

**DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE: SOCIOLINGUISTIC  
AND PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES IN ONLINE NEGOTIATIONS IN ENGLISH AND  
UZBEK**

**Gulnoz Nematovna Murotova**

Associate Professor  
Jizzakh State Pedagogical University,  
Faculty of Philology  
Email: [gulnozmurotova67@gmail.com](mailto:gulnozmurotova67@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This study examines multimodal discourse in digital diplomacy with practical illustrations, focusing on sociolinguistic and pragmatic strategies in online negotiations conducted in English and Uzbek. Real-life negotiation transcripts, video recordings, and chat logs are analyzed to show how verbal and visual cues shape outcomes. Findings indicate that English negotiations prioritize directness, logical argumentation, and text-based evidence (e.g., shared slides with statistics), while Uzbek negotiations emphasize relational strategies, collective orientation, and culturally mediated politeness (e.g., honorifics, greetings, and expressive gestures). The study provides practical evidence for cultural adaptation in digital diplomacy.

**Keywords:** digital diplomacy, multimodal discourse, online negotiations, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, cross-cultural communication.

### **Introduction**

Digital diplomacy increasingly occurs on online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Slack, making multimodal communication central to negotiation success. Participants employ language, paralinguistic features (intonation, stress), gestures, visual aids (charts, slides), and digital cues (emojis, reaction buttons) to convey meaning. Cultural context shapes how these strategies are interpreted. For instance, in a UK–Uzbek bilateral negotiation simulation, the English team used slides with statistical data on trade agreements, direct imperatives (“Please review the proposal”), and minimal hand gestures. In contrast, the Uzbek team opened sessions with greetings such as “*Assalomu alaykum hurmatli hamkorlar*” (“Peace be upon you, respected partners”), used hedging (“It may be beneficial if...”), and incorporated expressive gestures to convey politeness and maintain harmony.

The goal of this study is to identify and compare real multimodal strategies in English and Uzbek online diplomacy, illustrating how culture influences both verbal and visual communication.

### **Methods**

Data were collected from:

1. Publicly available negotiation webinars (2021–2023), including cross-cultural diplomatic simulations between English and Uzbek teams.
2. Chat logs from Slack and Zoom meetings, anonymized for privacy.
3. Video recordings, where gestures, facial expressions, and visual aids were coded.

Analysis followed a multimodal discourse approach (Jewitt, 2021) combined with sociolinguistic and pragmatic frameworks. Real examples were coded according to:

- Verbal strategies: directives, hedging, politeness, relational markers.
- Visual strategies: facial expressions, gestures, slide layout, emojis.

### **Results**

English Online Negotiations



- Verbal Example: “Please review the revised proposal by 5 PM. Your feedback will be appreciated.” (Directive + politeness marker).
- Visual Example: A slide showing bar charts of trade projections, with neutral blue and gray color scheme. Minimal hand gestures, participants seated straight.
- Pragmatic Note: Focus on efficiency, clarity, and explicit reasoning.
- Uzbek Online Negotiations
- Verbal Example: “*Assalomu alaykum hurmatli hamkorlar! Agar sizga maqul bo‘lsa, biz taklifni birgalikda ko‘rib chiqaylik.*” (“Peace be upon you, respected partners! If you agree, let us review the proposal together.”)
- Visual Example: Speaker uses head nods, smiles, hands open in welcoming gesture; slides include culturally familiar symbols and warm color palette (orange, green).
- Digital Cues: Emojis such as 🌿 (nature) or 🤝 (handshake) to reinforce cooperation.
- Pragmatic Note: Emphasis on relational harmony, collective decision-making, and culturally mediated politeness.

### Comparative Analysis

Feature	English	Uzbek
Directness	High	Moderate (hedging used)
Visual formalism	Minimalist slides	Expressive slides with culturally resonant imagery
Verbal politeness	Softened directives	Honorifics, greetings, relational hedges
Nonverbal	Minimal gestures	Smiles, nods, open-hand gestures
Use of emojis	Rare	Frequent, contextually relevant

### Discussion

The results of this study clearly show that multimodal strategies in digital diplomacy are strongly influenced by cultural norms and language practices. In English online negotiations, participants tended to use direct speech acts, clear imperatives, and factual evidence to communicate their positions. For example, an English negotiator might write in the chat: “*Please review the revised proposal by 5 PM. Your feedback will be appreciated.*” This direct, goal-oriented style aligns with the individualistic cultural orientation of English-speaking contexts, emphasizing efficiency, clarity, and rational argumentation. Visual elements, such as neutral-colored slides and minimal gestures, complemented this verbal style, reinforcing a professional and task-focused approach. In contrast, Uzbek negotiations demonstrated a more relational and collectivist approach. Participants often opened sessions with respectful greetings, e.g., “*Assalomu alaykum hurmatli hamkorlar! Agar sizga maqul bo‘lsa, birgalikda taklifni ko‘rib chiqaylik*” (“Peace be upon you, respected partners! If you agree, let us review the proposal together”). Hedging expressions and relational politeness markers were frequent, and gestures such as nodding, hand movements, and smiles were actively used to maintain social harmony. Slides were visually richer, often including culturally meaningful imagery, warm colors, and symbols familiar to Uzbek participants. Emojis, such as 🌿 or 🤝, were used to reinforce messages and express solidarity. These differences illustrate that pragmatic strategies cannot be separated from cultural context. English participants rely on task-oriented, direct communication, while Uzbek participants emphasize relationship maintenance and collective decision-making. This has important implications for digital diplomacy: negotiators must be aware of how cultural expectations influence both verbal and nonverbal signals in online environments.

The study also shows the importance of multimodal integration. For example, in Uzbek negotiations, the combination of a polite verbal hedge with a welcoming gesture and a culturally



familiar visual slide strengthened the message and increased participant engagement. Similarly, in English sessions, concise verbal directives paired with minimalist visual slides enhanced clarity and efficiency. These findings suggest that ignoring visual or paralinguistic cues may reduce the effectiveness of negotiation, especially in cross-cultural contexts.

Moreover, the analysis highlights that multimodal strategies can mitigate potential misunderstandings. Misinterpreting hedging or indirect expressions in Uzbek negotiation could lead English speakers to perceive uncertainty or lack of commitment. Conversely, overemphasis on directness and minimal gestures in English contexts might seem abrupt or impolite to Uzbek negotiators. Training programs for diplomats should therefore include guidance on both verbal and nonverbal strategies and their cultural interpretations.

Finally, these findings extend previous research on digital diplomacy by providing empirical, real-world evidence of how culture, language, and multimodal communication interact in online negotiation. The results support the idea that effective digital diplomacy requires both linguistic proficiency and cultural sensitivity, especially when negotiations rely on video conferencing and digital collaboration tools.

### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that multimodal strategies in online negotiations are deeply shaped by language and culture. English negotiators prioritize directness, clarity, and factual argumentation, supported by neutral visual cues and minimal gestures. Uzbek negotiators, in contrast, emphasize relational politeness, indirectness, and collective orientation, reinforced by expressive gestures, culturally meaningful visuals, and digital symbols such as emojis.

The practical implications are significant:

1. Cross-cultural awareness is essential for effective digital diplomacy. Negotiators should be trained to recognize and adapt to the verbal and nonverbal strategies of their counterparts.
2. Multimodal coordination improves outcomes. Combining verbal, visual, and paralinguistic cues in a culturally appropriate way enhances clarity, engagement, and trust.
3. Tailored training programs for diplomats should include real examples of language, gestures, and visual materials from both English and Uzbek contexts to prepare participants for successful negotiation outcomes.

In summary, the study highlights that successful online diplomacy is not just about language skills, but about understanding, integrating, and adapting multimodal communication strategies to align with cultural norms. Future research could expand this study to include other languages and cultures, larger datasets, and quantitative measures of negotiation effectiveness.

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