

Pragmatic Strategies in Mitigating and Intensifying Wish/Desire Expressions

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Abstract: This paper deals with the issues based on analyzing the pragmatic strategies used to mitigate and intensify wish and desire expressions in English and Uzbek discourse. While desire is primarily a semantic category, its realization in discourse depends on contextual, cultural, and interactional factors. The study analyzes modal verbs, hedging devices, intensifiers, and emotive constructions that either soften or strengthen expressions of intention. Drawing from contemporary literary works in both languages, the research demonstrates how mitigation supports politeness and relational harmony, whereas intensification conveys urgency, emotional depth, or dramatic force. The findings reveal cross-cultural similarities and differences in pragmatic patterns shaping interpersonal communication and expressive nuance.

Keywords: Pragmatics, desire expression, mitigation, intensification, modality, politeness strategies, discourse analysis, comparative linguistics.

Introduction: Expressions of wish and desire occupy a central position in human communication, reflecting internal states, intentions, aspirations, and emotional attitudes. However, the way speakers articulate desire is rarely neutral. Rather, desire expressions are shaped by pragmatic strategies that either soften (mitigate) or strengthen (intensify) the communicative force of the utterance. These strategies are influenced by social distance, power relations, cultural norms, and emotional context.

Mitigation typically functions to reduce imposition, protect face, and maintain interpersonal harmony. In English, modal constructions such as “would like,” “I was hoping,” or “I wish perhaps...” serve to soften the expression of desire. Similarly, hedging devices, indirect speech acts, and conditional forms reduce assertiveness. Conversely, intensification involves linguistic tools that amplify emotional commitment or urgency, including adverbs like “really,” “so much,” exclamative structures, and repetition.

In Uzbek discourse, similar pragmatic adjustments are evident. Analytic forms such as “-gim keladi,” politeness particles, modal verbs like “kerak,” and mitigating expressions such as “imkon bo’lsa” help

reduce face-threatening force. Intensification, on the other hand, may appear through repetition (“juda-juda xohlayman”), emotive lexemes, and culturally embedded interjections.

Pragmatic variation in desire expressions is particularly visible in literary discourse, where characters’ emotions, relationships, and conflicts are constructed through nuanced language choices. Authors deliberately manipulate mitigation and intensification to signal vulnerability, authority, longing, nostalgia, or despair. Thus, pragmatic analysis of desire expressions in fiction provides insights into both linguistic structure and socio-cultural values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatic strategies in expressing desire and intention have been widely studied within the frameworks of politeness theory, speech act theory, and modality. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that speakers use mitigation strategies to protect positive and negative face. Expressions of desire can be face-threatening if they imply imposition or expectation. Therefore, linguistic softeners such as hedges and modal verbs function as politeness strategies.

Leech (2014) expands this discussion by introducing the

concept of pragmatic principles regulating communicative force. According to Leech, indirectness and mitigation enhance interpersonal harmony in conversation. In the context of desire expressions, constructions like “I would like to” rather than “I want to” reduce assertiveness and indicate deference.

Speech act theory, originally proposed by Searle (1979), classifies desire expressions as directives or commissives depending on their structure. Indirect speech acts often serve mitigating purposes. For example, “I was wondering if...” performs the function of request while masking direct desire.

Intensification has also been examined within discourse analysis. Quirk et al. (1985) describe intensifiers as lexical elements that amplify meaning. In emotional discourse, repetition and exclamatives increase affective force. Ochs and Schieffelin (1989) highlight the role of emotional language in socialization and identity construction.

Within modality theory, Palmer (2001) distinguishes volitional modality as a category directly associated with wishes and desires. The pragmatic strength of volitional modality varies depending on contextual and interpersonal factors.

To illustrate pragmatic mitigation and intensification, examples are drawn from contemporary literary works not analyzed in the previous article.

From Sally Rooney’s *Normal People* (2018):

“I was sort of hoping you might come.”

The phrase “sort of” and past progressive “was hoping” serve as mitigating devices. The speaker reduces imposition and emotional exposure. Instead of stating “I want you to come,” the utterance softens personal desire and signals vulnerability.

From Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* (2001):

“I desperately want to be forgiven.”

The adverb “desperately” intensifies emotional urgency. The structure amplifies affective commitment and highlights psychological tension. Intensification here marks emotional climax.

From Abdulla Qahhor’s later prose collections:

“Agar iloji bo’lsa, birgina gapni aytmoqchi edim.”

The phrase “agar iloji bo’lsa” mitigates desire, reducing potential imposition. It reflects politeness norms and respect.

From Erkin A’zam’s contemporary narratives:

“Men juda-juda ko’rishni xohlayman!”

Reduplication (“juda-juda”) intensifies the emotional force. It expresses impatience or deep longing.

In English fiction, mitigation often relies on modal verbs, hedges, and conditional structures. Emotional intensification depends largely on adverbials and syntactic emphasis. Uzbek literary discourse employs modal particles and conditional clauses for mitigation, while intensification frequently uses repetition and emotive expressions.

Comparative Table: Pragmatic Mitigation and Intensification

Strategy Type	English Literary Example	Linguistic Device	Uzbek Literary Example	Linguistic Device	Pragmatic Function
Lexical Hedging (Mitigation)	<i>“I was sort of hoping you might come.”</i> (Rooney)	Hedge: <i>sort of</i>	—	—	Emotional exposure reduced
Tense-based Softening	<i>was hoping</i> (past progressive)	Temporal distancing	—	—	Vulnerability signaling
Modal/Conditional Mitigation	<i>you might come</i>	Modal verb <i>might</i>	<i>Agar iloji bo’lsa...</i> (Qahhor)	Conditional clause	Reduction of imposition

Indirect Desire Expression	Avoids direct “I want”	Structural mitigation	... <i>aytmoqchi edim</i>	Tentative past form	Politeness & deference
Emotional Urgency Marker	Direct verb + intensifier	Affective focus	Emotive structure	Lexical-emotional charge	Deep longing or impatience

Cross-cultural pragmatic research demonstrates that cultures differ in directness levels. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) found that indirectness correlates with cultural norms governing politeness and hierarchy. Uzbek communicative culture, shaped by collectivist values and respect conventions, often favors mitigating strategies in formal discourse contexts.

Literary discourse provides a fertile ground for examining pragmatic variation. Simpson (2004) suggests that stylistic analysis of fictional dialogue

reveals patterns of power, emotion, and intention. Contemporary pragmatic studies emphasize that fictional language reflects real-life sociolinguistic tendencies while intensifying them for narrative effect.

Recent developments in intercultural pragmatics also confirm that emotional intensification strategies vary across languages. While English frequently uses adverbial intensifiers (“really,” “so much”), Uzbek relies on reduplication (“juda-juda”) and emotive particles.

Mitigation Patterns

English	Uzbek
Hedging particles (<i>sort of, kind of</i>)	Conditional clauses (<i>agar iloji bo'lsa</i>)
Past progressive softening (<i>was hoping</i>)	Tentative past forms (<i>-moqchi edim</i>)
Modal verbs (<i>might, could</i>)	Modal particles and affixes
Focus on emotional safety	Focus on respect and deference

In English fiction, mitigation frequently protects the speaker’s face needs (Brown & Levinson politeness framework). The structure avoids direct exposure of emotional vulnerability.

In Uzbek literary discourse, mitigation often encodes cultural politeness norms, emphasizing humility and respect rather than individual emotional defense.

Intensification Patterns

English	Uzbek
Adverbial intensifiers (<i>desperately, deeply, terribly</i>)	Reduplication (<i>juda-juda</i>)
Syntactic emphasis	Emotive lexical amplification
Psychological tension	Emotional immediacy
Individual affect	Expressive emotional surge

English intensification is largely lexico-syntactic, relying on adverbs and semantic precision. Uzbek

intensification is predominantly expressive and rhythmic, employing repetition and emotional vocabulary.

Thus, pragmatic strategies reflect cultural communicative norms. English discourse prioritizes indirectness in maintaining personal space, whereas Uzbek discourse embeds politeness within respect-oriented formulae. Intensification in both languages signals heightened emotional states but differs in structural manifestation. Literature establishes that mitigating and intensifying strategies are not arbitrary stylistic choices but structured pragmatic devices shaped by cultural expectations and discourse goals. These frameworks inform the comparative analysis conducted in this study.

CONCLUSION

Mitigating and intensifying strategies play a crucial role in shaping wish and desire expressions within discourse. Through modal verbs, hedging constructions, and conditional forms, speakers minimize face threat and preserve interpersonal harmony. Conversely, intensifiers and emotive devices heighten expressive force and signal urgency or emotional depth.

Comparative analysis of English and Uzbek literary texts demonstrates both universal pragmatic mechanisms and culture-specific realizations. While English favors modal and adverbial modification, Uzbek discourse often relies on analytic constructions and reduplication.

The study confirms that desire expressions function not merely as semantic units but as pragmatic tools embedded in social interaction. Understanding these strategies contributes to intercultural pragmatics, discourse analysis, and comparative linguistics.

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