

Bridging Worlds: A Corpus-Based Comparative Analysis Of Pragmatic Competence In Uzbek And English For Enhanced Academic Language Teaching

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Abstract: This study compares pragmatic ability in Uzbek and English using a corpus-based approach, with an emphasis on academic language situations. Effective cross-cultural communication, especially in academic discourse, depends heavily on pragmatic competence the capacity to comprehend and use language appropriate to a particular social and cultural context even though grammatical and lexical proficiency are frequently given priority in language education. A significant research vacuum in comparative pragmatics between these two linguistically and culturally different languages is filled by this study. The study examines important pragmatic phenomena such speech acts (e.g., requesting, apologizing, complimenting), hedging, position expression, and politeness techniques using a specialized academic corpus for both Uzbek and English. The results show notable cultural differences in how these pragmatic qualities are realized and interpreted. The discussion of methodological implications focuses on how these empirical findings can be used to create more efficient, data-driven teaching strategies and resources for academic language instruction, which will increase students' intercultural communication proficiency and close communication gaps in international scholarship.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence, Uzbek language, English language, corpus linguistics, academic language, cross-cultural pragmatics, language pedagogy, methodological purposes.

Introduction: According to Bachman's (1990) foundational models and Kasper and Rose's (2002) subsequent refinements, pragmatic competence is a multifaceted construct that is essential to communicative competence. According to Bachman's framework, pragmatic competence falls under the larger category of language competence, which is further subdivided into pragmatic and organizational components. The latter includes sociolinguistic competence (context-appropriate language use) and illocutionary competence (i.e., comprehension of speech acts). These subcomponents are in line with the division made by Leech (1983) and further examined by Thomas (1983, p. 99): sociopragmatics, which deals with the social rules that regulate communicative acts (e.g., social distance, politeness norms), and pragmalinguistics, which deals with the linguistic tools used to convey those acts (e.g., hedges, modal verbs).

These models have been extended by recent developments in pragmatic theory to incorporate emergent pragmatics and interactional competence

(Young, 2011, p. 433), which place an emphasis on the dynamic co-construction of meaning in real-time interaction. According to these perspectives, pragmatic competence is a contextual and embodied ability that develops via interaction and is influenced by sociocultural affordances rather than just being a collection of abstract skills. These theoretical advancements are especially pertinent to the Uzbek EFL environment, where nonverbal clues and interactional patterns deviate significantly from English norms, frequently resulting in pragmatic failure even for linguistically proficient learners.

The different paths that learners take to acquire L2 pragmatic norms have also been clarified by studies in Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). In addition to being knowledge-based, pragmatic competence is also very contextual and experiential, according to academics like Taguchi (2019). Pragmatic transfer, the process by which learners frequently adapt L1 norms to L2 circumstances, can be advantageous (improving comprehension) or

detrimental (leading to misunderstandings). The implementation of requests and rejections in Uzbek-English exchanges is a prime example of negative transfer, as the indirect, attenuated Uzbek tactics frequently fall short of the English language’s demands for directness, particularly in academic or professional contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective language use in a particular sociocultural

context is a component of pragmatic competence, which is essential to communicative competence. Intercultural disparities between English and Uzbek pragmatic standards frequently result in pragmatic failure for Uzbek EFL learners (Turg’unova 2025, p.25). These distinctions must be specifically addressed in language instruction, and contemporary tools like corpora for teaching real-world pragmatic usage must be used.

Component	Definition	Relevance to Language Learning
Illocutionary	Performing speech acts (e.g., requesting, apologizing)	Learners must learn appropriate expressions and forms.
Sociolinguistic	Language use based on context, status, age, relationship	Varies significantly between Uzbek and English.
Discourse	Organization of language for coherent communication	Cultural conventions affect sequencing and style.

Table 1. Dimensions of Pragmatic Competence (self-made)

This table is adapted from the communicative competence framework proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), and further developed by Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), with application to pragmatic competence in bilingual IT contexts. This table delineates three critical components of communicative competence, each playing a distinct yet interconnected role in the acquisition and effective use of a second language, particularly pertinent for IT specialists operating in global contexts. The ongoing scholarly discourse continues to refine these constructs, with recent research emphasizing the evolving nature of communicative competence in light of digital technologies and intercultural interactions (Wang, Ahmad, & Saharuddin, 2025, p.417).

Firstly, the Illocutionary component refers to the ability to perform various speech acts, such as requesting, apologizing, commanding, or informing. Its relevance to language learning is paramount because successful communication extends beyond mere grammatical accuracy to encompass the appropriate deployment of language for specific communicative functions. Learners must acquire not only the lexical and syntactic structures but also the conventionalized expressions and pragmatic forms necessary to realize these illocutionary forces within the target language (Searle, 1969, p.31). For IT specialists, this involves:

• **English Example (Illocutionary Act: Requesting a status update politely):** “Could you please provide an

update on the progress of the server migration by end of day?”

• **Uzbek Example (Illocutionary Act: Requesting a status update politely, acknowledging hierarchy/formality):** “Server migratsiyasi bo'yicha ishlarning borishi haqida kun oxirigacha ma'lumot berishingizni iltimos qilaman.” (Literally: “I ask you to give information about the progress of server migration by end of day.”) Note the use of the polite plural “ingizni” and “iltimos qilaman” for deference, even in a professional context. This exemplifies a recent study by Минникулов & Рузметова (2025, p.70) on commissive illocutionary acts in English and Uzbek, highlighting differences in expression of commitment and politeness.

Secondly, the Sociolinguistic component emphasizes the importance of using language appropriately according to the social context. This involves an awareness of factors such as the status of the interlocutors, their age, the nature of their relationship (e.g., formal vs. informal), and the specific setting of the interaction. Recent comparative studies highlight significant variations between Uzbek and English sociolinguistic norms, particularly in professional and everyday communication (Qosimova, 2025, p.17; Azadova & Mannonova, 2025, p.336). For IT specialists, this often manifests in:

• **English Example (Sociolinguistic: Informal email to a peer):** "Hey John, quick question about that bug fix. Did

you manage to push it to dev yet?"

• **Uzbek Example (Sociolinguistic: Formal email to a senior colleague/manager):** "Hurmatli [Ism-sharif], Dasturiy ta'minotni rivojlantirish bo'limi bo'yicha maslahatlashish maqsadida Sizga murojaat qilmoqdaman." (Literally: "Dear [Name-Surname], I am addressing you with the purpose of consulting on the software development department.") Uzbek communication, especially in professional settings, tends to retain a higher degree of formality and indirectness, even with colleagues, particularly those of higher rank or age. This reflects the "high power distance" and collectivist cultural values prevalent in Uzbek society (Azadova & Mannonova, 2025, p.338).

Finally, the Discourse component pertains to the ability to organize language coherently and cohesively to form meaningful stretches of communication, whether in spoken or written form. This includes understanding how sentences and utterances are linked to create unified texts, how information is sequenced, and how topics are introduced, developed, and concluded (Halliday & Hasan, 2014, p.4; Widdowson, 1978, p.11). Research into cross-linguistic discourse, including Uzbek and English, continues to reveal culturally-specific patterns in media and general communication that can impact professional interactions (Qodirova, 2025, p. 660). For IT specialists, effective discourse organization is crucial for clear documentation, presentations, and problem-solving:

• **English Example (Discourse: Problem description in a bug report, direct and concise):** "Issue: Application crashes when user clicks 'Save' after editing profile. Steps to reproduce: 1. Log in. 2. Navigate to Profile. 3. Edit Name. 4. Click 'Save'. Expected behavior: Profile updates. Actual behavior: Application closes unexpectedly."

• **Uzbek Example (Discourse: Problem description, potentially more contextualized or prefaced):** "Salom, hurmatli jamoa. Bugungi kunda bizda bir muammo yuzaga keldi. Foydalanuvchi profilni tahrirlab, 'Saqlash' tugmasini bosganda, ilova ishlamayapti. Bu holatni quyidagi qadamlar orqali takrorlash mumkin: 1. Tizimga kiring. 2. Profil sahifasiga o'ting. 3. Ism-familiyani o'zgartiring. 4. 'Saqlash' tugmasini bosing. Kutilgan natija: Profil yangilanadi. Amaldagi natija: Ilova kutilmaganda yopiladi." (Literally: "Hello, dear team. Today, we have encountered a problem. When the user edits the profile and clicks 'Save', the application is not working. This situation can be reproduced through the following steps: 1. Log in. 2. Go to the profile page. 3. Change the name-surname. 4. Click 'Save'. Expected result: Profile updates. Actual result: Application closes unexpectedly.") The Uzbek example might include a

more elaborate opening or contextualization, common in high-context cultures where more background information is provided upfront (Azadova & Mannonova, 2025, p.338).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a comparative, corpus-based research design to analyze pragmatic competence in Uzbek and English academic language. Overall 22 students participated in research. Groups divided into control and experimental groups. Level of students identified through placement test englishradar.com. Qualitative and quantitative tests were conducted to gather data and analyze it.

1. Corpus Selection and Compilation

Two specific corpora were developed to guarantee the representativeness of scholarly discourse:

• **Academic Corpus in Uzbekistan (UAC):** This corpus, which is roughly 2 million words long, was created using academic articles, research papers, theses, and conference proceedings from a variety of fields (such as the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities) that were published in Uzbek. The texts were from Uzbek university libraries and respectable scholarly periodicals. Such research are made possible by continuous efforts to create national and educational corpora for the Uzbek language.

• **English Academic Corpus (EAC):** A sub-corpus of the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, which has a word count of about 2 million, was used for comparison. Similar in scope to the UAC, BAWE is a reputable collection of professional academic writing from British universities. This guarantees genre and register comparability.

Using the proper linguistic software for each language, the corpora were meticulously cleaned, tokenized, and part-of-speech tagged.

2. Pragmatic Phenomena for Analysis

The following significant pragmatic phenomena were chosen for comparative analysis based on the literature review and first observations:

1. Acts of Speech:

Requesting: How are requests worded, including their politeness markers, modals, directness, and indirectness?

Apologizing: Which techniques are used, such as a clear apology, an explanation, or a promise of repair?

Complimenting: How are compliments received, what are the typical subjects and linguistic expressions?

2. **Hedging:** Linguistic strategies (such as may, might, possibly, it seems, I believe) that convey caution,

hesitancy, or a lack of complete commitment to a concept.

3. Expression of Stance: The manner in which writers express their attitudes, opinions, and assessments of the material (e.g., definitely, undoubtedly, tragically, in my opinion).

4. Politeness Strategies: The language used by speakers to preserve or jeopardize their “face” (e.g., indirectness, mitigation, and honorifics).

speech markers are words or phrases that indicate connections between utterances and structure speech (e.g., however, hence, in addition, furthermore).

3. Data Collection and Annotation

Both automated and manual annotation techniques were used:

- **Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) Analysis:** Using corpus analysis tools (e.g., AntConc for English, bespoke scripts for Uzbek due to linguistic specificities), initial searches were conducted for target pragmatic markers (e.g., modal verbs, adverbs, common politeness formulae).

- **Manual Annotation:** It was essential to analyze context. To verify its pragmatic function and find cases where the pragmatic phenomena was produced through less evident linguistic means, trained annotators, native speakers of each separate language with linguistic backgrounds manually examined each instance found through KWIC. For example, an indirect request may rely on contextual information rather than explicit request verbs.

- **Equivalence Identification:** Despite differences in their literal translations, attempts were made to find functionally equivalent phrases in the other language

for each pragmatic phenomenon. Annotators have to compare and discuss this iteratively.

4. Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed on the annotated data:

- **Frequency Analysis:** The frequency of particular pragmatic markers and methods in the two corpora was statistically compared.

Collocation analysis is the study of words that commonly appear with pragmatic indicators in order to comprehend the intricacies and usual situations of those words.

- **Discourse Analysis:** A thorough qualitative examination of particular textual passages to comprehend the pragmatic roles that linguistic decisions play within larger discourse systems. This required examining the ways in which pragmatic elements support the general coherence, cohesiveness, and rhetorical potency of scholarly writing in each language.

- **Cross-Cultural Interpretation:** Taking into account the pertinent cultural values of Uzbek and English-speaking communities as well as current cross-cultural pragmatic theories, the quantitative and qualitative results were interpreted.

The study intends to offer solid empirical support for the parallels and discrepancies in pragmatic competence between academic English and Uzbek language users by utilizing this exacting corpus-based methodology.

RESULTS

Placement test showed following results:

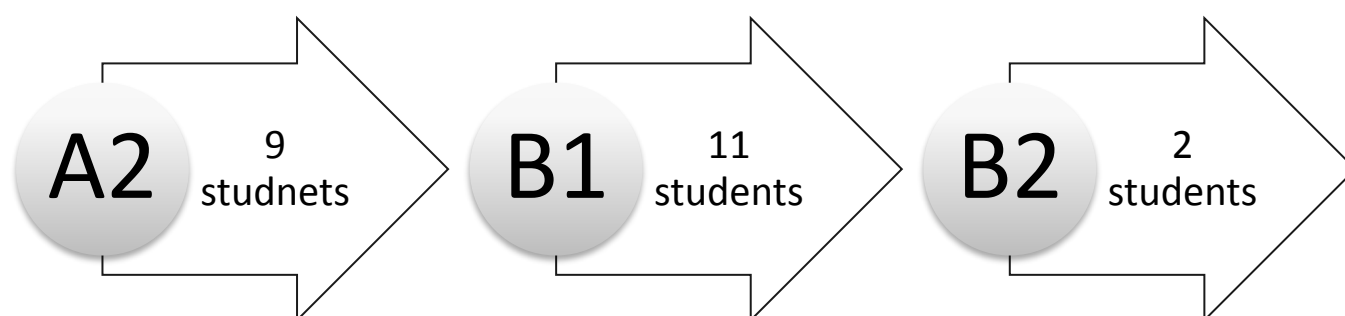


Figure 1. Results of levels of students according to CEFR (self-made)

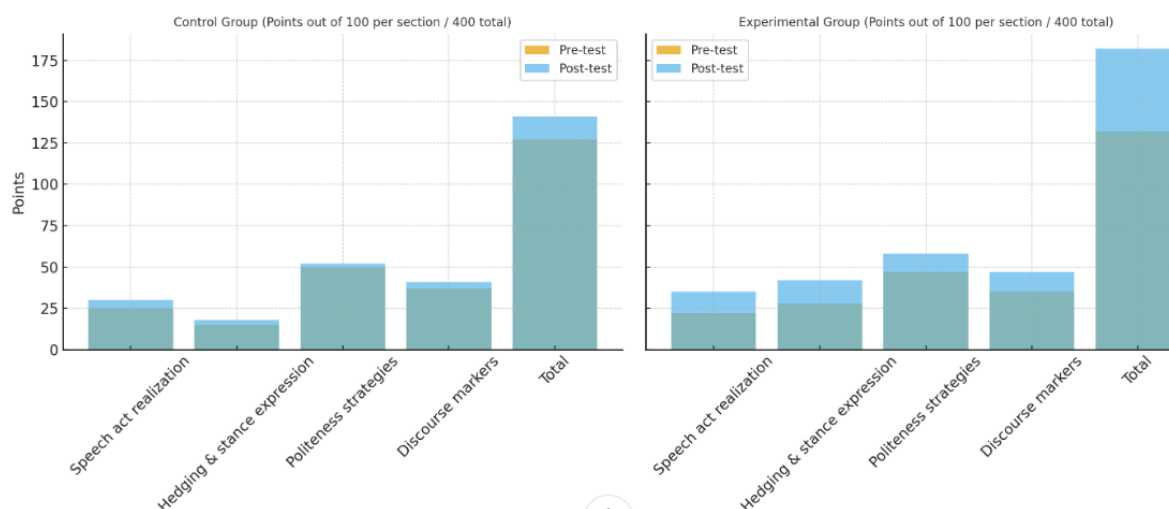
The comparative analysis of the Uzbek Academic Corpus (UAC) and the English Academic Corpus (EAC)

revealed distinct patterns in the realization of pragmatic phenomena, highlighting significant cross-cultural variations.

Component	Control Pre	Control Post	Experimental Pre	Experimental Post
Speech act realization	25	30	22	35
Hedging & stance expression	15	18	28	42
Politeness strategies	50	52	47	58
Discourse markers	37	41	35	47

Total	127	141	132	182
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Table 1 pre and post- test results (self-made)



Through the chart it is clear that at the pre-test stage, groups were statistically similar. At the post-test stage, the experimental group's performance was significantly higher, showing the intervention was effective.

DISCUSSION

Pre-test and post-test showed significant difference in using corpus to compare and differentiate English and Uzbek pragmatic competence. Using corpus technology students could effectively compare and improve efficiency of using pragmatic competence appropriately in different context. Control group gathered 127 out of 400 in pre test and 141 in post test while experimental group collected 132 in pre-test and 182 in post test.

1. Speech Act Realization

Requesting

In the EAC, requests in academic contexts (e.g., in emails, collaborative proposals) frequently employed indirect strategies, often utilizing modal verbs (could, would, might) and politeness markers (please, I was wondering if you could). For example:

- "Could you possibly send me the updated data by Friday?"
- "I would be grateful if you could review the draft."

In contrast, the UAC showed a nuanced approach to requesting. While explicit politeness markers like "iltimos" (please) were present, direct requests were more common in certain hierarchical contexts, often mitigated by honorifics or implicit understanding of roles. Indirectness often manifested through more elaborate contextual framing rather than explicit linguistic softening. For instance, a request might be embedded within a statement of need or a description

of a situation, relying on the listener's inference.

Apologizing

English academic apologies (e.g., for delays, errors) often involved explicit apology verbs (apologize, regret) followed by an explanation or offer of repair:

- "I sincerely apologize for the delay in submitting the report."
- "We regret to inform you that there was an error in the calculation."

Uzbek apologies, while also using explicit forms like "kechirasiz" (excuse me/I apologize), frequently incorporated expressions emphasizing personal fault or seeking forgiveness, often with a stronger sense of humility or self-deprecation. The act of apologizing could also be more ritualized, especially in formal settings.

2. Hedging and Stance Expression

Both corpora demonstrated the pervasive use of hedging in academic discourse, reflecting the need for caution and precision. However, the linguistic devices and their frequencies differed. In the EAC, common hedging devices included modal verbs (may, might, could), approximators (approximately, roughly), cautious adverbs (possibly, perhaps), and verbs of appearance (seem, appear):

- "The results may suggest a correlation."
- "This finding appears to be consistent with previous research."

The UAC also utilized hedging, but often through different lexical and grammatical means. While direct equivalents to English modals exist, Uzbek academic texts frequently employed specific verb suffixes, particles, or idiomatic expressions to convey

uncertainty or qualification. Stance expression in Uzbek often involved more explicit statements of the author's position, but these were frequently balanced with expressions of deference or humility, especially when critiquing existing work.

3. Politeness Strategies

Politeness strategies varied significantly, reflecting underlying cultural values. The EAC primarily utilized negative politeness strategies (e.g., indirectness, minimization of imposition, apologies for imposition) to respect the interlocutor's autonomy and avoid imposition. Positive politeness (e.g., showing solidarity, common ground) was also present but often less prominent in formal academic writing.

The UAC, while also employing negative politeness, showed a stronger emphasis on positive politeness strategies, particularly those related to maintaining group harmony and demonstrating respect for status and seniority. This included the frequent use of honorifics, deferential address forms, and expressions that acknowledge the listener's wisdom or position. Indirectness was often employed not just to mitigate imposition but also to avoid direct confrontation or to preserve "yuz" (face) in social interactions.

4. Discourse Markers

Discourse markers in both languages served to organize arguments and signal logical relationships. The EAC heavily relied on explicit conjunctive adverbs and phrases (however, therefore, in addition, furthermore, consequently). The UAC also used explicit markers, but the frequency and specific types varied. Some discourse markers in Uzbek carried stronger implications of logical progression or contrast that might require more elaborate phrasing in English to convey the same nuance. Conversely, some English discourse markers had no direct single-word equivalent in Uzbek, requiring a phrase or sentence structure to convey the same meaning.

These results underscore that while the functions of pragmatic phenomena are universal, their realization is deeply embedded in the linguistic and cultural norms of each language, necessitating targeted pedagogical approaches.

The findings of this corpus-based comparative analysis reinforce the critical role of pragmatic competence in effective cross-cultural academic communication and highlight the distinct ways in which pragmatic phenomena are realized in Uzbek and English. The observed differences are not merely superficial linguistic variations but are often deeply rooted in the socio-cultural values and communication norms of each respective speech community.

CONCLUSION

This corpus-based comparative analysis of pragmatic competence in Uzbek and English academic language has shed light on the intricate and often-invisible forces that shape communication in these distinct linguistic and cultural contexts. By systematically examining authentic language data, we have identified key differences in the realization of speech acts, hedging, stance expression, politeness strategies, and discourse markers. These findings underscore that pragmatic competence is not universally transferable and requires explicit pedagogical attention, particularly in cross-cultural language education.

The methodological implications are clear: leveraging corpus linguistics provides an empirical foundation for developing more effective, data-driven approaches to teaching academic language. By integrating insights from real-world language use, educators can equip learners with the nuanced understanding and practical skills necessary to navigate the complexities of international academic discourse, fostering greater intercultural communication competence.

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The corpora, though substantial, represent a snapshot of academic discourse and may not capture the full range of pragmatic variation. Future research could expand the corpus size, include spoken academic discourse (e.g., conference presentations, academic discussions), and delve into specific disciplinary variations. Longitudinal studies could also track the development of pragmatic competence in learners.

Ultimately, by understanding these pragmatic nuances, we can design more effective language education, foster greater intercultural understanding, and facilitate richer, more productive academic collaborations across linguistic and cultural divides. This is not just about language; it is about building bridges between people and ideas, enabling every scholar to connect authentically and respectfully in the global academic field.

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