## CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATICS OF EXPRESSING WISH AND DESIRE: EVIDENCE FROM ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the linguopragmatic mechanisms of expression of wish and desire in English and in Uzbek. By the method of comparativism of authentic samples of discourse and the data from the corpus the research studied the semantics, pragmatics and the socio-cultural parameters of how the participants of the discourse formulate wish/desire expressions. It was proven that the cross-cultural differences of the participants' discourse are multifaceted in terms of the techniques of politeness, mitigation, the form of the verbs in the conditional mood and the contextualization. In terms of sophisticated discourse, English language speakers constructed desire in the decreased indirect illocutionary force, in contrast, the Uzbek speakers predominated with socio-politically direct formulations of desire.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, wish/desire expressions, cross-cultural communication, discourse analysis, English, Uzbek

## Introduction

Recent studies done in cross-cultural pragmatics point out that saying one's internal state (wishes, desires, intentions) and their articulation are influenced by grammatical mechanisms, but are also shaped by communicative norms of the culture (Kecskes, 2014). Emotionally/effectively loaded speech acts, if socially aligned to the situation, context or audience, express social stances, as well as relational/even inter-personal distance sensitivity (Norrick, 2020). Taking English and Uzbek as two contrasting and correlating examples deploys frameworks, models or constructs useful to understanding the way in which languages design and articulate the concept of 'desire'.

English uses a lot of modal verbs and shows politeness through things like conditional sentences (Brown & Levinson, 1987) but the opposite is true for Uzbek which uses a culturally specific combination of set phrases and evidentials along with pronouns that suggest the use of a group (Rahmatullayev, 2018). These are the types of things that lead one to conclude that desire expressions are a good place to start for understanding the types of differences that exist between both languages at a more profound sociocultural and pragmatic level.

One of the most important aspects of human communication is the expression of a wish and desire. The human emotions, the intentions, the interpersonal attitudes, the hypotheticals, and the future expectations all require some sort of communication and the expression of a wish or desire and so in order to do so one must communicate to do so. All of that to say, the expression of desire is highly prevalent among human communication and yet, the expression of desire across languages has yet to be fully researched and more specifically, the expression of desire within the Uzbek language which is so culturally rich yet so typologically distinct.

This is why in this specific study the focus is set on examining the expressions of wish and desire that are used across discourse context by speakers of both English and Uzbek. The study, which is built on speech act theory, corpus linguistics, and sociopragmatics, is to identify the

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expression of these wishes and desires which are shaped by certain structural features or certain semantic features or perhaps by some pragmatic features.

## Literature Review

Researchers tend to agree that the manifestations of desire largely sit at the boundaries of semantics, pragmatics, and sociocultural communication (Wierzbicka, 2006). The upcoming subsections further develop the previous theoretical foundations, augmented by the latest additions to the field.

Lexical items such as wish, hope, and want as well as their Uzbek equivalents (xohlamoq, istamoq, umid qilmoq) are considered to be instances of expressive speech acts (Searle, 1979). Such acts indicate the psychological condition of the speaker, while at the same time, functioning at the level of the social (Vanderveken, 2018). More recent studies show that expressives may be underpinned by a directive or a commissive sub-meaning, depending on the circumstances (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014).

Boulomaic modality captures constituent aspects of the broad modal system, including one's desires, preferences, and internal motivations (van der Auwera & Ammann, 2020). For example, in English, modality can be expressed as (would, could, might), while in Uzbek, one can rely on the morphological (-sa edi) and adverbial constructions. Previous research has shown that encoding counterfactual wishes in multilingual children relies on the past tense to signify psychological distance, which expresses systematic under-differentiation across languages (Crowely, 2024). The phenomenon of why a large number of languages tend to soften the expression of wanting a certain thing is addressed in Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014). In English, one can frequently observe such mitigations on the expression of wanting a certain thing through the use of conditionals (I would like to...) and hedges (maybe, perhaps) while in Uzbek, such mitigations can be achieved through a group of politeness strategies that are interlaced with religious phrases (Xudo xohlasa, Nasib bo'lsa), which both soften the directness of the expression and indicate a particular configuration of the community (Karimov, 2021).

Corpus-based methods of a linguist's perspective on the use of a corpus in research is to gain insights on the ways in which texts are used. McEnery and Hardie (2012) argue that corpus-driven research, as a branch of corpus linguistics, is the research that underpins empirical analysis of pragmatics. The most recent corpus studies reveal that modality expressed with desire verbs in English is accompanied with evaluative adverbs (I really want, I sincerely hope), while in Uzbek, such verbs are accompanied with culturally motivated expressions (iloho, Xudo xohlasa) (Tursunov, 2022).

Wierzbicka (1991, 2006) posits that cultural norms engendered by cultural scripts. Uzbek discourse maps onto collectivistic scripts that are modest, respectful and divinely attributed (Johanson, 2021). Meanwhile, English cultural scripts prop up individualistic notions of agency, autonomy, and self-expression (Kecskes, 2014). These contrasts shape different conceptualizations of desire. Non-Western English learners encounter difficulties acquiring the pragmatically justifiable expressions of desire. EFL learners tend to overgeneralize relatively direct expressions (e.g. I want...) with no softening, showing a gap in pragmatic development (Schauer, 2019). Preference by Uzbek learners for literal translations of formulated expressions from English gives rise to a kind of pragmatic transfer called 'pragmalinguistic transfer'.

The wish and desire are in learnt English have drawn diverse studies. In Scherer's (1974) classification of emotions, Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1979) consider wishes as expressive acts which overlap with directives or commissives. The recent work of Crowley (2024) is concerned with how tense and modality encode hypotheticals and counterfactuals. Recent work in linguistics is concerned with boulomaic modality, which is the modal category which expresses desire. 2021-2024 studies show that want, wish, and hope are far more differentiated than previously recognized in their distribution, emotional intensity, and discourse function. Impoliteness is recognized in the literature (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 2014) as shaping the structure of the expression of desire. Recent studies (2020-2023) show that desire is mitigated more by English speakers applying modal verbs and indirectness as opposed to Uzbek speakers who exhibit preference for more formulaic socially-anchored expressions.

In applied corpus linguistics (McEnery and Hardie, 2012; Bednarek, 2019) the revealed pragmatic tendencies are deeper than frequency, collocation, and syntactic patterns. Recent studies (2020-2024) exhibit considerable register variance in corpus-based studies of desire verbs. Wierzbicka (1991, 2006) provided further evidence that emotional expression in any given culture if often prescribed by cultural scripts. Modal and expressive constructions in Turkic languages (Johanson, 2021) show that collectivist patterns are predominant. The Uzbek research (Rahmatullayev, 2018) is a study of those formulaic expressions that are closely associated with religious, fate, and humility values. Recent studies conducted in EFL contexts (Bardis 2021; Octaviani 2023) indicate that learners of English show a lack of awareness of the pragmatic norms governing the expression of desire which signifies the necessity for explicit teaching of the subject.

## Methodology

This research employs a combination of methods, including corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and sociopragmatic interpretation.

## Data Sources

Following established corpus methodologies (McEnery & Hardie, 2012), the research draws from:

— British National Corpus (BNC) – for conversational English data.
— Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) – for multi-genre English samples.
— Uzbek National Corpus – for written and spoken Uzbek data.
— Authored Transcripts – 60 natural conversations collected ethically from native speakers.

## Analytical Techniques

— Frequency Analysis: identification of common lexical and grammatical patterns.
— Collocational Analysis: examining frequent co-occurrences that signal pragmatic meaning.
— Discourse-Pragmatic Coding: classification into directive, expressive, and commissive functions (following Searle, 1979).
— Sociopragmatic Interpretation: assessing how cultural norms shape linguistic choices (Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

## Data Sources

- British National Corpus (BNC)
- Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)
- Uzbek National Corpus
- 60 authentic conversational recordings (30 English, 30 Uzbek speakers)

## Methods

- Corpus searches and frequency analysis
- Discourse-pragmatic interpretation
- Semantic and structural comparison
- Identification of politeness strategies

## Analysis

### English Wish/Desire Expressions

Corpus data (BNC, COCA) suggest that English expresses `desire` mostly using indirect and modalized constructions as follows.

- **I would like to…** — high-frequency polite request (COCA: 34,000+ hits)
- **I wish I could…** — counterfactual desire expressing regret
- **I hope…** — future-oriented desire
- **If only…** — emotionally intensified wishing (Bednarek, 2019)

These structures reflect the English preference for minimizing imposition through **negative politeness** (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

### Uzbek Wish/Desire Expressions

Uzbek displays typologically distinct patterns:

- **xohlayman / istayman** — direct desire
- **-sa edi / bo'lsa edi** — hypothetical, regretful
- **Iloho**, **Xudo xohlasa**, **Nasib bo'lsa** — culturally embedded formulas expressing fate, humility, and collective identity

These are deeply tied to cultural norms (Rahmatullayev, 2018; Karimova, 2021).

### Comparative Structural Patterns

Main cross-linguistic contrasts include:

- **English** uses modal verbs (would, could, might).
- **Uzbek** uses morphological strategies and cultural formulas.
- **English** encodes counterfactuality with past tense (I wish I knew).
- **Uzbek** uses particles such as **edi**, **-da**, **-ku** (Johanson, 2021).

### Pragmatic Function Distribution

Following Searle's (1979) classification:

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- **Directive** → indirect requests (e.g., I'd like you to…)
- **Expressive** → emotions, hopes, regrets
- **Commissive** → intentions and promises (I hope to…)

Uzbek examples show frequent blending of emotional and cultural meanings.

## Mitigation and Intensification

- **English mitigation:** modals, hedges (maybe, perhaps), indirect conditionals
- **Uzbek mitigation:** honorifics, relationship markers, religious formulas

Intensification also differs:

- English → adverbs (really, truly)
- Uzbek → emotive particles (-da, -ku) and blessings

## Discourse Contexts

- **Social Media:** Uzbek → blessing formulas; English → hedging
- **Spoken Conversation:** Uzbek → relational politeness; English → personal stance
- **Media:** both languages → evaluative, emotional style

## Discussion

Analysis shows that desire expressions reflect **deep cultural and pragmatic values**:

### English (individualistic):

- Negative politeness
- Indirectness
- Minimizing imposition
- Autonomy-oriented stance

### Uzbek (collectivist):

- Social harmony
- Fate-driven expressions
- Religious-cultural formulas
- Respect-based interaction

This data vindicates the assertions of Wierzbicka (2006), Spencer-Oatey (2008), Kecskes (2014), and Johanson (2021), in that the choices that an individual makes in their speech and writing are influenced by the culture-specific communicative scripts integrated in the individual's upbringing.

## Conclusion

This study shows that English and Uzbek construct and pragmatically interact with the expression wish and desire through different techniques. In English this is done by the use of modality through tense shifts in the indirect form as well as using a counterfactual. In Uzbek this

is done through the use of different constructions, including formulaic speech and cultural markers.

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