



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPEECH CULTURE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FORMAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a comparative sociolinguistic analysis of speech culture in the English and Uzbek languages, focusing on formal communication contexts such as education, media, and public discourse. We examine **verbal etiquette, discourse markers, and politeness strategies** in each language, highlighting both similarities and differences shaped by sociocultural, historical, and linguistic influences. A qualitative methodology is employed, analyzing examples from real-life formal settings (classroom interactions, news media, official speeches) to illustrate how each language encodes respect, formality, and interpersonal cues. The analysis reveals that English formal communication often prioritizes globalized etiquette norms and **indirect politeness**, whereas Uzbek formal speech is deeply rooted in traditional etiquette, emphasizing **respect, hierarchy, and emotional warmth** in expression. Despite these differences, both languages share the fundamental goal of maintaining courteous relations and social harmony in formal contexts. This article contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics by detailing how English and Uzbek speakers navigate formal interactions, and by shedding light on the role of cultural values—such as English individualism and Uzbek collectivism—in shaping speech practices. The findings have practical implications for intercultural communication, particularly in educational and media settings, and suggest avenues for further research on speech culture across diverse languages.

Keywords: speech culture, polite speech, public discourse, verbal etiquette, politeness strategies, negative politeness, register, cultural values.

INTRODUCTION

Language does more than convey information; it reflects a society's culture, values, and social norms. The concept of speech culture (or speech etiquette) refers to the accepted norms and practices of polite communication within a community. Comparative studies of speech culture in different languages can illuminate how underlying cultural values shape everyday communication. This paper focuses on English and Uzbek, two languages from distinct linguistic families (Indo-European and Turkic, respectively) with divergent historical trajectories. English, a global lingua franca, has developed widely understood norms of polite speech that have been spread internationally. Uzbek, the state language of Uzbekistan, has been heavily influenced by Central Asian traditions, Islamic etiquette, and periods of Russian/Soviet governance, all of which contribute to its unique speech conventions in formal settings.

Formal communication contexts—such as education, media, and public discourse—demand a high level of speech culture in both English and Uzbek societies. For instance, in educational settings, appropriate forms of address and respectful language uphold the teacher-student hierarchy; in media and journalism, tone and wording must balance professionalism with politeness; and in political or public speeches, speakers employ culturally resonant forms of courtesy to engage and persuade audiences. Understanding these practices is vital, as misinterpreting politeness cues across cultures can lead to pragmatic failure or misunderstandings in international communication.

This study aims to compare English and Uzbek speech culture in formal domains, focusing on three key aspects: (1) **Verbal etiquette** – the formulas and norms for greetings, address, and other courteous expressions; (2) **Discourse markers** – words or phrases that organize speech and manage interactions; and (3) **Politeness strategies** – the approaches speakers use to show respect, soften requests, or handle face-threatening acts.¹ We ask how each language’s sociocultural background has shaped these aspects of formal communication, and what commonalities or differences exist between the two. By drawing on examples and prior research from linguistics and sociolinguistics, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of cross-cultural communication between English and Uzbek speakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Etiquette and Cultural Values: Prior research underscores that speech etiquette is deeply tied to national culture and values. Each language community develops “stable speech formulas” for situations like greetings, farewells, thanks, and apologies, which reflect its way of life and social priorities. In English-speaking cultures, politeness has often been described in terms of **universal strategies** (e.g., Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory) that prioritize the addressee’s autonomy and avoid imposition. English politeness norms are considered part of a global etiquette standard, shaped by centuries of social norms in British and American society. In contrast, Uzbek speech etiquette is strongly influenced by local traditions of deference and community. Uzbek linguists note that polite expressions in Uzbek are rooted in the nation’s mentality and traditional values. For example, *Mahmudov and Asqarova (2005)* document the rich system of honorifics and respectful address in Uzbek, highlighting its role in maintaining social harmony. Such differences align with Anna Wierzbicka’s perspective that each culture’s concept of politeness is unique and culturally specific.

Forms of Address and Greeting: A salient difference noted in the literature is in address forms. English lacks a T/V distinction (familiar vs. formal “you”) and instead uses first names or titles plus last names depending on context. Titles like “Mr.,” “Ms.,” “Sir” or professional designations (Dr., Professor) are used in formal English address, but the language does not encode hierarchy in pronouns. Uzbek, however, has a robust system: it differentiates between informal “sen” and polite “Siz” for ‘you’, and it employs kinship terms as honorifics for strangers or seniors. It is common in Uzbek to address an unrelated older man as *aka* (“elder brother”), *otaxon* (“respected father”), or an older woman as *opa* (“older sister”) or *xola* (“auntie”), as a sign of respect.

¹ Wierzbicka, A. (1991). *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*. Mouton de Gruyter. – A seminal book arguing that speech acts and politeness have culture-specific realizations; used in this study to underscore how English and Uzbek politeness norms are products of their distinct cultural contexts.

Even teachers are addressed by honorifics like *ustoz* (“master/teacher”) instead of their personal name. This reflects a cultural emphasis on treating others as family and showing deference to age and status. In English formal settings, by contrast, one might simply say “Excuse me, Sir/Madam,” or address a professor as “Dr. Smith,” but would not use family terms for strangers. These distinctions have been highlighted in comparative studies of English and Uzbek etiquette, which show **similar functions** (marking respect) achieved through **different linguistic means**.

Politeness Strategies: According to Brown and Levinson’s framework, English politeness tends to emphasize **negative politeness** – strategies that minimize imposition (e.g., using modal verbs, apologies, hedging). Indeed, English speakers often phrase requests indirectly (“Could you possibly open the window?”) and use softeners or tentative language to be polite. Uzbek politeness strategies, while also employing indirectness, put particular weight on **positive politeness and honorifics** that affirm respect and solidarity. Uzbek polite speech often involves elaborate courteous phrases, terms of endearment or respect, and even blessings for the addressee. For example, where an English speaker might say a brief “Thank you very much,” an Uzbek speaker might say “*Katta rahmat, umringiz uzoq bo’lsin*,” meaning “Thank you, may your life be long,” which adds a benevolent wish as part of the thanks. Researchers have observed that **emotional warmth and respect** are at the forefront of Uzbek politeness, as opposed to the more reserved and formulaic politeness in English. However, both English and Uzbek share certain universal politeness behaviors, such as using greetings to acknowledge others and saying thanks or sorry in appropriate situations – the differences lie in degree of formality and expression.

Discourse Markers and Pragmatic Particles: Discourse markers (DMs) like *well*, *so*, *you know* in English or *xo’sh* (“so”), *mana* (“here/you see”), *baribir* (“anyway”) in Uzbek play significant roles in conversation management. While less studied than etiquette formulas, some research has compared their usage. **Qo’chqarova (2025)**, for instance, found that in literature dialogue, English characters use discourse markers to convey personal stance, mitigate statements, and maintain conversational flow, reflecting an individualistic communication style.² Uzbek fictional characters, on the other hand, frequently use markers that emphasize social relations – for example, particles that signal respect or acknowledge the other’s status – aligning with the collectivist and hierarchical norms of Uzbek culture. In formal discourse, English speakers commonly use explicit structural markers (“firstly,” “however,” “in conclusion”) to organize speeches or texts, a practice tied to Western rhetorical training. Uzbek formal speeches also use structuring words (often of Persian-Arabic origin, like *avvalo* for “firstly”), but what stands out is the use of polite particles and honorifics embedded in discourse (e.g., adding *-ku* or *-da* for emphasis in a gentle manner, or using the polite plural in verbs consistently to show respect). Translation studies note that English discourse markers are sometimes omitted or transformed in Uzbek translations, indicating that the two languages do not always map marker-to-marker and that Uzbek might prefer more implicit or context-driven cohesion. Overall, discourse markers in each language serve to make communication coherent

² Qo’chqarova, Y. (2025). The Role of Discourse Markers as Indicators of Social Relations in English and Uzbek Fiction. *TADQIQOTLAR*, 76(4), 263–266. – A qualitative analysis of discourse markers in English and Uzbek, highlighting that English markers often convey indirectness and personal stance, whereas Uzbek markers encode respect and hierarchy, reflecting sociopragmatic differences.

and polite, but their **frequency and pragmatic meanings** can differ in ways that mirror the languages' politeness orientations.

Formal Contexts – Education, Media, Public Discourse: The application of these linguistic norms can be seen in specific formal arenas. In **educational settings**, English-speaking teachers and students maintain politeness but often with a relatively **informal tone** by global standards (e.g., students may call a lecturer “Professor” or even use first names in some cultures, and class discussions encourage open questions). Uzbek classrooms traditionally observe a stricter etiquette: students stand when the teacher enters, use deferential address (*ustoz*), and may be less inclined to voice disagreement openly due to cultural respect for authority. It has been observed that Uzbek students sometimes hesitate to ask questions or challenge a teacher in class, *fearing it may be perceived as disrespectful*, whereas Western students are typically encouraged to engage in debate. In **media and journalism**, both languages adhere to professional etiquette, but styles diverge. English-language news media values conciseness and clarity; politeness is maintained through a neutral, respectful tone and the avoidance of overtly biased or insulting language. Uzbek media, especially in print journalism, traditionally employs a more **formal and courteous tone**, often using honorifics when mentioning public figures and employing indirect speech for criticisms. A comparative study found that Uzbek newspaper articles show a higher degree of politeness and formality than their English counterparts; English political journalism tends toward direct “on-record” statements for transparency, while Uzbek journalism more often uses indirect or deferential phrasing, consistent with collectivist norms and a preference for diplomatic tone. In **public discourse** (e.g., political speeches, official meetings), English orators might use inclusive language (“my fellow citizens”) and some rhetorical questions or humor, but generally avoid overly flowery expressions in modern practice. Uzbek public speakers, in contrast, often begin speeches with extensive greetings (*Assalom alaykum*, and a litany of respect titles for the audience such as “Respected elders, dear guests, ladies and gentlemen”), and may incorporate aphorisms or proverbs to connect with cultural values. This difference reflects historical influences: Uzbek oratory has roots in traditional **adab** (etiquette literature) and the influence of Soviet-era formal speech style, whereas English public speaking has been shaped by democratic and contemporary media norms that favor direct appeal and simplicity.

In summary, the literature indicates that while both English and Uzbek have rich traditions of formal speech culture, Uzbek polite communication is more **explicitly hierarchical and effusive**, and English is more **uniformly formal and restrained**. Both languages continuously evolve, and recent scholarship in cross-cultural pragmatics emphasizes updating these comparisons as globalization and social change influence speech habits.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a **qualitative comparative methodology** grounded in pragmatics and discourse analysis. We collected data from three formal domains: **educational interactions, media texts, and public speeches**. For the education domain, sample dialogues between teachers and students in university settings were gathered (from classroom observation reports and published examples). For media, we analyzed excerpts from English and Uzbek newspaper articles and

television news transcripts, focusing on how journalists address the audience and refer to subjects. For public discourse, we examined segments of political speeches and official addresses delivered in English (e.g. speeches by government officials or institutional leaders) and in Uzbek (speeches by Uzbek officials or community leaders). These sources provided real-life instances of formal language use in both languages.

The analysis procedure involved **coding the data for key features**: (1) verbal etiquette formulas (greetings, address forms, honorifics, closings, etc.), (2) discourse markers and structural elements of speech, and (3) politeness strategies (based on Brown and Levinson's categories of positive/negative politeness and direct vs. indirect speech acts).³We paid particular attention to speech acts such as requests, expressions of thanks, and apologies in formal contexts, examining how they are phrased in each language. For example, to analyze politeness in requests, we looked at instances like a teacher asking a student to do something in class or a host asking a panelist a question on TV, comparing English modal constructions ("Could you...") with Uzbek respectful imperatives or interrogatives ("... olasizmi?").

Throughout the analysis, a **contrastive approach** was used: we identified patterns in one language and then checked for their equivalent or lack thereof in the other. Where available, we consulted bilingual speakers and existing translations to ensure accurate interpretation of nuances. The sociocultural context of each example was considered (e.g., the relative status of speakers, the formality of the situation) to understand not just what was said but why it was said that way. This approach is aligned with qualitative sociolinguistic methods, where the goal is to interpret communicative behavior in context rather than to quantify frequency. However, to ground our observations, we reference findings from previous empirical studies and theoretical literature as noted in the Literature Review.

The methodology is inherently exploratory given the broad scope of "speech culture." By triangulating multiple sources and contexts, we aim to build a well-rounded picture of English vs. Uzbek formal speech. One limitation is that our data for each context is illustrative rather than exhaustive; a more extensive corpus analysis could further validate the patterns noted. Nonetheless, the chosen examples and references are deemed sufficient for a rich comparative analysis, as presented in the following section.

Comparative Analysis. Verbal Etiquette in Formal Communication

Greetings and Small Talk: Greetings are the first layer of verbal etiquette and show clear contrasts between English and Uzbek. In formal English interactions, greetings are typically brief and standardized. For example, in a business or academic setting one might say, "*Good morning, Professor Smith. How are you?*" and receive a concise response. The question "How are you?" in English is often a polite ritual rather than a literal inquiry into wellbeing. English speakers tend to quickly move to the business at hand after a greeting, especially in professional contexts. In contrast, Uzbek formal greetings are more extended and imbued with personal touch. It is common to use the Islamic greeting "*Assalomu alaykum*" ("Peace be upon you")

³ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press. – Foundational work proposing universal politeness strategies (positive and negative politeness) and the concept of face; provides a theoretical framework referenced in analyses of both English and Uzbek politeness.

followed by inquiries about health and family even in relatively formal meetings.⁴ For instance, a university dean greeting a visitor in Uzbek might say: *“Assalomu alaykum, hurmatli mehmon, yaxshimisiz? Oilangiz tinchmi?”* (“Peace be upon you, respected guest, are you well? Is your family at peace?”). Uzbek etiquette encourages asking about one’s family and life as a sign of goodwill. Indeed, Uzbek greetings can become **mini-conversations** – it is not unusual for an initial exchange to cover several rounds of polite questions about each other’s health, children, or recent news. This reflects the cultural norm that showing personal interest is polite and builds rapport. English small talk, on the other hand, often avoids deeply personal topics with strangers and instead gravitates to neutral topics (the classic example being talk about the weather). English people are known to choose “safe” and impersonal topics like weather as ice-breakers, a practice which Kate Fox (2014) notes is less about weather per se and more a social protocol to ease into interaction.⁵ Uzbeks also engage in small talk, but they **avoid controversial or critical topics with strangers**, preferring to find common ground about everyday life and family matters. Both cultures thus use small talk as social lubricant, but the preferred content differs – impersonal but friendly in English, personal and relationship-building in Uzbek.

Forms of Address and Titles: Formal address is another domain of etiquette where these languages diverge. English typically uses a title plus surname (e.g., “Dr. Brown,” “Mr. Johnson”) in formal address, or a generic respectful term (“Sir/Madam”) if the name is unknown. In settings like education, students call teachers *Mr./Mrs Lastname* (or in higher education sometimes **Professor** plus last name), unless given permission to use first names. English does not have special second-person pronouns for formality, so politeness is conveyed by tone and word choice rather than pronoun variation.⁶ Uzbek, by contrast, encodes respect directly into the language with pronouns and possesses a rich vocabulary of honorifics. The pronoun “Siz” (second-person plural) is used universally in formal situations or when addressing anyone to whom respect is owed (elders, teachers, strangers), whereas “sen” (second-person singular) is reserved for close friends, peers, or those younger than oneself. Using “sen” wrongly in a formal context would be considered a breach of etiquette. Additionally, Uzbek speakers frequently use **kinship terms as honorifics**: for example, calling an older male colleague *aka* (“older brother”) or an older female neighbor *opa* (“older sister”) to express friendliness and respect. In professional hierarchies, titles like *Domla* or *Ustoz* (both roughly meaning “teacher/master”) are used for educators, and *Rahbar* (leader), *Xonim* (madam), etc., may be used in workplaces. Even the President in Uzbek might be addressed in third person as *“Hurmatli Prezident janoblari”* (“Respected Mr. President”), which has a formal flair not common in English address (English speakers would simply say “Mr. President” without an explicit “respected” qualifier). Such usage underscores that **hierarchical relations are overtly recognized in Uzbek speech culture**. An illustrative contrast: In a store, an English

⁴ Najmiddinova M.N. “Linguocultural and linguopragmatic features of the concept of “hospitality” in English and Uzbek”//International conference Philology, Methodology, Translation Studies: Current Issues of Modern Science. -8-9.11.2024. -P.306-309.<https://doi.org/10.2024/1xm0b673>

⁵ Fox, K. (2014). *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*. London: Hodder & Stoughton. – An anthropological look at English social etiquette (including the use of weather as a conversational tool), providing insight into English small talk conventions referenced in contrast to Uzbek small talk practices.

⁶ Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press. – Foundational work proposing universal politeness strategies (positive and negative politeness) and the concept of face; provides a theoretical framework referenced in analyses of both English and Uzbek politeness.

clerk might politely ask, “Can I help you, Sir?” using a generic respectful *Sir*. A clerk in Uzbekistan might say, “*Qanday xizmat, aka?*” which literally means “What service [can I do], older brother?” using *aka* to respectfully address a male customer as family. This family-term address creates a sense of closeness or familiarity while maintaining respect, a nuance absent in English’s service etiquette.

Courtesy Expressions (Thanks and Apologies): English and Uzbek both have rich sets of courteous phrases, but their usage reflects cultural styles. In English formal interactions, politeness is often delivered succinctly. Thanking someone might be as simple as “*Thank you very much, I appreciate it.*” Apologies likewise tend to be brief: “*I’m sorry for the inconvenience*”, “*Excuse me.*” Repetition or embellishment is generally avoided in professional English contexts to maintain efficiency. Uzbek, conversely, often favors amplified courtesy expressions. Thanking someone in Uzbek might involve multiple words of thanks and even a blessing. For example: “*Katta rahmat, juda minnatdorman, yaxshiliklaringiz uchun rahmat!*” which layers gratitude (*rahmat*) with an expression of indebtedness (*minnatdorman* = “I am thankful/obliged to you”). It is also common to add a hopeful or prayerful statement, such as “*Yordamingiz tufayli, rahmat. Doimo sog’ bo’ling!*” meaning “Thanks to your help, thank you. May you always be healthy!”. Such flourishes convey sincerity and warmth, aligning with Uzbek norms of hospitality and reciprocity. English speakers might find this overly effusive in a formal context, whereas Uzbeks might find a terse “thanks” inadequately warm. Apologies in Uzbek likewise tend to include self-effacing or intensified language. A person might say “*Kechirasiz, xato qildim*,” literally “Forgive me, I made a mistake,” or “*Ming bor uzr*,” “A thousand apologies,” when seeking forgiveness. The inclusion of *uzr* (apology) and phrases like “a thousand times” magnify the regret expressed. English apologies, even formal ones, usually don’t go so far – one “sorry” is typically enough, perhaps coupled with a reason: “*I’m terribly sorry for the error on the report.*” These tendencies corroborate the claim that **English formal politeness favors restraint and convention, whereas Uzbek formal politeness favors expressiveness and emotional appeal.** Importantly, both languages consider gratitude and apologies essential components of good manners; the difference lies in *how much* and *in what style* they are expressed.⁷

Discourse Markers and Communication Style

Structuring Speech: In formal speeches or writings, discourse markers and connective words play a key role in organizing information and guiding the audience. English has a well-developed set of **logical connectors** (“firstly, secondly, however, therefore, in conclusion,” etc.) that are routinely taught and used in academic and official communication. These markers help explicitly signal transitions and the relationships between ideas, reflecting the English preference for clarity and explicitness in formal rhetoric. Uzbek formal discourse also uses connectors, often borrowed or calqued from classical Persian-Arabic tradition or modern Uzbek coinages (e.g., *birinchidan* for “firstly,” *shuning uchun* for “therefore,” *xulosa qilib aytganda* for “in conclusion”). Uzbek speeches, however, might rely slightly more on repetitive structures and parallelism (a legacy of oral poetic traditions and Soviet-era oratory) rather than on a wide variety of conjunctive adverbs. Both languages thus

⁷ Najmiddinova M.N., Rahmatova M.U. The role of Pragmatics in Intercultural Communication with an Emphasis on Politeness // Tamaddun Nuri/The light of civilization. ISSN 2181-8258 IF-9.347 DOI 10.69691,4-son (67) 2025.- P.237-240. <https://doi.org/10.2024/1xm0b673>

ensure coherence, but an English speaker might find an Uzbek speech uses more reiteration where an English speech uses signposting language.

Interactive Discourse Markers: In spoken formal discourse (like interviews or panel discussions), English speakers often use mild discourse markers and polite hedges to navigate conversation. Phrases like “Well,” “So,” “You know,” can serve to soften responses or gain thinking time even in formal settings. For example, an English interviewee might begin an answer with, “Well, I think that’s a complex issue...” – *well* here mitigates the directness of jumping straight into the answer. Uzbek speakers have their own set of conversational particles, such as *xo’sh* (“so/okay”), *ya’ni* (“meaning/that is”), which structure responses. Additionally, particles like *-ku* and *-da* appended to words convey emphasis or a subtle attitudinal meaning (similar to how one might use “after all” or “you see” in English, albeit as suffixes in Uzbek). In formal Uzbek discourse, a speaker might use *mana* (“here” as in “here is an example”) to draw attention, or *balki* (“perhaps”) to introduce a suggestion carefully. These elements help manage the flow and politeness of discourse by either softening statements or involving the listener.

Cultural Pragmatics of Markers: Research suggests that the pragmatics of discourse markers reflect cultural communication styles. English discourse markers often align with a style of individual expression and subtle politeness – for instance, hedging opinions with “I think, maybe” (showing personal stance and avoiding absolute statements). Uzbek discourse markers more often signal consideration of the interlocutor and context – for example, adding *-ku* to a statement can imply “as you know,” invoking shared understanding, and using respectful particles or phrases ensures that the statement doesn’t come off as blunt. A recent comparative study (albeit in fiction dialogue) found that English utilizes discourse markers for indirectness and conversational management, whereas Uzbek relies on markers that encode respect and collective identity, reinforcing social hierarchies and solidarity. For instance, where an English speaker might say, “Frankly, I disagree,” using “frankly” as a discourse marker to preface a direct statement, an Uzbek might prefer to soften the disagreement: “*Ochig’i, men biroz boshqacha fikrdaman,*” literally “To be open, I have a somewhat different opinion,” where *ochig’i* (“openly/frankly”) and the phrase structure both mitigate the face-threatening act of disagreement. Moreover, Uzbek formal dialogue often avoids blunt negation or refusal; one might use a marker like *afsuski* (“unfortunately”) to decline an invitation or request, thereby framing the refusal as regretful and impersonal. English too might use “unfortunately” in formal refusals, but Uzbek speakers tend to pile up a few such softeners to be extra polite (e.g., “*Afsuski, mumkin emas edi,*” roughly “Unfortunately, it wasn’t possible,” as an elaborate way to say “no”).⁸

In summary, while discourse markers in both languages fulfill the universal roles of structuring discourse and maintaining politeness, **English markers lean towards managing the speaker’s own presentation (often to appear tactful or organized),** whereas **Uzbek markers more directly attend to the addressee’s status and the interpersonal tone,** ensuring politeness is explicitly conveyed. These differences mirror the broader cultural communication ethos: English pragmatics valorize

⁸ Najmiddinova M.N. Linguopragmatic analysis of phraseological units and idioms relating to the concept of hospitality in English and Uzbek //FarDu, Ilmiy xabarlar jurnali, ISSN 2181-1571. Volume 31 Issue 4, 2025. -P.73-84. DOI: 10.56292/SJFSU/vol31_iss4/a94. <https://journal.fdu.uz/>

brevity and clarity tempered by tact, whereas Uzbek pragmatics valorize respect and communal harmony, even if it adds linguistic length or redundancy.

Politeness Strategies and Face-Saving Techniques

Politeness strategies are techniques speakers use to handle delicate communicative acts (requests, criticisms, disagreements, etc.) without offending others – essentially, to save face for both interlocutor and themselves. Both English and Uzbek employ a range of such strategies, but their preferences reveal interesting contrasts.

Direct vs. Indirect Strategies: English formal communication often employs *indirect strategies* to achieve politeness, especially reflecting what Brown & Levinson term “negative politeness” (honoring the addressee’s desire not to be imposed upon). For example, instead of direct orders, English speakers prefer questions or suggestions: “*Could you send me the report by Monday?*” is favored over “*Send me the report by Monday.*” The use of conditional or question form (*Could you...?*) and the polite insertion “please” are hallmarks of English requests. Uzbek also uses interrogative forms for polite requests, but structurally it lacks modal verbs like “could/would,” so politeness is conveyed through other means such as using the respectful pronoun and adding *iltimos* (“please”). An Uzbek superior might say to a subordinate: “*Hujjatlarni tayyorlab bera olasizmi, iltimos?*” which literally corresponds to “Will you be able to prepare the documents, please?”. The phrasing is a question with *-sizmi* (formal you + question) and *iltimos*, functioning similarly to the English example. Where English often uses *hints or very indirect suggestions* in extremely face-sensitive situations (for instance, saying “It would be great to have those documents soon” as a way of requesting them), Uzbek tends to combine a direct statement with deferential phrasing rather than hinting. At the highest levels of deference, an Uzbek speaker might use self-lowering and other-raising language – e.g., “*Agar mumkin bo’lsa...*” (“If it’s possible...”) prefacing a request, which implies the speaker acknowledges the imposition and fully gives the power to refuse to the listener.

Positive Politeness and Solidarity: Positive politeness strategies (those that emphasize closeness, camaraderie, and respect for the listener’s positive face) are present in both cultures but surface differently. English positive politeness in formal contexts might involve using inclusive language (“we” form: “We should try to address this issue” includes the listener) or complimenting and acknowledging the listener’s contributions (“I really value your insight on this”). Uzbek positive politeness is strongly tied to showing respect and care. Complimenting in Uzbek formal contexts is frequent and effusive. For example, at a conference, an Uzbek presenter might begin by praising the audience or previous speakers: “*Hurmatli ustozlar va hamkasblar, sizlarning qimmatli fikrlaringizdan ilhomlandim*” (“Respected mentors and colleagues, I was inspired by your valuable thoughts”), thereby honoring them. Another aspect is the use of honorific plural: in Uzbek, one shows respect not only by using “Siz” but also by pluralizing certain verbs or possessives when referring to the respected person (a form of grammatical politeness absent in English). For instance, asking a superior about their health, one might say “*Yaxshi yurganmisiz?*” (literally “Have you been well? [polite plural]”), whereas to a friend it would be “*Yaxshi yurganmisan?*” (singular/informal). This fine-tuned level of politeness is built into the language. English can only approximate it with lexical choices (e.g. saying “*How have you been, Sir?*” to an elder – the “Sir” adds respect, but the verb doesn’t change form).

Handling Disagreement and Criticism: In formal discourse, disagreeing or delivering criticism is a face-threatening act that each culture mitigates differently. English strategy often uses softening preambles and impersonal language. For example, an English colleague in a meeting might say, *“I see your point; however, might there be an alternative approach...?”* rather than *“I disagree with you.”* The use of “might” and question form, and prefacing with acknowledgment, all soften the disagreement. Uzbek strategy in a comparable situation might rely on apologies or aligning with the group: *“Kechirasiz, lekin mening fikrim boshqacharoq,”* which means “Forgive me, but my opinion is a bit different.” Here, the speaker literally asks forgiveness before stating disagreement, a strong politeness marker. Additionally, an Uzbek might couch criticism in proverbs or general statements to avoid direct attribution. For example, instead of “Your plan has flaws,” one might say *“Masal bor: ‘O‘ylab ish tutmoq kerak’, shunday emasmi?”* (“There is a saying: ‘One should act with thought,’ is it not so?”) to imply that more thought is needed, indirectly advising the person. This indirect, sometimes roundabout approach stems from a cultural preference to avoid open conflict or embarrassment in public settings.

Hierarchy and Politeness: A key difference underlying these strategies is the approach to hierarchy. English-speaking cultures, particularly in countries like the US, Australia, or even modern UK business culture, tend to downplay hierarchy in communication (addressing bosses by first name in some companies, using egalitarian language). Politeness exists, but overt deference is toned down to signal equality. Uzbek culture leans in the opposite direction: acknowledging hierarchy is itself a politeness strategy. Using titles, honorifics, and self-effacement not only shows respect but is expected to maintain one’s own image as a cultured person. For instance, when receiving praise, an Uzbek might respond with a modest denial or by crediting elders/colleagues (a form of verbal humility), whereas an English speaker might simply say “Thank you” and perhaps a modest “I had a good team.” In Uzbek, one might say *“Yo‘q, yo‘q, bu sizlarning yordamingiz tufayli, katta rahmat”* (“No, no, it’s thanks to your help, many thanks”), deflecting credit. This exemplifies **politeness as a collective affair** in Uzbek—achievements and conversations are often framed in a way that uplifts others and downplays oneself to show humility.

Overall, the comparative analysis of politeness strategies shows both languages aim to **preserve harmony and show respect**, but **English does so by minimizing imposition and emphasizing fairness**, whereas **Uzbek does so by maximizing expressions of respect and emphasizing relational roles**. These strategies are effective in their respective cultures: an English audience might find excessive formality distancing or insincere, while an Uzbek audience might find overly casual politeness rude or unfriendly. Each language’s methods are well adapted to its social environment and communicative expectations.

DISCUSSION

The above comparative analysis highlights how **sociocultural and historical contexts are deeply woven into speech practices** in English and Uzbek. Several broad themes emerge from the findings:

Cultural Values Reflected in Speech: English speech culture, especially in formal settings, reflects values often associated with Western, individualistic societies – *formality is balanced with a certain egalitarianism and personal autonomy*. The widespread use of indirect language (e.g., politely phrased requests or soft criticisms)

aligns with an emphasis on not infringing on others' freedom (negative politeness). At the same time, English etiquette has become somewhat standardized globally; phrases like "please, thank you, excuse me" are taught worldwide and understood in international contexts. This "global etiquette" aspect means English formal communication can sometimes be perceived as impersonal or formulaic, but it also ensures clarity across diverse audiences. Uzbek speech culture, conversely, reflects *collectivist and hierarchical values*. Respect for elders, hospitality to guests, and strong community ties (e.g., the **mahalla** neighborhood tradition) are mirrored in the language by the abundant honorifics, elaborate greetings, and frequent expressions of regard. The historical influence of Islam (with its stress on generosity and respect) and the experience of Soviet administrative formality have together shaped Uzbek polite discourse to be rich in ceremonial courtesy and indirectness where needed. For example, the habit of including blessings or prayers in everyday polite speech (wishing someone good health or a long life as part of thanking them) harks back to traditional customs. These differences underscore Wierzbicka's point that what counts as "polite" is culture-specific – neither approach is inherently more polite than the other; each is tailored to meet societal expectations of respectful behavior.

Historical Influences and Evolution: Historically, English has been influenced by social class distinctions (the elaborate etiquette of Victorian England, for instance) but modern English has largely shed overt markers of class in language usage, leaning toward a more neutral politeness suitable for a democratic public sphere. Uzbek, on the other hand, after gaining independence in 1991, underwent a conscious revival and elevation of the Uzbek language in all official domains. There has been an effort to **standardize and enrich Uzbek for formal usage**, pulling from classical literature and Persian-Arabic loanwords to elevate its expressive capacity. Our analysis indicates that Uzbek formal speech today is a blend of that classical elegance and Soviet-inherited formal style, yielding a high degree of politeness and formality in contexts like government communication and journalism. This is gradually evolving: younger generations in urban areas, exposed to global media, may begin to favor a slightly more concise style (some English influence is seen, for instance, in business communication where Uzbek professionals might avoid too much flowery language to be more "efficient").⁹ English itself continues to evolve; however, given its role as an international lingua franca, changes in formal English happen slowly and carefully to maintain mutual intelligibility worldwide.

Similarities and Universal Tendencies: Despite many differences, it is important to recognize similarities and possible universals. Both English and Uzbek adhere to the principle that effective formal communication requires politeness and clarity – no professional or public interaction can succeed if it comes off as disrespectful or incoherent. Both cultures use indirectness to some extent to achieve tact: direct orders are often avoided in favor of questions or suggestions in both languages, though realized differently.¹⁰ The notion of face (public self-image) is relevant in both, as predicted by politeness theory: English speakers are concerned with not

⁹ Salimova, M. S. (2025). Politeness Strategies in English and Uzbek Newspapers. *LingvoSpectrum*, 3(1), 171–177. – A study of media discourse revealing that Uzbek journalistic language tends to employ more indirect and formal politeness strategies (aligned with collectivist norms) compared to the more direct style of English news, especially in political reporting

¹⁰ Najmiddinova M.N. Similarities and differences between values of Uzbek and English cultures // Tanqidiy nazar, tahliliy tafakkur va innovatsion g'oyalar.2025.-B.107-111.

<https://phoenixpublication.net/index.php/TANQ/article/view/3802>

appearing rude or ignorant, Uzbek speakers with not appearing disrespectful or arrogant – each addresses the positive and negative face needs of others through their conventional politeness strategies. Furthermore, certain politeness strategies appear across cultures (sometimes termed “politeness universals”): thanking, apologizing, offering compliments, and responding to compliments modestly are found in both English and Uzbek etiquette (even if the frequency and style differ). For example, while an Uzbek might overpraise a guest and the English host might understate compliments, both are engaging in hospitality norms to make the other feel valued.

Contextual Variability: The degree of formality and style of politeness in each language also varies with context and individual factors. Not all English interactions are concise and not all Uzbek interactions are flowery – there is variation by region, personal style, and context (urban vs. rural communication in Uzbekistan, for instance, can differ, with rural speech sometimes even *more* formal-traditional). In international or intercultural settings, code-switching or adaptation occurs. An interesting point is how English and Uzbek speakers adjust when speaking each other’s language. Uzbek learners of English sometimes transfer their politeness habits, which can strike native English interlocutors as overly deferential or ambiguous (for example, an Uzbek student in an English-speaking class might hesitate to assert their opinion, which an English teacher could misinterpret as a lack of knowledge rather than politeness). Conversely, native English speakers in Uzbekistan may have to consciously adopt more formalities than they are used to, such as using titles or slowing the pace of business to include personal niceties, to avoid coming across as rude or *too* blunt.

Implications for Communication: Understanding these differences is crucial in fields like international education, diplomacy, and multicultural workplaces. In education, teachers working in Uzbekistan (or with Uzbek students abroad) should be aware that students might not speak up not due to lack of interest, but due to ingrained respectfulness, and they may require active encouragement in a manner that does not violate their sense of propriety. In media, translators and journalists need to maintain politeness levels appropriate to target audiences – for instance, translating an English political speech into Uzbek might involve adding polite forms or honorifics to meet audience expectations, and vice versa. In business and diplomacy, awareness of how requests or refusals are phrased can prevent miscommunication; what might sound like a polite suggestion in one language could seem like an order or an evasion in the other if context is lost.

Future Trends: The discussion would be incomplete without noting that languages and cultures are dynamic. English and Uzbek speech cultures today face new influences: digital communication, social media, and increased global contact. These can lead to a certain convergence in very formal “neutral” communication (e.g., email etiquette across languages is beginning to share some norms). Yet, in culturally rich interactions, the deep-seated norms persist. Future research could track how younger bilingual Uzbeks, for example, navigate between English and Uzbek politeness – do they compartmentalize styles or blend them? Another area is **gender and politeness**: both languages have gendered dimensions of politeness worth exploring (e.g., some evidence suggests women in both cultures may use more polite forms on average, a sociolinguistic pattern noted globally). Additionally, exploring other Turkic or Indo-European languages in comparison could further illuminate

whether observed features are unique or part of a broader regional typology of communication.

In conclusion of the discussion, the comparative perspective affirms that speech culture is a rich tapestry where language structure, cultural values, and historical layers interweave. English and Uzbek provide a compelling case study due to their differences; yet at a human level, they both strive to fulfill the same communicative ethos: **to convey messages effectively while maintaining respect and social cohesion.**

CONCLUSION

This research article set out to compare speech culture in English and Uzbek within formal communication contexts, with a focus on verbal etiquette, discourse markers, and politeness strategies. Through qualitative analysis supported by examples and existing studies, we have identified clear differences as well as noteworthy similarities between the two languages' approaches to formal communication.

Key Findings: English formal speech culture is characterized by brevity, indirectness, and a relatively standardized set of politeness conventions. Politeness in English often manifests as *subtlety* – saying things without saying them outright, using modal verbs and softening phrases to avoid offense. There is a preference for **formal but short** polite forms and maintaining a professional distance. Uzbek formal speech culture, in contrast, is marked by explicit respect, elaborate courtesy, and a greater emotional aspect in expression. Politeness in Uzbek is frequently *amplified* – longer phrases of respect, inclusion of honorifics and blessings, and careful attention to hierarchical relations. As a result, an Uzbek formal interaction might feel overly ceremonial to an English speaker, whereas an English formal interaction might seem too cold or insufficiently respectful to an Uzbek speaker, if each judges by their own cultural norms.

Despite these differences, both languages serve the *fundamental sociolinguistic function of politeness*: to negotiate interpersonal relations and ensure smooth cooperation. Both English and Uzbek speakers, in their own ways, ask themselves, “How can I say this so that it will be received well?” The strategies diverge due to cultural conditioning, but the underlying intent is universal. We also observed that both languages employ a mix of **positive and negative politeness strategies**, but English skews towards negative politeness (avoiding imposition) and Uzbek towards positive politeness (emphasizing respect and camaraderie), aligning with the broader cultural context of individualism vs. collectivism.

Implications: For practitioners and learners, this comparative insight has practical implications. Educators and communicators working across English and Uzbek contexts should not only translate words but also **translate politeness levels**. What is politely implied in one language may need to be explicit in the other. For example, a direct translated request from English to Uzbek might lack the necessary courteous padding and could be perceived as abrupt – adding a phrase like *iltimos* or a respectful address can adjust the tone appropriately. Conversely, training Uzbek professionals in international English might involve practicing more concise phrasing, since overly lengthy polite preludes can be misinterpreted or lost on English listeners. Understanding these nuances is key in diplomacy, business negotiations, and any intercultural exchange involving Uzbek and English speakers.

Limitations and Further Research: While this study has provided a detailed snapshot, it is by no means exhaustive. The qualitative approach and limited samples mean that further research – perhaps using larger corpora of spoken and written English and Uzbek in formal contexts – could quantify the differences (for instance, measuring the average length of a politeness formula, or the frequency of certain discourse markers). Additionally, this study focused on idealized “standard” English and Uzbek; regional dialects or variations (like British vs. American English politeness, or Uzbek as used in different provinces or neighboring countries) were beyond our scope. Future studies could expand to those dimensions. It would also be fruitful to examine **perceptions**: how do English speakers perceive Uzbek politeness and vice versa? Do they recognize each other’s politeness signals? Initial impressions suggest that without awareness, each side might miss cues (for instance, an English person might not realize that an Uzbek is being extremely respectful when they use familial terms to address them). Survey-based research or ethnographic studies could shed light on these perceptual gaps.

Conclusion Statement: In closing, the comparative analysis of English and Uzbek speech cultures reveals a fascinating interplay of language and culture. English, with its global and modern orientation, has cultivated a speech culture that is *polite yet efficient*, valuing respect through restraint. Uzbek, with its rich heritage and strong community ethos, has nurtured a speech culture that is *polite and affectively rich*, valuing respect through overt expressions. Each system is well suited to its cultural milieu, and neither can be deemed “better” – they are simply different solutions to the universal social challenge of communicating formally with grace. By understanding these solutions, we not only become better communicators across cultures, but we also gain insight into the values and social fabrics of the communities that speak these languages. As the world becomes more interconnected, such understanding is essential. It reminds us that learning a language involves learning a culture, and effective communication goes beyond grammar into the realm of **cultural fluency**. We conclude that appreciating and adapting to these differences in speech culture is key to successful formal communication between English and Uzbek speakers, and by extension, between any cultures.

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