verbal exposure	Mental accommodation or pressure
Reluctant consent	short answer, hesitation, emotional marker	Signals acceptance with internal conflict	Evaluation plus emotional resistance
Culturally marked consent	honorific tone, deference, respectful formula	Protects social hierarchy and harmony	Cultural conceptualization

The table demonstrates that consent may be verbal, non-verbal, inferential, emotional and culturally conditioned. In fiction these types often occur together. A character may say mayli while the narrator describes hesitation; the verbal form indicates acceptance, but the narrative context changes its pragmatic value. Similarly, an English character may say of course in a situation where the reader understands irony or social pressure. Thus, the analysis of consent requires attention not only to what is said but also to how the text frames the saying.

METHODS

The study uses a qualitative research design based on cognitive-pragmatic and comparative analysis. The material consists of dialogic and narrative patterns typical of English and Uzbek fictional discourse, with attention to situations where agreement, acceptance, permission, compliance or non-objection becomes communicatively relevant. The analysis does not rely on isolated dictionary meanings. Each form is interpreted in relation to its preceding utterance, surrounding narration, character relations and cultural-pragmatic background.

Discourse analysis was used to identify the communicative situation in which consent appears. This method makes it possible to examine the relation between speaker, listener, narrative voice and social setting. In fictional discourse, the meaning of consent depends on who speaks, to whom, under what conditions and with what possible consequences. A direct affirmative response between equal friends has a different pragmatic value from the same response given by a younger character to an elder, a servant to a master or a socially dependent character to a dominant figure.

Pragmatic analysis was applied to determine illocutionary force, indirect meaning and implicature. The study examined whether a given expression functions as direct consent, polite acceptance, reluctant compliance, strategic avoidance or contextually inferred agreement. The analysis follows the view that utterances perform actions and that their meaning is shaped by shared assumptions, conversational expectations and contextual relevance (Austin J. L., 1962, 94-107; Grice H. P., 1975, 41-58; Verschueren J., 1999, 7-10).

Conceptual analysis was used to reconstruct the mental structure of consent. In this procedure, consent was treated as a frame containing several components: a proposal or initiative, an evaluating subject, a possible alternative, a decision to accept, an emotional attitude and a projected consequence. This approach is consistent with cognitive theories that connect meaning with categorization, mental spaces and discourse comprehension (Fauconnier G., 1994, 16-18; Kintsch W., van Dijk T. A., 1978, 363-394; Lakoff G., 1987, 5-11).

Comparative analysis was used to reveal similarities and differences between English and Uzbek forms of consent. The comparison focused on three parameters: degree of explicitness, role of politeness and role of cultural hierarchy. The aim was not to produce national stereotypes, but to show how literary discourse reflects different communicative preferences. In both languages consent may be direct or indirect; however, the conditions that make one form more natural than another may vary according to cultural expectations and social relations.

The analytical procedure consisted of four stages. First, consent-related expressions and situations were identified. Second, they were grouped as explicit, implicit, emotional, culturally marked or conflict-avoidant forms. Third, their pragmatic functions were interpreted in relation to context. Fourth, the cognitive components of acceptance were described. This procedure made it possible to move from linguistic form to discourse function and then to conceptual interpretation.

RESULTS

The analysis shows that consent in fictional discourse is realized through a continuum ranging from fully explicit verbal agreement to contextually inferred acceptance. The first and most visible form is explicit consent. English examples include yes, of course, certainly, I agree and all right. Uzbek equivalents include ha, xo'p, mayli, roziman and bo'ladi. These forms usually function as direct responses to a preceding request, suggestion or statement. Their pragmatic function is to reduce uncertainty and signal cooperative alignment.

Explicitness, however, does not always mean simplicity. In fiction a direct affirmative expression may still carry additional meaning. A character who says yes after a long pause may be consenting reluctantly; another who says of course in a cold tone may be expressing irony rather than sincere agreement. The narrator's description of facial expression, gesture or inner thought can transform the pragmatic value of an explicit formula. This confirms that the meaning of an utterance is not limited to lexical content but emerges from discourse context (van Dijk T. A., 2008, 15-20).

The second form is indirect consent. It is represented through modal constructions, softened responses, partial answers and actions that imply acceptance. English fictional discourse may use forms such as *if you wish*, *I suppose so*, *perhaps we may* or *it would be better*. Uzbek discourse may use expressions such as *o‘zingiz bilasiz*, *siz aytgandek*, *mayli-da* or *ko‘ramiz*. These utterances do not always state agreement openly, but in a given context they can function as consent. Their pragmatic value lies in balancing acceptance with caution, modesty or face-saving.

The third form is silent or non-verbal consent. Literary texts often describe consent through nodding, lowering the eyes, smiling, taking an object, moving toward a place or simply not objecting. Such forms are highly dependent on context. Silence may be interpreted as consent when the situation makes objection possible and when the character’s subsequent action confirms acceptance. Yet the same silence may also indicate fear or helplessness. Therefore, the reader must evaluate whether the character has communicative freedom.

The fourth result concerns the cognitive components of consent. Five components appear repeatedly: evaluation, intention, emotional acceptance, interpersonal trust and expected consequence. Evaluation means that the character assesses the proposal or situation. Intention refers to the decision to align with it. Emotional acceptance indicates whether the agreement is sincere, reluctant or forced. Interpersonal trust concerns the relation between the participants. Expected consequence refers to what the character believes will happen after accepting. These components may be explicitly narrated or only implied through behaviour.

The fifth result concerns politeness. Consent often functions as a politeness strategy, especially when refusal would threaten interpersonal harmony. In Uzbek fictional communication, respect-based formulas and indirect acceptance are especially productive in scenes involving elders, family relations and socially unequal interlocutors. In English fiction, politeness is often expressed through modal verbs, hedges and restrained responses. In both cases, consent is connected with the management of social distance and with the avoidance of unnecessary confrontation.

The sixth result is that consent is culturally conceptualized. Sharifian's cultural-linguistic approach is useful here because it treats language as a reflection of cultural schemas and conceptualizations (Sharifian F., 2017, 2-9). In Uzbek discourse, the value of social harmony may make indirect consent more appropriate than direct refusal. In English discourse, individual choice may be more openly verbalized, yet politeness and emotional restraint remain important. These tendencies do not operate mechanically, rather, they provide interpretive backgrounds that shape fictional communication.

DISCUSSION

The results confirm that consent in fiction is a multidimensional phenomenon rather than a single speech formula. This finding supports the general pragmatic view that utterances perform social actions and that these actions must be interpreted within context (Austin J. L., 1962, 94-107; Searle J. R., 1969, 22-25). In fictional discourse, the act of consenting is not limited to saying yes. It may be performed through indirect language, silence, compliance or a narrator's description of a character's emotional state. Therefore, consent should be studied as a discourse event.

A key issue is the relation between consent and inference. Grice's theory of implicature explains why readers can understand consent even when the text does not provide explicit verbal confirmation (Grice H. P., 1975, 41-58). If a character receives a proposal, remains silent and then acts according to that proposal, the reader may infer acceptance. Yet this inference is controlled by narrative context. The interpretation becomes stronger when the character has a real possibility to refuse and when later behaviour confirms the inferred acceptance. If the character lacks power or freedom, silence should not be treated as full consent. This distinction is important both ethically and linguistically.

The cognitive dimension of consent is equally significant. Consent requires a mental relation between proposal and acceptance. Kintsch and van Dijk's model of text comprehension helps explain how readers integrate local utterances into a global representation of discourse (Kintsch W., van Dijk T. A., 1978, 363-394). When

reading fiction, the reader does not process a consent marker in isolation. The reader connects it with previous events, character motives, cultural knowledge and expected narrative outcomes. As a result, consent becomes part of a mental model of the fictional situation.

The comparison between English and Uzbek discourse shows both universal and culture-specific tendencies. Universally, both languages can express consent directly, indirectly and non-verbally. In both traditions consent may express sincerity, politeness, hesitation or social pressure. At the same time, cultural expectations influence which form appears more appropriate in a particular scene. Uzbek communicative norms often attach high value to respect and relational harmony, while English discourse often foregrounds individual stance and explicit verbal positioning. These tendencies should be understood as flexible patterns rather than rigid rules.

Another important point concerns the boundary between consent and compliance. In some fictional situations a character's acceptance is shaped by authority, fear or moral obligation. Linguistically, the response may look like consent; pragmatically, however, it may be closer to compliance. This distinction is crucial for literary analysis because authors often use apparent consent to reveal hidden conflict. A character may outwardly agree while inwardly resisting. Such scenes demonstrate the gap between illocutionary form and cognitive-emotional content.

CONCLUSION

The article has examined consent as a cognitive-pragmatic category in English and Uzbek fictional discourse. The main conclusion is that consent in fiction cannot be reduced to direct words of agreement. It is formed through the interaction of verbal expression, contextual inference, emotional state, cultural expectation and narrative framing. A character may consent through an explicit phrase, a softened response, silence, gesture or subsequent action; each form receives its meaning from the discourse situation.

The analysis showed that explicit consent reduces ambiguity, while implicit consent requires the reader to interpret contextual cues. The cognitive structure of consent includes evaluation, intention, emotional acceptance, interpersonal trust and expectation of consequence. These components explain why two identical affirmative expressions may carry different meanings in different fictional contexts. Consent may be sincere, reluctant, polite, strategic or socially constrained.

The comparative perspective revealed that English and Uzbek fictional discourse share common pragmatic mechanisms but differ in preferred cultural patterns. Uzbek discourse often emphasizes respect, indirectness and relational harmony, whereas English discourse more frequently foregrounds explicit stance, modal politeness and individual decision. Nevertheless, both traditions use consent as a flexible communicative tool for managing social relations.

The practical value of the study lies in its usefulness for discourse analysis, literary interpretation, translation studies and intercultural pragmatics. Translators and researchers should pay attention not only to lexical equivalents of consent but also to the pragmatic conditions under which agreement is expressed. Future studies may expand the material, include corpus-based methods and examine multimodal forms of consent in drama, cinema and digital narrative communication.

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