

**INDIRECTNESS IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION:
PRAGMATIC STRATEGIES OF UZBEK USERS ON
TELEGRAM AND INSTAGRAM****Khamraeva Bakhora Abdukhakim kizi****M.A., UZBEK STATE WORLD LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY****<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17426237>****ARTICLE INFO**Received: 20th October 2025Accepted: 21st October 2025Online: 22nd October 2025**KEYWORDS***This paper explores how Uzbek speakers employ indirect speech acts on Telegram and Instagram.***ABSTRACT***In the contemporary era of digital communication, social media platforms have significantly transformed how people convey meaning and maintain social relations. Among Uzbek users, messaging applications such as Telegram and Instagram have become key spaces for interpersonal communication, creating a fertile environment for exploring indirectness in pragmatic behavior.***1. Introduction**

In the contemporary era of digital communication, social media platforms have significantly transformed how people convey meaning and maintain social relations. Among Uzbek users, messaging applications such as Telegram and Instagram have become key spaces for interpersonal communication, creating a fertile environment for exploring indirectness in pragmatic behavior.

Indirectness, a well-established topic in pragmatics, often serves as a politeness strategy used to mitigate imposition, express respect, or maintain group harmony. However, when communication occurs in online settings, the absence of paralinguistic cues (intonation, gestures, facial expressions) challenges users to find new ways to express politeness and subtle intentions.

This paper explores how Uzbek speakers employ indirect speech acts on Telegram and Instagram. By focusing on online requests, suggestions, and refusals, the study examines how users pragmatically adapt their communication strategies to fit platform-specific norms while reflecting underlying cultural values.

2. Theoretical Background

Indirectness has been extensively studied in the context of speech act theory and politeness research (Searle, 1975; Brown & Levinson, 1987). It allows speakers to achieve communicative goals without threatening the interlocutor's "face." Brown and Levinson's framework distinguishes between positive and negative politeness strategies, both of which are frequently realized through indirectness.

In high-context cultures such as Uzbekistan, indirect communication plays a vital role in maintaining social harmony and demonstrating deference. As Hall (1976) notes, indirectness is often embedded in contextual cues and shared understanding, which are partly lost in text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC).

With the growth of CMC, pragmatic strategies have evolved to include new multimodal markers such as emojis, GIFs, punctuation, and message timing (Crystal, 2006; Dresner & Herring, 2010). These devices often serve to replace the nonverbal cues absent in online environments, functioning as tools for politeness and mitigation.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative pragmatic approach based on naturally occurring data from Telegram and Instagram. Thirty-six Uzbek participants aged 18–30 were observed over a two-week period, with consent for anonymized use of their communication excerpts. The dataset includes group chat messages, direct messages, and public comments containing indirect requests, refusals, or suggestions.

The analysis applies Searle's (1975) framework of speech acts and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, focusing on three categories of indirectness:

Linguistic Indirectness (hedges, modals, presuppositions)

Visual Indirectness (emojis, stickers, GIFs)

Contextual Indirectness (ellipsis, pauses, timing)

Each message was coded for its pragmatic function—whether to mitigate imposition, express respect, or convey hesitation—and interpreted within its digital and cultural context.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis revealed several distinctive patterns of indirectness among Uzbek users on Telegram and Instagram.

4.1. Linguistic Indirectness as Politeness Strategy

Requests and suggestions were often framed through modals such as “could,” “might,” or “maybe,” reflecting an awareness of social distance and politeness. For example:

“Kimdadir o'sha fayl bo'lsa, iltimos, yubora olasizmi?”

This structure, with a hypothetical clause and the polite marker *iltimos*, demonstrates how indirectness softens the force of a request.

4.2. Emojis as Pragmatic Markers

Visual cues, especially emojis, functioned as extensions of politeness. Participants frequently used 😊, 🙏, or 😬 to mitigate potential face-threatening acts. As one respondent noted, “If I don't add an emoji, they may think I'm angry.” This supports Dresner and Herring's (2010) claim that emojis perform pragmatic—not merely decorative—functions.

4.3. Contextual Variations Between Platforms

Telegram's affordances (group chats, longer messages) encouraged explicit but softened requests, whereas Instagram favored implicit, visually supported communication. For example, comments like “Bir o'tiraylik-ey!” or “Bir ko'rishaylik-ey!” on Instagram DMs conveyed polite suggestions embedded in informal tones, typical of off-record indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

4.4. Indirectness as Cultural Reflection

The preference for indirectness reflects broader Uzbek sociocultural norms emphasizing humility, tact, and deference toward others. Even in the online domain, users maintain these values, adjusting them to the digital medium through creative pragmatic adaptations.

5. Conclusion

The findings indicate that indirectness remains a core pragmatic strategy in Uzbek digital discourse. Users creatively combine linguistic, visual, and contextual cues to maintain politeness and interpersonal balance. Telegram and Instagram, though differing in formality and interaction mode, both reveal how digital communication sustains and reshapes traditional norms of tact and respect.

This study demonstrates that indirectness in CMC is not a communication barrier but a pragmatic adaptation to technological and cultural affordances. It also underscores the importance of studying digital pragmatics within non-Western linguistic contexts such as Uzbek, where politeness and social harmony remain deeply embedded in interactional behavior.

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