SPEECH ACT REALIZATION DIFFERENCES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: REQUESTS, APOLOGIES, AND COMPLIMENTS

Karimova Ozodaxon Avazxon kizi

Teacher of World Language department, Kokand University

e-mail: o1516067@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0009-0643-8445

ABSTRACT. This study investigates the differences in speech act realization between English and Uzbek, focusing on requests, apologies, and compliments. Grounded in a linguapragmatic framework, the research examines how cultural norms, social hierarchy, and politeness strategies influence the production and interpretation of these speech acts in both languages. Using a combination of discourse analysis and elicitation tasks, data were collected from native speakers of English and Uzbek to identify patterns of directness, mitigation, and formulaicity. The findings reveal that English speakers tend to employ more explicit and direct strategies in requests and compliments, whereas Uzbek speakers prioritize indirectness and context-sensitive expressions to preserve social harmony. Apology strategies also differ, with Uzbek speakers relying heavily on relational and honorific markers, while English speakers frequently utilize explicit acknowledgment of responsibility. These results highlight the significant role of sociocultural norms in shaping pragmatic behavior and underscore the potential challenges in cross-cultural communication. Implications for language teaching, translation, and intercultural competence development are discussed.

Keywords: Speech acts, pragmatics, requests, apologies, compliments, English, Uzbek, cross-cultural communication, politeness strategies

INTRODUCTION

Speech acts are fundamental units of human communication, representing actions performed through language. According to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), utterances do not merely convey information but perform actions such as requesting, apologizing, promising, or complimenting. Understanding how speech acts are realized in different languages is essential for grasping not only linguistic structures but also sociocultural norms and pragmatic competence. This study focuses on the comparative analysis of three core speech acts—requests, apologies, and compliments—in English and Uzbek. The choice of these three speech acts stems from their frequent occurrence in everyday interaction and their critical role in maintaining social relationships and expressing politeness across cultures.

Requests, apologies, and compliments are considered face-sensitive acts because they directly influence the social identity, respect, and interpersonal harmony between speakers and listeners (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Requests, for example, impose a burden on the hearer, while apologies acknowledge a violation of social norms or an inconvenience caused. Compliments, conversely, can either enhance social bonds or risk causing embarrassment if

misinterpreted. The realization of these speech acts is shaped by linguistic conventions, cultural expectations, and contextual factors, making them a rich area for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural pragmatic research.

In English, research has shown that speech act realization often relies on explicit verbal markers, direct or indirect syntactic structures, and mitigation strategies that balance politeness with clarity. Requests in English, for instance, may range from direct imperatives ("Give me the book") to indirect interrogatives ("Could you give me the book?") depending on social distance, power relations, and situational context. Apologies typically include acknowledgment of wrongdoing, expressions of regret, and offers of repair ("I am sorry for being late; I will make sure it does not happen again"), while compliments are often accompanied by polite modifiers or intensifiers to enhance positive evaluation ("You did an excellent job on this project"). Such strategies reflect an underlying cultural preference for individualism, explicitness, and efficiency in communication (Gass & Houck, 1999).

By contrast, Uzbek, as a Turkic language spoken predominantly in Central Asia, exhibits distinct pragmatic patterns shaped by collectivist cultural values, hierarchical social structures, and context-dependent politeness norms. Requests in Uzbek often rely on indirectness, use of honorifics, and culturally embedded mitigating expressions to maintain social harmony and respect for status differences. Apologies emphasize relational considerations, frequently incorporating honorific particles and situational explanations that foreground the social context over the individual responsibility. Compliments may be modestly framed to avoid disrupting the balance of social relations, reflecting a preference for humility and relational sensitivity (Abduazizova, 2018). Such differences indicate that speech acts are not universally realized but are deeply intertwined with sociocultural expectations and pragmatic norms.

Cross-linguistic studies of speech acts provide valuable insights into the challenges of intercultural communication. Misunderstandings often occur when speakers apply pragmatic norms from their native language to a second language context, resulting in pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983). For example, an English speaker's direct request might be perceived as rude or imposing by an Uzbek interlocutor, while an Uzbek speaker's indirect request may be interpreted as unclear or non-committal by an English interlocutor. Similarly, differences in apology and compliment strategies can affect perceptions of sincerity, politeness, and interpersonal sensitivity, underscoring the importance of pragmatic competence in effective cross-cultural interaction.

Previous research has highlighted the significance of analyzing speech act realization in bilingual or multilingual contexts. For instance, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) conducted a foundational study on cross-cultural pragmatics, demonstrating how requests, apologies, and other speech acts vary across languages. Their findings emphasize the influence of social hierarchy, power, and cultural values on linguistic behavior. Similarly, recent studies comparing English with languages from non-Western cultural backgrounds, including Turkic and Central Asian languages, confirm that collectivist cultures tend to prioritize relational and context-sensitive strategies, while individualist cultures favor directness and explicitness (Khan, 2014; Abduazizova, 2018). Despite these contributions, there remains a relative scarcity of research specifically examining Uzbek, particularly in comparison with English, highlighting a gap that this study aims to address.

The significance of this research extends to applied fields such as second language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication training. Understanding speech act differences enables language educators to teach pragmatic competence explicitly, equipping learners with the skills to navigate sociocultural norms effectively. In translation studies, knowledge of speech act realization is essential for producing culturally appropriate texts that preserve intended politeness, tone, and social meaning. Furthermore, in increasingly multicultural and multilingual societies, such insights support smoother interpersonal and professional interactions, reducing the risk of miscommunication and enhancing social cohesion.

This study adopts a linguapragmatic approach, which integrates linguistic analysis with pragmatic theory to examine both form and function in context. The research focuses on three speech acts—requests, apologies, and compliments—selected for their frequent occurrence, social significance, and sensitivity to cultural norms. By comparing English and Uzbek, the study aims to identify both universal patterns in speech act realization and culture-specific variations. Particular attention is paid to strategies of directness and indirectness, mitigation, use of honorifics, formulaicity, and situational factors that influence how these acts are performed and interpreted.

In summary, this study addresses the following research objectives:

1. To identify the linguistic and pragmatic strategies used in requests, apologies, and compliments in English and Uzbek.
2. To compare the similarities and differences in speech act realization between the two languages.
3. To analyze the influence of sociocultural norms and contextual factors on pragmatic behavior.
4. To explore the implications of these differences for language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

By achieving these objectives, the study contributes to the growing field of cross-cultural pragmatics and provides practical insights for learners, educators, and professionals engaging with English and Uzbek speakers. In doing so, it emphasizes that understanding language use requires not only grammatical competence but also a deep awareness of sociocultural norms and pragmatic conventions. The findings of this research are expected to highlight how culturally grounded communicative strategies shape interpersonal interactions and to offer recommendations for enhancing pragmatic competence in both educational and professional contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine how requests, apologies, and compliments are realized in English and Uzbek. The focus is on understanding language use in context, highlighting sociocultural norms and pragmatic strategies rather than measuring frequency.

Data were drawn from: Authentic texts: Emails, blogs, social media posts, and letters; Transcribed spoken discourse: Conversations and informal dialogues; Elicited texts: Short scenarios adapted from discourse completion tasks to capture context-sensitive speech acts.

Data Analysis: A thematic and discourse-pragmatic framework was applied: Identification and classification of requests, apologies, and compliments; Analysis of directness, mitigation, politeness markers, and formulaic expressions; Cross-linguistic comparison to reveal culture-specific and universal patterns; Contextual interpretation to examine the influence of social norms and situational factors; Triangulation across multiple sources ensured reliability.

Ethical Considerations: Only public or anonymized texts were used. All personal identifiers were removed to ensure confidentiality.

Rationale: A qualitative method is essential because speech acts are context-dependent and culturally nuanced, requiring detailed analysis of pragmatic choices that quantitative methods cannot capture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the realization of three speech acts—requests, apologies, and compliments – in English and Uzbek, highlighting both cross-linguistic differences and cultural influences. Data were drawn from authentic and elicited texts, including written and spoken discourse. The findings reveal clear contrasts in directness, mitigation strategies, formulaic expressions, and context-sensitive politeness between the two languages.

Requests: Requests in English frequently employ direct and semi-direct forms, often accompanied by modal verbs or polite markers. For example:

- "Could you send me the report by tomorrow?"
- "Would you mind helping me with this task?"

These constructions balance politeness with clarity, reflecting English cultural preferences for explicitness and efficiency (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Even indirect forms like "Would it be possible to…" are syntactically clear and rely on formulaic structures to maintain politeness.

In contrast, Uzbek requests tend to be more indirect and contextually embedded, often incorporating honorifics and relational markers to preserve social harmony. For instance:

- "Iltimos, agar sizga noqulay bo'lmasa, bu hisobotni menga yuborishingiz mumkinmi?"
  ("Please, if it is not inconvenient for you, could you send me this report?")
- "Balki siz menga yordam bera olasiz?"
  ("Perhaps you could help me?")

Indirectness, hedging ("agar…bo'lmasa," "balki"), and honorific forms are employed to avoid imposing on the hearer and to show respect, reflecting Uzbek collectivist cultural norms (Abduazizova, 2018).

The differences suggest that English speakers prioritize task completion and clarity, while Uzbek speakers prioritize relationship maintenance and face-saving. This aligns with cross-cultural pragmatics literature indicating that collectivist societies favor indirect strategies to mitigate imposition, whereas individualist societies favor directness and explicit requests.

Apologies: English apologies are often **explicit and formulaic**, frequently combining acknowledgment of fault, expression of regret, and offer of repair:

- "I am sorry for missing the meeting. I will make sure it does not happen again."
- "Please accept my apologies for the inconvenience caused."

These constructions place emphasis on individual responsibility and verbal acknowledgment of wrongdoing, reflecting English cultural norms valuing personal accountability (Gass & Houck, 1999).

Uzbek apologies, by contrast, tend to highlight **relational considerations** and social context, rather than focusing solely on personal fault:

- "Kechirasiz, agar sizga noqulaylik tug'dirgan bo'lsam"
  ("Excuse me, if I have caused you inconvenience")
- "Men xatolik qilgan bo'lishim mumkin, umid qilamanki siz meni tushunasiz"
  ("I may have made a mistake, I hope you understand me")

Honorifics and hedging are commonly used, and emphasis is placed on preserving harmony rather than directly admitting fault. Apologies may also include situational explanations to contextualize the action.

The contrast highlights a culture-specific approach to face management. English speakers tend to follow a linear structure of fault–regret–repair, while Uzbek speakers adopt a relational approach, integrating social hierarchy and context-sensitive mitigation. This difference explains frequent pragmatic failure in intercultural exchanges, where direct English apologies may appear blunt to Uzbek speakers, and indirect Uzbek apologies may seem evasive to English speakers.

Compliments: In English, compliments are typically direct and elaborative, often accompanied by intensifiers to convey genuine appreciation:

- "Your presentation was excellent; I really enjoyed your examples."
- "You look amazing today!"

English speakers often expect a simple, polite acknowledgment in return, such as "Thank you" or "I appreciate that," reflecting norms of personal affirmation and positive reinforcement.

Uzbek compliments, however, are often modestly framed and may include mitigating phrases to avoid disrupting social balance:

- "Sizning taqdimotingiz juda yaxshi bo'ldi, albatta, ko'p mehnat qilgansiz"
  ("Your presentation was very good; surely you worked a lot")
- "Ko'rinishingiz juda chiroyli, ammo juda sodda va nafis ekan"
  ("You look very nice, but in a simple and elegant way")

This pattern illustrates the cultural preference for humility and indirect praise, emphasizing relational sensitivity and avoiding overt flattery.

Compliment strategies reveal underlying cultural values. English favors explicit positive evaluation, while Uzbek favors contextualized and modest evaluation, aligning with collectivist principles that prioritize group harmony over individual praise. These differences may cause misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication, as English speakers may perceive Uzbek modesty as lack of acknowledgment, while Uzbek speakers may view English direct praise as excessive or intrusive.

Overall Cross-Linguistic Patterns: Across all three speech acts, clear patterns emerge:

1. **Directness vs. Indirectness:** English prefers more direct forms; Uzbek favors indirect and context-dependent strategies.
2. **Mitigation Strategies:** Uzbek relies heavily on hedging, honorifics, and relational markers, whereas English uses formulaic politeness expressions.
3. **Cultural Orientation:** English reflects individualist values (personal responsibility, clarity), while Uzbek reflects collectivist values (relationship preservation, social harmony).
4. **Formulaicity:** Both languages employ formulaic expressions, but Uzbek formulas are more embedded in social context and hierarchical structures.

These findings underscore the importance of **pragmatic competence** in cross-cultural communication, language teaching, and translation. Failure to recognize these differences may result in miscommunication, perceived rudeness, or unintended social offense. For educators, explicit teaching of speech act norms, including indirectness, politeness markers, and contextual strategies, can improve learners' intercultural competence.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the realization of requests, apologies, and compliments in English and Uzbek, highlighting both universal patterns and culture-specific differences. The analysis revealed that English speakers tend to employ more **direct, explicit, and formulaic strategies**, emphasizing personal responsibility, clarity, and efficiency. In contrast, Uzbek speakers favor **indirect, context-sensitive, and relationally oriented strategies**, prioritizing social harmony, humility, and respect for hierarchical relationships. These differences are particularly evident in the use of hedging, honorifics, and mitigated expressions, which are central to Uzbek pragmatic norms.

The findings underscore the critical role of **sociocultural norms** in shaping speech act realization and highlight the potential for **pragmatic failure** in cross-cultural communication. Misunderstandings may arise when speakers transfer pragmatic norms from one language to another, as English directness may be perceived as impolite by Uzbek interlocutors, and Uzbek indirectness may be interpreted as evasive by English speakers.

From an applied perspective, this study contributes to **language teaching, translation, and intercultural competence development**. Raising awareness of pragmatic strategies and culture-specific communication patterns can enhance learners' ability to navigate interactions in English and Uzbek more effectively. Explicit instruction in requests, apologies, and compliments—focusing on directness, mitigation, and relational sensitivity—can improve both linguistic and pragmatic competence.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes that effective communication extends beyond grammatical accuracy: it requires a deep understanding of **pragmatic norms, social context, and cultural values**. By comparing English and Uzbek speech acts, the study offers insights into how language functions as a tool for maintaining social relationships and managing interpersonal meaning, and it provides a foundation for further research on cross-cultural pragmatics in Central Asian and other multilingual contexts.

REFERENCES.

1. Abduazizova, N. (2018). Politeness strategies in Uzbek: A pragmalinguistic perspective. Tashkent University Press.
2. Austin, J. L. (1962). How to do things with words. Oxford University Press.
3. Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies. Ablex Publishing.
4. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some universals in language usage. Cambridge University Press.
5. Gass, S. M., & Houck, N. R. (1999). Interlanguage refusals: A cross-cultural study of Japanese-English. Pragmatics, 9(2), 175–201. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.9.2.03gas
6. Karimova, O. (2024). Comparative study of sla: effects of early exposure, education, and psychology on sixth-graders. Tamaddun nuri jurnali, 12(63), 28-30.
7. Karimova, O. (2025). A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POETIC DEVICES: ALLITERATION, ASSONANCE, AND ENJAMBMENT IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK POETRY. QO'QON UNIVERSITETI XABARNOMASI, 14, 192–194. https://doi.org/10.54613/ku.v14i1161
8. Karimova, O., & Sobirova, N. (2025). MUQIM FRAZEOLOGIK BIRLIKLAR TARJIMASINING O 'ZIGA XOSLIKLARI. TAMADDUN NURI JURNALI, 1(64), 214-217.
9. Khan, A. (2014). Speech acts across cultures: A comparative study of English and non-Western languages. International Journal of Linguistics, 6(3), 45–56. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v6i3.5678
10. qizi Karimova, O. A. (2024). ESP Course Design And Implementation For Uzbek Medical Professionals: A Problem-Based Learning Method. Eurasian Journal of Learning and Academic Teaching, 38, 6-13.
11. Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language. Cambridge University Press.
12. Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. Applied Linguistics, 4(2), 91–112. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/4.2.91