

LINGUOPRAGMATIC FEATURES OF DIRECTIVE SPEECH ACTS IN
TEACHERS’ DISCOURSE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

Gulamjanova Komila Farrukhovna

Senior teacher, Oriental university

Abstract: *Directive speech acts are an inseparable part of classroom communication because teachers constantly use language to guide students, organize activities, manage behavior, give advice, and encourage participation. This study explores how directive speech acts are expressed in English and Uzbek teachers’ discourse, with particular attention to their linguopragmatic features. The analysis focuses on commands, requests, instructions, suggestions, advice, and prohibitions, as well as the linguistic forms used to realize them. Special attention is given to directness and indirectness, politeness strategies, mitigation, and the influence of sociocultural norms. The study adopts a qualitative contrastive approach supported by pragmatic, contextual, and discourse analysis. The comparison shows that both English and Uzbek teachers rely on a range of directive strategies, but the two languages differ in the way politeness, authority, and social distance are linguistically expressed. English teacher discourse frequently uses modal interrogatives and conventionally indirect forms, while Uzbek makes broader use of imperative morphology, respectful verb forms, and culturally established politeness markers. The findings suggest that teacher directives should be interpreted not only as grammatical constructions, but also as context-dependent communicative actions shaped by institutional roles, interpersonal relations, and cultural expectations.*

Keywords: *directive speech acts, teacher discourse, linguopragmatics, English, Uzbek, pragmatics, politeness, directness, pedagogical discourse.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom communication is built around interaction. Teachers do not simply transfer information; they constantly use language to organize lessons, guide students through tasks, ask for responses, correct mistakes, encourage participation, and maintain order. In this sense, teacher talk is highly functional. Almost every utterance serves a particular communicative purpose.

One of the most common functions of teacher speech is directing students toward an action. A teacher may ask learners to open a book, answer a question, work in pairs, listen carefully, revise a topic, or avoid a particular behaviour. These utterances are generally described as directive speech acts.

Directive speech acts are especially important in pedagogical discourse because teaching itself involves guidance. However, teachers do not always express directives in the

same way. The same classroom intention can be realized through different linguistic forms. For example: *Open your books.* and: *Could you open your books, please?* may both lead to the same action, but they differ in tone, degree of directness, and interpersonal effect. The same distinction can be observed in Uzbek: *Kitoblaringizni oching.* and: *Iltilmos, kitoblaringizni ochib bera olasizmi?* Both utterances are directive, yet they differ in how strongly the teacher’s authority is expressed.

This difference between what a sentence looks like grammatically and what it does pragmatically is one of the central concerns of linguopragmatics. The theoretical foundations of speech act analysis are closely associated with J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle. Their work demonstrated that speaking is not simply a matter of producing sentences; speakers also perform actions through language. Among Searle’s major categories, directives are particularly relevant to classroom discourse because they are intended to influence the hearer’s future behaviour.

In teacher–student communication, however, directive acts are shaped by more than communicative intention alone. The classroom represents an institutional environment in which the teacher usually has greater authority. Teachers control many aspects of interaction, including the sequence of activities, turn-taking, task instructions, evaluation, and classroom management.

For this reason, the linguistic realization of directives may be influenced by:

- teacher authority;
- social distance;
- formality;
- age of learners;
- classroom situation;
- urgency;
- politeness;
- cultural expectations;
- teaching style.

The comparison of English and Uzbek is particularly interesting because the two languages use different linguistic resources to express politeness and interpersonal relations.

In English, teachers frequently rely on modal verbs such as: *can, could, would, should, may.* For instance: *Could you explain your answer?* The utterance is grammatically interrogative, but pragmatically it functions as a request.

Uzbek makes use of different grammatical and morphological resources: *Javobingizni tushuntirib bera olasizmi?* or: *Javobingizni tushuntiring.* The choice between these forms can signal different levels of directness, respect, or interpersonal distance.

Even a small grammatical difference may carry pragmatic meaning. Consider:

O‘qi. and: *O‘qing.* Both mean “read”, but the second form may communicate a higher degree of respect, social distance, or formality. This makes English-Uzbek comparison particularly valuable for linguopragmatic research.

Although directive speech acts have been widely discussed in pragmatics and speech act theory, their use in English and Uzbek teacher discourse has received less attention from a comparative perspective. A contrastive study can therefore reveal both shared pragmatic tendencies and language-specific features.

The present research examines directive speech acts in English and Uzbek teachers’ discourse with a focus on their linguistic form, communicative function, directness, politeness, and contextual meaning.

1.1. Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to identify and compare the linguopragmatic features of directive speech acts in English and Uzbek teachers’ discourse.

1.2. Research Objectives

The study aims:

1. to identify the main types of directive speech acts used by English- and Uzbek-speaking teachers;
2. to determine the linguistic forms through which directives are expressed;
3. to distinguish between direct and indirect directive strategies;
4. to examine the use of politeness and mitigation;
5. to identify similarities and differences between English and Uzbek teacher discourse;
6. to consider the influence of social and cultural factors on directive choice.

1.3. Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

1. What types of directive speech acts are commonly used in English and Uzbek teachers’ discourse?
2. Which grammatical and lexical forms are used to express them?
3. How are direct and indirect directives realized?
4. What strategies are used to make directives more polite or less imposing?
5. What similarities and differences can be observed between English and Uzbek teacher discourse?

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

The study follows a qualitative contrastive linguopragmatic approach. The analysis combines several methods: pragmatic analysis, contextual analysis, discourse analysis, descriptive analysis, contrastive analysis.

The main unit of analysis is the teacher’s directive utterance. Rather than focusing only on grammatical form, each utterance is examined in relation to its communicative purpose

and classroom context. For instance: *Can you close the window?* is not analysed simply as an interrogative sentence. In a classroom context, it normally functions as a request. This distinction is essential for pragmatic analysis.

2.2. Research Material

For a full empirical study, the data should be collected from authentic classroom interaction. The corpus may include: recorded university classes, school lessons, transcripts of teacher–student communication, online lessons, educational videos, naturally occurring classroom conversations. A balanced dataset could include approximately: Corpus

Suggested number of directives: English teacher discourse 100–150, Uzbek teacher discourse 100–150. Total 200–300

A balanced corpus would make it possible to compare not only individual examples but also the frequency of different directive strategies.

2.3. Types of Directive Speech Acts

The directives may be divided into several functional categories. Commands usually express a relatively strong degree of authority. English: *Sit down.* Uzbek: *O‘tiring.* Instructions guide students through a task. English: *Read the text and answer the questions.* Uzbek: *Matnni o‘qing va savollarga javob bering.* Requests are often less direct and leave more space for the listener’s autonomy. English: *Could you read the first sentence?* Uzbek: *Birinchi gapni o‘qib bera olasizmi?* Suggestions present an action as a useful possibility rather than an obligation. English: *You could use another example here.* Uzbek: *Bu yerda boshqa misoldan foydalanishingiz mumkin.* Advice recommends a course of action. English: *You should revise this topic before the exam.* Uzbek: *Imtihondan oldin bu mavzuni takrorlab chiqishingiz kerak.* Prohibitions are used to prevent an action. English: *Don’t use your phones during the test.* Uzbek: *Test vaqtida telefon ishlatmang.*

2.4. Analytical Criteria

Each directive can be examined according to several parameters. Criterion Possible categories. Speech act type command, request, instruction, suggestion, advice, prohibition. Sentence form imperative, interrogative, declarative. Directness direct, conventionally indirect, indirect. Politeness mitigated, unmitigated. Modality *can, could, should, mumkin, kerak.* Address form name, pronoun, title, zero address. Directive strength strong, moderate, weak. Classroom function instruction, correction, discipline, encouragement. Social meaning, authority, respect, solidarity, distance

3. Results

The present version outlines the main analytical patterns that can be tested against authentic classroom data.

3.1. Direct Imperatives

Imperative constructions are among the clearest ways of expressing directives in both English and Uzbek. Examples include: *Look at the board. Work in pairs.* In Uzbek: *Doskaga*

qarang. Javoblaringizni yozing. Juftlikda ishleng. These utterances are structurally direct because the grammatical form corresponds clearly to the communicative purpose. However, directness does not automatically mean impoliteness. In the classroom, teachers are expected to organize activities. For this reason, imperatives such as: *Open your books.* or: *Matnni o'qing.* may sound completely normal. Their meaning is shaped by institutional context. This illustrates an important pragmatic principle: a grammatically direct form is not necessarily socially impolite.

3.2. Interrogatives as Directives

One of the most common strategies in English is the use of interrogative forms to express requests. Examples include: *Can you explain this word? Could you read the next sentence? Would you answer the question?* Grammatically, these are questions. Yet in most classroom contexts, the teacher is not genuinely asking whether the student has the ability to perform the action. The real intention is: Please do this. This makes them conventionally indirect directives. A possible scale of directness can be seen in the following examples: Read the text. *Can you read the text? Could you read the text? Could you read the text, please?* All four utterances refer to the same basic action, but their interpersonal effect changes. Uzbek also uses interrogative forms in a similar way:

Matnni o'qiy olasizmi? Savolga javob bera olasizmi? Fikringizni tushuntirib bera olasizmi? These structures soften the directive by presenting it as a question rather than as a direct command.

3.3. Politeness and Mitigation

Teachers often soften directives in order to maintain positive relations with students. In English, common mitigating devices include: please; could you; would you; maybe; perhaps; try to; let's. For example: *Could you speak a little louder, please?* The direct version would be: Speak louder. The first version is more polite because it reduces the force of the command. Uzbek uses both lexical and grammatical means of politeness. Common examples include: *iltimos; marhamat; mumkinmi; keling; ing; ingiz; bera olasizmi.* For example: *Iltimos, biroz balandroq gapiring.* or: *Yana bir marta tushuntirib bera olasizmi?*

These expressions reduce the degree of imposition and make the directive more interpersonal.

3.4. Inclusive Directives

Another important strategy is the use of inclusive forms. English teachers often say: *Let's continue. Let's check the answers. Let's look at another example.* Uzbek has comparable constructions: *Keling, davom etamiz. Keling, javoblarni tekshiramiz. Endi boshqa misolni ko'rib chiqamiz.*

These forms are particularly interesting because the teacher includes himself or herself in the activity. Instead of saying: Check the answers. the teacher says: Let's check the answers. This reduces the social distance between teacher and students and presents the

activity as a shared process. Thus, inclusive directives perform both an instructional and an interpersonal function.

3.5. Degrees of Directive Force

Directive utterances can vary considerably in strength. Compare: Stop talking. Please stop talking. Could you stop talking, please? It’s getting difficult to hear. The first is very direct. The second includes a politeness marker. The third is conventionally indirect. The fourth does not contain an explicit directive at all. However, in a classroom situation, students may easily understand that: It’s getting difficult to hear. actually means: Please stop talking. The same process can occur in Uzbek. For example: Shovqin bo‘lyapti. literally means: It is getting noisy. However, students may interpret it as: Jim bo‘ling. This is an example of contextual or indirect directive meaning. The intended meaning is recovered through context rather than grammar alone.

4. Discussion

The comparison between English and Uzbek teacher directives shows that directive meaning is closely related to context.

Teachers in both languages use commands, instructions, requests, advice, suggestions, and prohibitions. They also use direct and indirect forms depending on the classroom situation. One important similarity is the frequent use of imperatives for routine instructions. Expressions such as: *Open your books.* and: *Kitoblaringizni oching.* are natural in classroom communication because the teacher is institutionally responsible for organizing the lesson. However, teachers often soften directives when the situation requires more interpersonal consideration. English makes frequent use of modal verbs: *Could you...? Would you...? Can you...?* These forms allow the teacher to maintain authority while sounding less forceful. Uzbek also has indirect request forms, but politeness is often expressed through verb morphology and respectful forms. For example: *O‘qi.* and: *O‘qing.* have the same basic lexical meaning, but they differ pragmatically.

The form *o‘qing* may signal respect, formality, or social distance. This is an important point in English-Uzbek comparison because politeness in Uzbek is often encoded directly in morphology. Another interesting similarity concerns inclusive expressions. English: *Let’s continue.* Uzbek: *Keling, davom etamiz.* Both forms make the directive sound more collaborative. The teacher still controls the activity, but the linguistic form suggests shared participation.

This reveals that teacher directives serve two purposes at the same time.

First, they perform a pedagogical function by directing students toward an activity. Second, they perform an interpersonal function by shaping the relationship between teacher and student. A teacher who says: Answer the question and a teacher who says:

Could you answer the question, please? Want essentially the same result. However, the second teacher chooses a linguistic form that reduces the strength of the directive. This difference is not merely stylistic. It reflects pragmatic choices.

4.1. Teacher Authority and Directness

Teacher–student communication is naturally asymmetrical. Teachers usually have the institutional right to give instructions and regulate behaviour. This explains why direct forms are common in classroom discourse. At the same time, teachers may choose less direct forms in order to create a more cooperative atmosphere. The choice may depend on: the age of students; the seriousness of the situation; the type of task; teaching style; level of familiarity; institutional culture. For example: *Work in pairs.* is direct and efficient. By contrast: *Why don’t you work in pairs?* sounds more suggestive.

And: *Let’s work in pairs.* sounds more inclusive. All three may result in the same activity, but the social relationship expressed by each utterance differs.

4.2. Politeness and Face

Directives are closely connected with politeness because they attempt to influence another person’s behaviour. In pragmatic terms, a directive may limit the hearer’s freedom of action. For this reason, speakers often use mitigation. Compare: *Do it again.* with: *Could you try that again?* The second form sounds less imposing. Similarly, in Uzbek: *Qaytadan qiling.* may be softened as: *Yana bir marta urinib ko’ring.* The softened version not only directs the student but also communicates encouragement. This shows that directive meaning can interact with other pragmatic functions such as support, solidarity, and politeness.

4.3. Sociocultural Factors

Directive choices are also influenced by cultural norms.

English-speaking communicative traditions often place strong emphasis on conventional indirectness and respect for personal autonomy. This may explain the frequent use of constructions such as: *Could you...? Would you...?* Uzbek communicative culture also values politeness, but respectful relationships are often expressed through grammatical forms, especially verb endings and forms of address.

However, such differences should not be treated as absolute rules. Not every English teacher is indirect, and not every Uzbek teacher relies on imperatives. Teacher behaviour may vary according to: personality; age; region; teaching experience; institution; educational level; classroom situation. For this reason, authentic empirical data is essential.

5. Conclusion

Directive speech acts are one of the most important pragmatic features of teacher discourse. Teachers use directives to organize lessons, guide learners, maintain discipline, provide advice, encourage participation, and manage classroom interaction. Both English and Uzbek employ a variety of directive strategies, including imperatives, interrogatives, modal constructions, suggestions, requests, and indirect contextual expressions.

The two languages share several important pragmatic tendencies. Both allow teachers to choose between direct and indirect forms, and both provide linguistic resources for mitigating directive force. At the same time, English and Uzbek differ in the ways politeness and social relationships are encoded. English frequently relies on modal interrogatives and conventional indirectness, while Uzbek makes greater use of verbal morphology, respectful forms, and lexical markers of politeness.

These differences demonstrate that directive speech acts cannot be fully understood through grammar alone. Their interpretation depends on: linguistic form + speaker intention + context + social relationship + cultural norms. Teacher directives should therefore be viewed as complex communicative acts in which authority, pedagogy, politeness, and interpersonal relations interact.

A contrastive linguopragmatic analysis of English and Uzbek teacher discourse can contribute not only to speech act theory and pragmatics, but also to teacher education, intercultural communication, and language teaching.

Further research should be based on authentic classroom corpora and may examine how directive strategies vary according to teacher age, gender, experience, student level, educational setting, and teaching methodology.

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