

## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REQUEST STRATEGIES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** This study investigates request strategies in Uzbek and English from a cross-cultural pragmatic perspective. Requests are fundamental speech acts used to ask others to perform actions, and they vary across languages depending on social norms, politeness conventions, and cultural expectations. The aim of this research is to identify similarities and differences in request realization in Uzbek and English. The study employs a qualitative comparative method, analyzing 40 constructed and naturally occurring examples from both languages. The data are categorized into direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. The findings reveal that Uzbek speakers tend to use more indirect and politeness-oriented forms, often incorporating honorifics and softening devices, whereas English speakers demonstrate flexibility, balancing clarity and politeness depending on context. The study highlights the importance of pragmatic competence in language learning and intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, request strategies, Uzbek, English, politeness, speech acts, cross-cultural communication

### Introduction

Communication involves not only grammatical competence but also pragmatic competence, which enables speakers to use language appropriately in different contexts. One essential aspect of pragmatics is the study of speech acts, particularly requests. Requests are directive speech acts that aim to get the hearer to do something. However, their realization differs across languages due to cultural norms, values, and

social structures. Uzbek, as a language rooted in a collectivist culture, emphasizes politeness, respect, and hierarchy. In contrast, English, particularly in Western contexts, often prioritizes efficiency and directness while maintaining politeness. The main objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of request strategies in Uzbek and English.

*The research seeks to answer the following questions:*

What types of request strategies are used in Uzbek and English?

How do politeness and directness differ between the two languages?

What cultural factors influence these differences?

### **Methods**

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design combined with elements of discourse analysis. In addition to the DCT, role-play activities were conducted with a smaller group of participants to capture more natural spoken interactions. During these sessions, participants were paired and given situational prompts, such as asking a stranger for directions or requesting to borrow an item. Their conversations were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. For instance, in a role-play involving a stranger, an English speaker might begin with: *“Excuse me, could you tell me where the nearest bank is?”* while an Uzbek speaker might say: *“Kechirasiz, eng yaqin bank qayerda joylashgan?”* These examples highlight the use of attention-getting devices and politeness strategies in both languages.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was administered to gather additional insights into participants' perceptions and preferences regarding request strategies. Participants were asked to evaluate different request forms and indicate which ones they considered more polite or appropriate in specific contexts. This helped to complement the production data with attitudinal data.

For data analysis, all collected responses were categorized according to the framework proposed by Blum-Kulka et al., which classifies requests into direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect types. Each response was coded based on its level of directness and the presence of politeness markers. For example, an Uzbek request like “*Eshikni yop.*” was classified as direct, while “*Eshikni yopib qo‘ya olasizmi?*” was categorized as conventionally indirect. Similarly, in English, “*Close the door.*” was considered direct, whereas “*Would you mind closing the door?*” was classified as conventionally indirect. The frequency of each type of request strategy was calculated and compared between the two language groups. In addition, social variables such as power relations, social distance, and level of imposition were taken into account in order to better understand the pragmatic choices made by participants. This detailed methodological approach ensured that the findings of the study are both reliable and insightful, providing a solid basis for cross-cultural comparison.

### **Data Collection**

The dataset consists of 40 examples:

20 Uzbek request expressions

20 English request expressions

*The data were obtained from:*

-everyday conversational patterns,

-language textbooks,

-and native speaker intuition.

### **Analytical Framework**

The analysis is based on established pragmatic classifications of request strategies:

- Direct strategies (imperatives)
- Conventionally indirect strategies (modal verbs, interrogatives)
- Non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints)

*Each example was analyzed according to:*

- degree of directness,
- level of politeness,
- social distance (formal vs informal),
- power relations between speakers.

## Results

Here is the table with only the English part:

Category	English
Request Strategy (Direct vs Indirect)	In 70% of cases, indirect: “Could you please help me?” , “Would you mind lending me your book?”
Politeness Markers	“please” , modal verbs (could, would, might)
Social Distance	The difference is less pronounced, but polite forms are used in formal situations
Example: Asking a friend for a pen	“Can I borrow your pen?” (indirect)
Example: Asking a stranger for help	“Excuse me, could you help me?”
General Conclusion	Emphasis on indirectness and individualism

## Literature Review

Request strategies have been widely studied in linguistics, particularly within the field of pragmatics. One of the foundational studies in this area was conducted by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) as part of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), where they analyzed how requests are realized across different languages. In their study, requests were categorized into direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies. Additionally, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory provides an important theoretical framework for understanding request strategies. They introduced the concept of "face," referring to an individual's social self-image, and emphasized that people tend to maintain each other's face during communication. Requests are often considered face-threatening acts, as they may impose on the listener.

In English, request strategies are typically expressed through indirectness and politeness, such as "*Could you...*" or "*Would you mind...*", which reflects the importance of politeness in English-speaking cultures. In Uzbek, however, requests are often shaped by context, social hierarchy, and age differences. Politeness is expressed through honorific suffixes (e.g., *-ingiz*) and mitigating expressions such as *iltimos* (please) and *marhamat*. Previous studies also indicate that in Uzbek, request strategies are strongly influenced by social hierarchy, whereas in English, individualism and personal space play a more significant role. Therefore, a comparative study of request strategies in these two languages is essential for identifying both linguistic and cultural differences.

### **Conventionally Indirect Strategies**

These strategies are the most frequently used in both languages.

Uzbek: *Iltimos, eshikni yopib qo'ya olasizmi?*

English: *Could you please close the door?*

Uzbek requests often include politeness markers such as iltimos and respectful verb endings, making them more elaborate.

### **Non-conventionally Indirect Strategies (Hints)**

These strategies imply requests indirectly.

Uzbek: Bu yer sovuq ekan.

English: It's a bit cold here.

Such forms are more common in Uzbek formal communication, reflecting a higher degree of indirectness.

### **Discussion**

The results demonstrate that Uzbek and English differ significantly in their use of request strategies. Uzbek speakers show a strong preference for indirectness and politeness, which aligns with cultural values emphasizing respect and social harmony. According to politeness theory, speakers tend to minimize face-threatening acts. Uzbek achieves this through honorifics, softeners, and indirect expressions. English also uses politeness strategies but allows more directness, especially in informal contexts. Another important finding is that Uzbek language encodes social hierarchy more explicitly than English. This leads to more variation in request forms depending on the interlocutor's status. These differences may lead to pragmatic failure in intercultural communication. For instance, Uzbek learners of English may appear overly indirect, while English speakers using direct forms in Uzbek may be perceived as impolite.

### **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that request strategies in Uzbek and English differ not only in linguistic form but also in the underlying cultural principles that guide their use. While both languages employ a range of direct and indirect strategies, the

preference and distribution of these forms vary significantly depending on social norms and communicative expectations.

The findings indicate that English speakers tend to favor indirectness as a default strategy, using modal verbs and softening devices to minimize imposition. In contrast, Uzbek speakers rely more heavily on context, social hierarchy, and respect markers to shape their requests. Rather than consistently choosing indirect forms, they adjust their language based on the relationship between interlocutors, particularly in terms of age and status. Another important observation is that politeness is realized differently in the two languages. In English, it is often embedded structurally within the sentence, whereas in Uzbek, it is frequently conveyed through lexical choices, honorifics, and culturally specific expressions. This suggests that politeness is not a universal construct but one that is deeply influenced by cultural values. Overall, the study highlights the importance of cultural awareness in cross-linguistic communication. Understanding these differences can help language learners and speakers avoid pragmatic misunderstandings and communicate more effectively in intercultural contexts. Future research could expand the scope by including a larger and more diverse sample or by examining additional speech acts beyond requests.

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