Latin American Journal of Education

INDIRECT REQUESTS AS A POLITENESS STRATEGY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Annotation: *This article examines how English and Uzbek speakers use indirect requests to express politeness during their communication. Speakers use indirect requests to approach their listeners with requests because politeness helps to reduce face-threatening interactions that occur during their conversation. The research presents an extensive examination of both languages, which shows how people use different ways to make indirect requests through English grammatical and lexical elements and through Uzbek cultural-based methods. The two languages demonstrate different patterns of speech through their usage of English modal verbs and softening expressions, which show linguistic differences, and through their usage of Uzbek respect markers and context-dependent phrases. The paper proves that while both languages use different linguistic patterns and approaches, they are utilized to achieve the common goal of creating polite and peaceful communication. Comprehension of these strategies is vital for effective cross-cultural communication and pragmatic competence.*

Keywords*: indirect requests, politeness strategies, English language, Uzbek language, linguistic politeness, request forms, pragmatic strategies, language comparison.*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tilida so'zlashuvchilar muloqot paytida xushmuomalalikni ifodalash uchun bilvosita so'rovlardan qanday foydalanishini ko'rib chiqiladi. So'zlovchilar o'z tinglovchilariga so'rovlar bilan murojaat qilish uchun bilvosita so'rovlardan foydalanadilar, chunki xushmuomalalik suhbat davomida yuz beradigan o'zaro tushunmovchiliklarni kamaytirishga yordam beradi. Tadqiqot har ikkala tilning keng qamrovli tekshiruvini taqdim etadi, unda odamlar ingliz tilining grammatik va leksik elementlari va o'zbek madaniyatiga asoslangan usullari orqali bilvosita so'rovlar qilishning turli usullaridan qanday foydalanishlarini ko'rsatadi. Ikki tilda, ingliz tilidagi modal fe'l va yumshatuvchi iboralardan foydalanish hamda o'zbek tilidagi hurmat belgilari va kontekstga bog'liq iboralarni qo'llash orqali turli nutq shakllari namoyon bo'ladi. Maqolada, har ikkala til ham turli lingvistik usul va yondashuvlardan foydalanishiga qaramasdan, ular xushmuomala va tinch muloqotni yaratishdek umumiy maqsadga erishish uchun foydalanilganligini isbotlaydi. Ushbu strategiyalarni tushunish samarali madaniyatlararo muloqot va pragmatik kompetentsiya uchun juda muhimdir.*

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Showing politeness holds great significance during conversations. Friendly relationships are often strengthened by this approach while conflicts are frequently avoided. Especially, politeness is frequently observed when requests are made. Requesting assistance is not always easy since it can create tension for the listener. Asking indirectly is a method employed across numerous languages around the world. This article investigates indirect requests as a politeness strategy and learns how they work in English and Uzbek. While comparing these two languages, the study focuses on exploring mutual and culture-specific patterns of polite communication.

Politeness strategies are considered linguistic and pragmatic devices to reduce tension and maintain social harmony during the exchange of ideas (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Requests, suggestions, and commands are often believed to be impositions of face-threatening acts on people because they can cause the feeling of obligation within the listeners. It leads to speakers adapting these acts to make them more acceptable in society. According to Brown and Levinson(1987), politeness strategies are considerably linked to the concept of face, which represents an individual's public self-image. Speakers have to preserve their own face and the faces of others by trying

various linguistic techniques. One practical way of achieving this is through indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Leech(2014) emphasizes that politeness includes reducing the pressure on others and creating a friendly and respectful atmosphere in interaction. Indirect speech guides speakers to achieve success in communication without stress and mental challenges (Leech, 2014). As a consequence, indirect requests are usually perceived as more polite than direct ones in many situations (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

Indirect requests are used when the speaker's intention is implicit, not expressed directly (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Rather than dictating or issuing a direct command, the speaker utilizes statements and questions, letting the listener understand the hidden meaning of the request. This approach is effective in making requests softer, giving the listener the sense of choice in responding. Blum-Kulka(1987) explains that indirect requests are generally seen as more polite because they allow the listener greater freedom to choose whether to accept. This method supports the balance of positive social relationships. For example: Direct request: Open the window. Indirect request: It's a bit hot in here. Although the second sentence is not as direct as the first, the listener can realize that the speaker asks to open the window. This indicates the use of

indirectness functions as a politeness strategy by transferring responsibility away from the speaker. Social factors such as power relations, social distance, and formality influence the decision to use indirect language (Thomas, 1995). Thomas(1995) notes that people are more likely to employ indirect approaches when they are addressing strangers, superiors, or older individuals.

In English, indirect requests are mostly made with grammatical and lexical devices(Leech, 2014). One of the common ways is to use modal verbs such as "could", "would", and "might". Example:

Direct: Close the door.

Indirect: Could you close the door, please?

Modal verbs can ease the request, turning it into a question, and this makes it sound more polite. Another crucial strategy of English language politeness is using softening phrases. According to Leech(2014), utterances like "I was wondering if" or "Do you think you could help?" soften the speaker's request. Example: "I was wondering if you could send me the number for university admissions". This approach lessens tension during conversation and demonstrates respect toward the listener's choice of answer (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Additionally, negative questions are also employed frequently to sound polite in English: "Would you mind closing the door?" Such constructions signal that English politeness depends largely on grammatical indirectness

(Blum-Kulka, 1987) and reveal personal freedom and equality as a whole cultural value (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In Uzbek, indirect requests tend to be controlled mainly by cultural norms, including respect, age, and social class (Kramsch, 1998; Kudratova, 2025). While there is an opportunity to make requests with grammatical indirect patterns, politeness is shown frequently through special respectful vocabulary, intonation, and contextual dependence (Kramsch, 1998). Example:

Direct: Derazani oching. (Open the window.)

Polite: Iltimos, derazani ochib bera olasizmi? (Please, could you open the window?).

The word "iltimos" and the respectful verb form contribute significantly to the level of politeness. Uzbek speakers rely heavily on contextual indirectness rather than on grammatical approaches (Kudratova, 2025). Example: "Bu yer biroz issiq ekan". (It seems a bit hot here). As in English, the listener is expected to assume the request's meaning. Furthermore, Kramsch highlights that politeness is closely related to social factors instead of simple language form in some cultures. Uzbek language politeness is no exception. In Uzbek, requests addressed to elders or those of higher status involve conditional and evaluative phrases: "Agar mumkin bo'lsa, bir oz yordam bersangiz". (If possible, could you help a little?) This reflects the

emphasis on respect and social relation in Uzbek interactions.

Both English and Uzbek languages use indirect requests to reduce the impact of face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, the process of achieving indirectness differs. In English, grammatical patterns are necessary for indirect politeness (Leech, 2014). Modal verbs, question structures, and softening expressions play an important role in polite requests (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Politeness is highly associated with respecting personal freedom but not imposing pressure on individuals. In Uzbek, indirectness relies generally on context. Respect is expressed commonly through word choices, social awareness, and several cultural standards (Kudratova, 2025). Blum-Kulka (1987) notes that cultures may vary in the way of how they maintain directness and politeness, and this distinction is noticeable between English and Uzbek. Despite these variations, both languages use indirect requests to reach the same aim: preserving a friendly and peaceful relationship.

This article has explored indirect requests as a politeness strategy in English and Uzbek. The findings indicate that indirectness is fundamental in mitigating the force of requests and sustaining harmonious social relations. Whereas English principally pays attention to grammatical means in order to achieve a target, Uzbek gives more weight to cultural values and social hierarchy. Examining these aspects also contributes to a broader understanding of how politeness strategies function within different linguistic and cultural contexts.

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