

**COMPARATIVE PRAGMATICS OF REQUESTS AND
DIRECTIVES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FORMAL TEXTS**

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Abstract. *This thesis offers a comparative pragmatic study of requests and directives in English and Uzbek formal texts. The aim is to identify differences in politeness strategies, degrees of directness, and conventionalized institutional formulas. The methodology integrates speech act theory, corpus-informed discourse analysis, and contextual interpretation. The novelty lies in a genre-sensitive model explaining how institutional authority and cultural expectations shape directive force and mitigation in formal written communication.*

Keywords: *pragmatics; requests; directives; formal register; politeness strategies; speech act theory; modality*

The comparative pragmatics of requests and directives in English and Uzbek formal texts can be defined as the systematic study of how institutional speakers encode obligation, permission, and expected compliance through conventional linguistic forms in two typologically different languages. The central mechanism of comparison is the mapping of illocutionary force to surface forms, where the same institutional goal, such as obtaining a signature, may be packaged as a mitigated request in one tradition and as a normatively framed directive in another. A concrete example is the difference between English letter formulas like “We would be grateful if you could submit the documents by 10 June” and Uzbek equivalents that often foreground procedural necessity and institutional rule, such as “Hujjatlarni 10-iyungacha taqdim etishingiz so‘raladi,” which can sound simultaneously request-like and directive-like because of administrative convention. In a corpus-informed sample typical for academic research, it is realistic to observe that modals and formulaic hedges constitute a large share of English requesting moves, while Uzbek official texts show higher density of performative or quasi-performative administrative predicates, producing measurable differences in mitigation frequency and in the proportion of explicit time-limit markers; a balanced dataset of several thousand words per genre often yields directive markers in over half of Uzbek procedural sentences, whereas English displays more variability across genres. The scientific explanation is that formal writing is constrained by genre norms and institutional

accountability, and these constraints interact with cultural expectations of clarity, hierarchy, and face management, leading to different optimal trade-offs between directness and politeness in the two linguistic systems [1].

Requests in formal texts may be defined as directive speech acts in which the writer seeks the addressee's voluntary cooperation while preserving relational equilibrium, whereas directives in the narrow sense are acts that presuppose institutional right to demand compliance. The mechanism that separates them in practice is not only grammatical mood but also the distribution of epistemic and deontic modality, the use of honorific or respectful address, and the presence of justificatory framing that legitimizes the imposition. For example, English employment communication frequently encodes a directive as a request by using conditional modality and appreciation frames, as in "Could you please forward the report at your earliest convenience," while Uzbek formal administrative notices may encode the same obligation by pointing to procedural rules, as in "Hisobot belgilangan muddatda yuborilishi shart," where "shart" overtly signals necessity and compresses the relational negotiation. Quantitatively, cross-linguistic pragmatics research commonly operationalizes directness by counting imperative forms, explicit performatives, and obligation modals; English formal letters often show low rates of imperatives and higher rates of "could/would" constructions, while Uzbek official style more readily employs necessity predicates and deverbal constructions that function as obligations, producing statistically higher directness indices in comparable institutional genres. Scientifically, this distribution can be interpreted through politeness theory and institutional discourse studies: English bureaucratic style tends to externalize obligation into cooperative framing to reduce face-threat, whereas Uzbek administrative style often legitimizes imposition by embedding it in normativity and collective procedural order, which changes how face-work is performed rather than eliminating it [2].

A further definitional layer concerns the relationship between conventionalization and pragmatic inference, because formal texts often rely on stable templates whose meaning is partly legal-administrative rather than conversational. The mechanism here is that repeated formulas become pragmatic shortcuts, so that expressions like "You are hereby requested to..." in English or "so'raladi" in Uzbek acquire a standardized institutional force that readers interpret without reconstructing the speaker's personal intent. For instance, English "hereby" performs a legal anchoring function by marking the utterance as performative, while Uzbek administrative writing relies on lexicalized predicates and participial constructions to achieve similar anchoring, often reinforced by references to deadlines, document numbers, and institutional titles. In terms of measurable patterns, template-driven segments can account for a substantial proportion of formal documents, and it is common in office correspondence for over one third of sentences to reproduce fixed frames

with minor variable slots such as dates and names, reducing pragmatic ambiguity. The scientific explanation is that institutional discourse prioritizes auditability and uniformity; therefore, pragmatic meaning is stabilized through formulaic language, and differences between English and Uzbek emerge not primarily from individual politeness preferences but from historically shaped bureaucratic norms of textualization [3].

In English formal requests, indirectness is typically defined as the preference for interrogative or conditional structures that encode the desired action as an option, even when the institutional context strongly anticipates compliance. The mechanism involves modal verbs, conditional clauses, and discourse markers that soften imposition, including “please,” appreciation statements, and reasons placed before the request, which together shift perceived agency to the addressee. A representative example is “If you could provide the signed copy by Friday, we would appreciate it,” where the conditional “if” and the modal “could” operate as mitigators, and the gratitude frame provides a relational cushion. In corpus-based counts reported in pragmatic literature, such mitigators can appear in a majority of request realizations in formal English correspondence, and conditional modals often outnumber bare imperatives by a wide margin, especially in external communication with clients or partners. Scientifically, this pattern aligns with the idea that English formal politeness frequently works through negative-politeness strategies that respect the addressee’s autonomy, and written formality amplifies these strategies because writers cannot repair face threats interactively and therefore pre-emptively mitigate them [4].

Uzbek formal requests and directives can be defined as speech acts embedded in a broader system of respect, hierarchy, and institutional accountability, where the surface form often blends request semantics with directive force. The mechanism is frequently realized through predicates like “so‘raladi,” “talab etiladi,” and necessity markers such as “shart,” as well as through participial and deverbal constructions that present obligations as procedural facts rather than personal demands. For example, “Mazkur hujjat nusxasi ilova qilinishi shart” frames the action as a compliance condition of the procedure, and the writer’s personal agency is backgrounded, which paradoxically can reduce interpersonal friction while maintaining high directness. Empirically, administrative Uzbek exhibits high rates of normative lexis and deadline specifications, and directive clauses may cluster around enumerated procedural steps; in many official notices, obligation markers appear repeatedly within a short span, yielding a measurable density that is higher than in comparable English documents. Scientifically, the explanation is that Uzbek official style often performs politeness by aligning the request with institutional legitimacy and collective norms, so mitigation is achieved through depersonalization and proceduralization rather than through optionality and interrogativity [1].

A crucial comparative issue is the role of address forms and honorific indexing, which can be defined as pragmatic devices that locate participants within a social and institutional relationship. The mechanism in English formal writing is relatively restrained, relying on titles and surnames (“Dear Dr Smith”), whereas Uzbek correspondence may activate respectful address through lexical choices and formulaic salutations that signal deference, while still allowing directive content to be firm. For example, an Uzbek letter may begin with a respectful salutation and then move quickly into “Sizdan ... so‘raymiz” or “taqdim etishingizni so‘raymiz,” where plural forms and respectful pronouns contribute to politeness even when the directive is strict. Quantitatively, address formulas are near-universal in both traditions in external correspondence, yet the internal composition differs: Uzbek tends to allocate more textual space to greeting and closing politeness, while English allocates more to mitigation within the request clause itself, a difference observable by counting tokens devoted to salutations and closings versus tokens devoted to hedges and modals. Scientifically, this supports the view that politeness resources are distributed differently across textual zones in different cultures: one tradition places relational work in the frame of the document, the other in the micro-design of the request sentence [2].

The interaction of modality and authority can be defined as the alignment between grammatical expressions of necessity and the institutional capacity to impose obligations. The mechanism is visible in English through “must,” “are required to,” and “should,” which encode deontic force with varying strength, while Uzbek uses “shart,” “lozim,” “kerak,” and “talab etiladi,” each carrying a distinct normative weight. For example, “Applicants must submit certified copies” is a strong directive grounded in regulation, while Uzbek “Ariza beruvchilar tasdiqlangan nusxalarni taqdim etishi shart” mirrors the same force with an explicit necessity predicate; both are directive, but their pragmatic feel differs because English “must” is compact and clause-internal, whereas Uzbek necessity predicates can function as sentence-level evaluators. In many regulated genres, strong obligation markers dominate; it is common for instructions and policies to contain a high proportion of “must/required” or “shart/talab” constructions, sometimes exceeding two thirds of directive clauses in procedural documents, reflecting the high compliance expectation. Scientifically, the comparison shows that when authority is explicit, mitigation decreases in both languages, but the languages differ in how they linguistically justify authority: English often points to policy text or external regulation, while Uzbek often embeds obligation in a conventional administrative predicate that already presupposes legitimacy [5].

From a discourse-structural perspective, the sequencing of reasons and requests can be defined as a pragmatic strategy that manages compliance by controlling information flow.

The mechanism in English formal writing often places reasons before the request to reduce resistance, using causal connectors and anticipatory explanation, whereas Uzbek may present the obligation first and then supply the reason as part of the procedural narrative, especially in notices and orders. For example, English “Due to the audit schedule, we would ask you to provide...” foregrounds rationale, while Uzbek “Taqdim etishingiz so‘raladi, chunki...” can preserve directive-first sequencing that signals institutional priority. Quantitatively, reason-first patterns can be measured by counting causal clauses preceding directive heads, and cross-cultural studies frequently show genre-dependent preferences: external customer-facing English texts show high reason-first frequency, while internal administrative Uzbek texts may show higher directive-first frequency, although both patterns exist in both languages. Scientifically, this is consistent with relevance-theoretic accounts of ostension and cognitive effort: writers choose sequencing that they expect will minimize interpretive cost for their audience, and audience expectations differ with institutional conventions and educational socialization [3].

To provide a compact comparative overview, it is useful to define a parameter table that links pragmatic variables to typical realizations across the two languages in formal genres. The mechanism of such a table is analytical operationalization: abstract notions like directness and mitigation are represented through observable markers such as imperatives, modal verbs, performative adverbs, and depersonalizing constructions. For example, English tends to realize mitigation through conditionality and appreciation, while Uzbek tends to realize mitigation through depersonalization and respectful framing, even when directive force is high. The quantitative dimension can be stated as relative tendencies rather than absolute laws, because institutional genres vary; nevertheless, comparative pragmatic research routinely reports consistent directional differences across comparable corpora. Scientifically, the value of the table is that it makes explicit which linguistic cues are being treated as evidence, enabling replicable analysis and preventing impressionistic conclusions.

Table 1. Comparative pragmatic indicators in English and Uzbek formal texts

The indicator is defined as an observable cue of directive force or politeness; the mechanism column states how it functions; the example column illustrates; the tendency column summarizes typical distribution.

Indicator: Conditional modal mitigation; Mechanism: encodes optionality and autonomy; Example: could/would in request clause; Tendency: higher in English.

Indicator: Necessity predicate; Mechanism: frames action as procedural requirement; Example: shart, talab etiladi; Tendency: higher in Uzbek.

Indicator: Performative anchoring; Mechanism: legal-institutional force marking; Example: hereby; so‘raladi; Tendency: frequent in both, realized differently.

Indicator: Depersonalization; Mechanism: removes agent, emphasizes rule; Example: passive “is required”; agentless obligation clauses; Tendency: high in both, stylistically stronger in Uzbek administrative prose.

Indicator: Appreciation/thanks; Mechanism: relational compensation; Example: we appreciate your cooperation; minnatdorchilik bildiramiz; Tendency: more clause-internal in English, more frame-based in Uzbek.

A linguistic micro-analysis can be defined as the examination of clause structure to identify how directive force is encoded through syntax and morphology. The mechanism differs because English has a relatively fixed word order and relies heavily on auxiliary modals, while Uzbek is agglutinative and can encode interpersonal relations and modality through suffixes, participles, and postpositional structures, producing different surfaces for similar pragmatic effects. For example, English may use “You are requested to submit...” where the passive voice depersonalizes the agent, while Uzbek can use participial constructions and nominalization to create official tone, such as “taqdim etish” with necessity predicates, reducing the visibility of the requester. Quantitatively, depersonalized constructions can be counted by passive markers in English and by agent-suppressing structures in Uzbek, and formal documents in both languages show elevated rates compared to informal communication, reflecting institutional preference for objectivity. Scientifically, this supports the claim that formal pragmatics is shaped by grammatical affordances: each language offers different low-cost ways to encode the same institutional stance, and writers select forms that best align with local norms of officialness and clarity [5].

An additional comparative dimension is the role of conventional politeness markers, which can be defined as lexical or phrasal units that signal respect and cooperative intent without changing propositional content. The mechanism in English includes “please,” “kindly,” and formulaic closings that maintain professionalism, whereas Uzbek includes respectful verbs and conventional closing wishes that reaffirm social harmony. For example, English “Please ensure that...” can function as a softening token even when the clause is directive, while Uzbek may employ “marhamat” or respectful plural address and concluding formulas that perform the same face-work across the document boundary. Quantitatively, markers like “please” appear frequently in English service-oriented correspondence, while Uzbek may distribute politeness through multiple smaller cues such as pronoun choice, pluralization, and honorific lexemes, making simple token counts insufficient unless categories are carefully operationalized. Scientifically, this highlights a

methodological point: cross-linguistic pragmatics must build comparable annotation schemes that respect language-specific realizations, otherwise differences may be artifacts of measurement rather than genuine pragmatic contrasts [4].

The methodological framework of this thesis is defined as an integrated approach combining speech act theory, politeness theory, and corpus-informed discourse analysis to ensure both conceptual depth and empirical accountability. The mechanism is to identify directive speech act types, annotate mitigation and authority cues, and interpret findings through genre constraints, so that analysis remains sensitive to institutional purpose rather than treating all formal texts as homogeneous. For example, a directive in a policy document functions differently from a directive in a business email, even if they share modal markers; therefore, genre stratification is necessary to avoid conflating institutional levels. Quantitatively, reliability in annotation can be strengthened by using explicit coding manuals and calculating agreement, and corpus balance can be improved by matching comparable genres and sizes, since disproportionate sampling can inflate apparent differences. Scientifically, such triangulation aligns with best practice in pragmatic research because it combines qualitative interpretation with quantifiable indicators, enabling cautious generalization about English and Uzbek formal directive practices [3].

The findings can be synthesized by defining the central comparative result as a difference in where and how each language places mitigation relative to directive force in formal written genres. The mechanism is that English tends to encode mitigation within the directive clause through modals, conditionals, and appreciation, while Uzbek tends to encode legitimacy and respect through procedural framing, depersonalization, and formal address conventions that coexist with strong obligation predicates. For example, English may soften with “could you,” whereas Uzbek may preserve a firm “shart” but surround it with respectful framing and institutional rationale, producing a different pragmatic experience for the reader despite similar compliance expectations. Quantitatively, these tendencies can be expressed as higher relative frequency of conditional modals in English and higher relative frequency of necessity predicates in Uzbek within comparable formal genres, alongside differences in the distribution of politeness tokens across salutations, bodies, and closings. Scientifically, the conclusion is that directness and politeness are not opposites in formal discourse; they are jointly optimized under institutional constraints, and English and Uzbek achieve this optimization via different linguistic resources and genre conventions.

In conclusion, the comparative pragmatic analysis demonstrates that requests and directives in English and Uzbek formal texts are shaped by shared institutional needs for clarity and accountability, yet diverge in their preferred strategies for managing face and authority. English formal writing more often relies on clause-level mitigation through

conditional modality and appreciation frames, which constructs compliance as cooperative choice even in regulated contexts. Uzbek formal writing more often relies on proceduralization, depersonalization, and necessity predicates that foreground rule-based legitimacy, while politeness is distributed through respectful framing and conventional document structure. These differences are best explained by the interaction of grammatical affordances, genre templates, and culturally stabilized expectations about institutional communication. The study therefore contributes a genre-sensitive model for comparing directive force across languages and provides a principled basis for translation, drafting, and pragmatic instruction in professional contexts.

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