e-ISSN 3060-5059

DOI: 10.67227

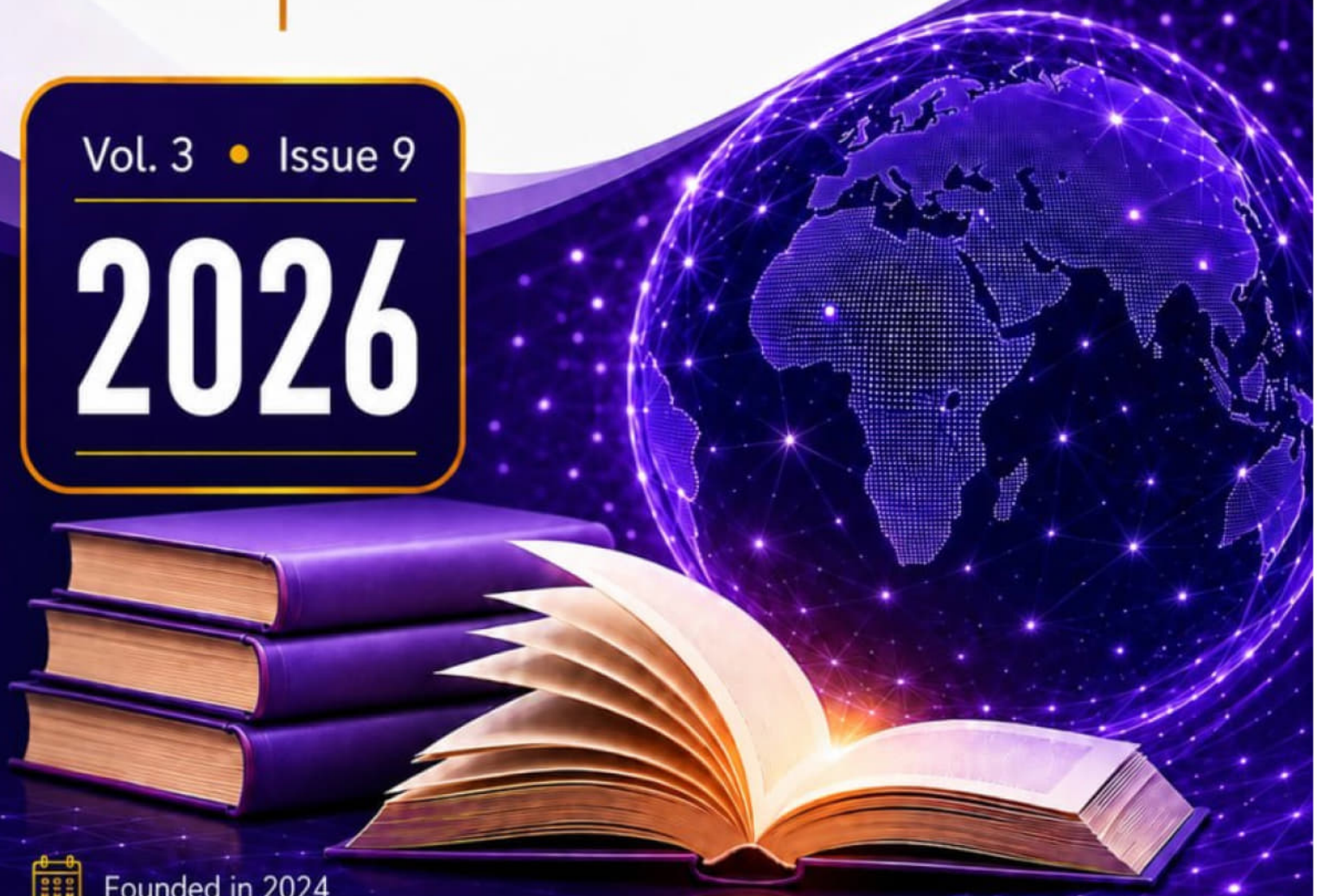
IJTIMOIY-GUMANITAR SOHADA ILMIY-INNOVATSION TADQIQOTLAR

ILMIY METODIK JURNAL

Scientific and Innovative Research in Social and Humanitarian Studies

Vol. 3 • Issue 9

2026



Founded in 2024

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PEER REVIEWED • OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 3060-5059 (Online)
Article / Original paper https://doi.org/10.67227/q4mv7m18

INGLIZ VA O'ZBEK BIZNES XATLARIDA PRAGMATIK YUMSHATISH (HEDGING) STRATEGIYALARINING QIYOSIY TAHLILI

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Annotatsiya.
Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o‘zbek tillaridagi korporativ elektron xatlarda qo‘llaniladigan pragmatik yumshatish (hedging) strategiyalari qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda modal fe’llar, shart shakllari hamda ehtirom ifodalarining illyokutiv kuchni pasaytirish va suhbatdoshning «salbiy yuzi»ni saqlashdagi o‘rni ko‘rsatib berilgan. Tadqiqot natijalari har ikki tildagi lisoniy va madaniy farqlarni ilmiy jihatdan asoslaydi.
Kalit so‘zlar: biznes xatlari, hedging, pragmatik yumshatish, illyokutiv kuch, xushmuomalalik nazariyasi, modal fe’llar, ehtirom shakllari.

СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ СТРАТЕГИЙ ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКОГО СМЯГЧЕНИЯ (ХЕДЖИРОВАНИЯ) В АНГЛИЙСКИХ И УЗБЕКСКИХ ДЕЛОВЫХ ПИСЬМАХ

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Аннотация.
В данной статье проводится сравнительный анализ стратегий прагматического смягчения (hedging), используемых в корпоративной электронной переписке на английском и узбекском языках. В исследовании рассматривается роль модальных глаголов, условных конструкций и форм выражения уважения в снижении иллокутивной силы высказывания и сохранении «негативного лица» собеседника. Результаты исследования позволяют научно обосновать лингвистические и культурные различия между двумя языками.
Ключевые слова: деловая переписка, hedging, прагматическое смягчение, иллокутивная сила, теория вежливости, модальные глаголы, формы выражения уважения.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PRAGMATIC HEDGING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK BUSINESS LETTERS

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Abstract.
This article presents a comparative analysis of pragmatic mitigation (hedging) strategies employed in English and Uzbek corporate email correspondence. The study examines the role of modal verbs, conditional constructions, and expressions of respect in reducing illocutionary force and preserving the interlocutor’s negative face. The findings provide a scholarly basis for understanding the linguistic and cultural differences between the two languages.
Keywords: business correspondence, hedging, pragmatic mitigation, illocutionary force, politeness theory, modal verbs, honorific forms.

Introduction. In contemporary pragmalinguistics and discourse studies, the examination of professional and institutional genres has emerged as a central domain of inquiry. The accelerating pace of economic globalization, international trade, and cross-border corporate integration necessitates a thorough theoretical and empirical investigation into the linguistic mechanics of business correspondence. Business letters constitute one of the most vital genres of institutional discourse, serving not merely as pragmatic conduits for operational information transfer, but as highly structured social interactions where professional roles, hierarchical distances, and institutional goals are continuously negotiated and maintained [1; B. 12–14].

The success of commercial correspondence fundamentally depends on the strategic formulation of communicative intent. Every business document inherently contains directive or commissive speech acts—such as requests, proposals, inquiries, reminders, or rejections—which intrinsically possess a degree of imposition upon the recipient's autonomy. Unmitigated directives risk creating interpersonal friction or appearing overly demanding in corporate settings. Consequently, professional communicators deploy pragmatic hedging strategies to tone down illocutionary force, mitigate face-threatening acts, and preserve harmonious institutional relationships [2; B. 45].

When comparing English and Uzbek business correspondence, pragmatic hedging manifests across distinct linguistic levels. In English business correspondence, hedging is predominantly realized through lexical and modal devices, including epistemic modal verbs, conditional structures, and probability markers. Conversely, in Uzbek

ISSN 3060-5059 (Online)

business letters, pragmatic mitigation relies heavily on morphosyntactic mechanisms, honorific suffixation, passive verb constructions, and ethnoculturally embedded politeness formulas. Analyzing these comparative mechanisms is essential for preventing cross-cultural pragmatic failure and enhancing professional communication in globalized environments [3; B. 28].

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a systematic comparative analysis of pragmatic hedging strategies in English and Uzbek business letters, evaluating their structural-semantic realizations, cognitive-pragmatic functions, and underlying cultural motivations across both communicative systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The theoretical framework of pragmatic hedging traces its origin to foundational works in academic discourse analysis, most notably those popularized by K. Hyland [8; B. 21], V. K. Bhatia [1; B. 50], and F. Bargiela-Chiappini [2; B. 88]. K. Hyland conceptualizes hedging as a pragmatic strategy that enables writers to express perspective, signal tentativeness, and modulate the epistemic commitment to their statements while simultaneously managing social relationships with readers. In corporate environments, hedging functions as an indispensable rhetorical instrument for negotiating institutional authority and mitigating professional risk.

Pragmatically, this study anchors itself in Speech Act Theory formulated by J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle [3; B. 30], alongside the landmark Politeness Theory developed by P. Brown and S. C. Levinson [4; B. 62]. Central to Brown and Levinson's model is the concept of 'Face'—defined as the public self-image that every social participant desires to claim. Direct requests or refusals in business letters constitute Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) directed at the recipient's 'negative face'—their desire for autonomy, freedom of action, and unhindered time. Pragmatic hedging operates as a communicative cushion, reducing the imposition of FTAs and demonstrating institutional deference [5; B. 111].

In Uzbek linguistics, pragmalinguistic analysis and communicative etiquette have been thoroughly examined by eminent scholars such as Sh. Safarov [6; B. 88], N. Mahmudov [9; B. 15], and M. Hakimov [15; B. 18]. Sh. Safarov emphasized the decisive role of pragmatic context in text generation and the modulation of illocutionary force. In Uzbek business discourse, hedging strategies are inextricably bound to the ethnocultural category of 'hurmat' (deference/respect), reflecting a collective orientation towards social harmony and hierarchical awareness.

The empirical methodology of this study is grounded in a qualitative and comparative-contrastive design. A specialized corpus of over 100 authentic and semi-authentic corporate emails, official commercial inquiries, proposal letters, and formal refusal notifications in English and Uzbek was compiled and analyzed. Methodological procedures involved discourse analysis, pragmatic functional categorization, and cognitive frame semantics to systematically identify, classify, and compare hedging markers across both linguistic systems [7; B. 105].

DISCUSSION

Comparative discourse analysis reveals fundamental structural and cognitive divergences in how English and Uzbek business letters operationalize hedging strategies. In English corporate correspondence, communication is strongly governed by 'task-oriented' and 'negative politeness' frameworks. English writers prioritize operational clarity, objectivity, and brevity while employing precise lexical hedges to avoid sounding overly authoritative or coercive. The illocutionary force of directives is systematically softened using modal auxiliaries (would, could, might), politeness adverbs (possibly, kindly), and introductory performative cushions such as 'We would appreciate it if...', 'It appears that...', or 'We kindly suggest...'.

Conversely, Uzbek business correspondence operates within a 'relational-oriented' and 'positive politeness' paradigm heavily influenced by collective cultural values. In Uzbek corporate letters, establishing relational harmony, acknowledging hierarchical status, and expressing formal respect precede operational requests. Pragmatic mitigation is primarily achieved through morphosyntactic markers, including conditional verb forms (-sa/-salar), passive constructions, honorific and plural suffixes (-ingiz, -lar), as well as formulaic deferential phrases such as 'ijozatingiz bilan' (with your permission), 'imkon qadar' (as far as possible), and 'maqsadga muvofiq boʻlar edi' (it would be expedient).

To provide a structured and rigorous comparative synthesis, Table 1 delineates the primary functional categories of hedging strategies, their linguistic realizations in English and Uzbek business correspondence, and their underlying cognitive-pragmatic objectives.

Table 1.. Comparative Analysis of Pragmatic Hedging Strategies in English and Uzbek Business Letters

Functional Hedging Strategy	Linguistic Realizations in English Business Letters	Linguistic Realizations in Uzbek Business Letters	Cognitive-Pragmatic Objective
1. Epistemic Modality & Probability	would, could, might, possibly, it seems that, it appears that	maqsadga muvofiq bo'lar edi, ehtimol, ko'rinadiki	Mitigating categorical assertions and presenting claims neutrally [11; B.50.].
2. Conditional & Indirect Requests	We would be grateful if you could send..., Would you mind...	Hisobotni yuborishingizga ijozat bersangiz..., ...bo'lsa edik	Reducing imposition on recipient's negative face and allowing option space [12; B.77.].

3. Depersonalization & Agent Defocusing	Circumstances prevent us from..., It has been decided that...	Vaziyat sababli qabul qilish imkoni mavjud emas..., ...ma'lum qilinadi	Defocusing personal agentivity during refusals or negative news [13; B.92.].
4. Honorific & Deferential Hedging	Kindly consider..., Respectfully requested..., We cordially invite...	Hormatli..., ...ni iltimos qilib qolamiz, ...ijozatingiz bilan	Acknowledging social distance, status hierarchy, and showing formal respect [14; B.102.].
5. Institutional Appeal & Shared Responsibility	Our team believes that..., It is recommended by management...	Tashkilotimiz nomidan..., Rahbariyat ko'rsatmasiga binoan...	Shifting individual responsibility to collective institutional authority [15; B.18.].

A crucial area where pragmatic hedging plays a vital role is in the delivery of negative news or formal refusals. In English corporate emails, refusal is typically softened by referencing external operational constraints ("Due to current budget limitations...") or utilizing impersonal passive structures. In Uzbek correspondence, refusal is mitigated through passive voice constructions and institutional plurals ("tashkilotimiz nomidan ma'lum qilamiz"), thereby insulating individual participants from direct confrontation and preserving interpersonal harmony [12; B. 77].

RESULTS

The qualitative and comparative analysis yields several key findings regarding the functional distribution and cultural motivations of pragmatic hedging strategies in English and Uzbek business letters:

1. **Structural Level Disparities:** English business letters rely primarily on lexical and modal hedges (epistemic modals, probability adverbs, tentative verbs) to create objective distance. Conversely, Uzbek correspondence operates predominantly through morpho-syntactic hedging (conditional moods, passive voice, honorific suffixes) coupled with culturally standardized deferential phrases [13; B. 92].
2. **Politeness Orientation:** Hedging in English business letters is oriented toward "Negative Politeness" — respecting the addressee's independence, time, and freedom from intrusion. In contrast, Uzbek hedging is heavily influenced by "Positive Politeness" and ethnocultural "hurmat" (deference), emphasizing relational warmth, hierarchical deference, and collective solidarity [14; B. 102].
3. **Agent Defocusing Strategies:** Both languages utilize agent defocusing during face-threatening acts such as rejections or reminders. However, English achieves this via objective operational framing, whereas Uzbek accomplishes depersonalization through institutional plurals and passive verb forms.

CONCLUSION

This comparative investigation demonstrates that pragmatic hedging strategies in business correspondence are deeply embedded in the cognitive and ethnocultural values of their respective speech communities. Masterful application of hedging markers is critical for maintaining professional face, mitigating face-threatening acts, and ensuring effective intercultural business communication [16; B. 120].

The empirical findings of this study offer practical applications for institutional translation pedagogy, cross-cultural negotiation training, and the design of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula in higher education institutions, assisting professionals in avoiding cross-cultural pragmatic failure.

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