

## **Colloquial Mental Verbs as Pragmatic Markers in Uzbek and English Spoken Interaction**

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**Abstract.** This article examines the communicative-pragmatic features of substandard verbs of mental activity in Uzbek and English. Although mental verbs have been widely studied from semantic and cognitive perspectives, their colloquial realizations in everyday communication remain underexplored, especially cross-linguistically. The study adopts a qualitative comparative approach based on naturally occurring spoken discourse from social media, interviews, podcasts, and informal dialogues. The analysis shows that substandard mental verbs function as pragmatic markers expressing hedging, emotional stance, politeness, informality, and interpersonal alignment. The findings reveal shared pragmatic tendencies alongside culturally conditioned differences: Uzbek favors indirectness and affective cognition, while English emphasizes stance marking and epistemic hedging. The study contributes to pragmatic linguistics and cross-cultural communication by highlighting the functional role of non-standard mental verbs.

**Key words:** substandard verbs; mental activity verbs; pragmatics; spoken discourse; Uzbek and English; cross-cultural communication.

### **Introduction**

Mental-activity verbs such as think, understand, remember, believe, and doubt represent core linguistic tools for encoding human cognition. Traditional linguistic research has largely focused on their standard, dictionary-based forms, leaving colloquial and substandard realizations at the periphery of analysis. However, everyday communication across languages relies heavily on non-standard cognitive verbs that perform important pragmatic and interpersonal functions.

In both Uzbek and English, speakers frequently employ substandard mental verbs to soften statements, express emotional involvement, negotiate social distance, and manage politeness. Expressions such as I kinda figured, I don’t really get it, or Uzbek ko‘nglimsezdi, tushunmayqoldimku illustrate how cognition is linguistically shaped by communicative needs rather than purely semantic accuracy.

Despite their high frequency in spontaneous speech, substandard mental-activity verbs have not been sufficiently examined in comparative pragmatics. This study addresses this gap by exploring how such verbs function communicatively in Uzbek and English and by identifying the cultural and pragmatic factors that motivate their usage.

### **Literature Review**

Research on mental verbs has developed mainly within cognitive linguistics and semantics (Wierzbicka, 1996; Evans, 2009), focusing on conceptual structure and meaning. Pragmatic studies have emphasized stance, hedging, and speaker evaluation (Biber et al., 2004; Hyland, 2005), demonstrating that mental predicates often serve interpersonal rather than propositional goals.

Studies on colloquial and non-standard language (Culpeper, 2011; Aijmer, 2018) indicate that informal lexical choices are central to identity construction and rapport management. However, most analyses are language-specific and rarely consider mental verbs as a separate pragmatic category.

In Uzbek linguistics, research has addressed colloquial speech and conversational particles, yet substandard mental verbs remain insufficiently systematized. The lack of contrastive studies between Uzbek and English further highlights the novelty of the present research.

## **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design aimed at identifying and explaining the communicative-pragmatic features of substandard mental activity verbs in Uzbek and English. The methodological framework is grounded in discourse-based pragmatics and contrastive linguistics, with a particular emphasis on naturally occurring spoken interaction. In order to ensure ecological validity, the research deliberately avoids constructed or introspective examples and relies instead on authentic language use as it occurs in real communicative contexts.

The empirical data consist of 400 conversational fragments, including 200 samples in Uzbek and 200 in English. These data were collected from a range of informal and semi-formal sources, such as social media interactions, interviews, podcasts, and recordings of everyday speech. The selected materials reflect spontaneous communication and represent a variety of speakers, interactional settings, and pragmatic intentions. This diversity allows for a more reliable observation of substandard verbal usage across different discourse environments.

The analysis proceeds in several stages. First, a corpus-based examination was conducted to identify frequently occurring substandard verbs associated with mental activity. These verbs were then subjected to pragmatic analysis, focusing on their communicative functions in context. Particular attention was paid to how speakers employ such verbs to express epistemic stance, emotional involvement, hesitation, mitigation, politeness, informality, and interpersonal alignment.

At the next stage, the identified verbs were classified according to their dominant semantic-functional domains, including thinking, remembering, understanding, believing, and doubting. This classification made it possible to observe patterns of pragmatic specialization and functional overlap within and across the two languages.

## **Data Collection**

The corpus consists of:

- 200 Uzbek conversational fragments
- 200 English conversational fragments

The data were collected from social networks, podcasts, interviews, and everyday informal speech. Only naturally occurring, non-scripted interactions were included.

## **Analytical Framework**

Each instance of a substandard mental verb was analyzed according to:  
ers in Uzbek and English Spoken Interaction• communicative function (softening, hedging, stance expression);

- emotional coloring;
- politeness strategies;
- degree of informality;
- interactional context.

Verbs were grouped into five semantic domains: thinking, remembering, understanding, believing, and doubting. A contrastive linguistic approach was applied to identify similarities and differences across languages.

## Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that substandard mental verbs perform several key pragmatic functions:

### 1. Hedging and mitigation

English favors epistemic hedges (I guess, I kinda think), while Uzbek uses indirect cognitive expressions (chamasi, shekilli).

### 2. Emotional stance marking

English employs phrasal verbs (freak out, zone out), whereas Uzbek relies on metaphorical cognition (miyasiqotibqoldi, ko‘nglisezdi).

### 3. Politeness and social alignment

Uzbek substandard mental verbs often soften disagreement, reflecting collectivist norms. English forms emphasize personal stance while maintaining conversational informality.

### 4. Semantic flexibility

In both languages, substandard verbs show extended meanings beyond literal cognition, functioning as discourse-pragmatic devices.

The findings confirm that substandard mental-activity verbs are not marginal linguistic phenomena but central pragmatic resources. Their distribution reflects broader cultural communication patterns. Uzbek discourse prioritizes harmony, indirectness, and emotional intuition, while English discourse emphasizes individual evaluation and epistemic positioning.

These differences suggest that substandard cognition verbs encode culturally specific models of thinking and interaction. Their pragmatic value outweighs their semantic deviation from standard norms.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that substandard verbs of mental activity in Uzbek and English play a crucial communicative-pragmatic role. They function as markers of stance, politeness, emotional involvement, and interpersonal alignment. While both languages share functional similarities, their preferred strategies differ due to cultural and cognitive factors. The research contributes to comparative pragmatics and highlights the need to reconsider substandard language as an essential component of linguistic competence.

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