

VERBAL EXPRESSION OF POLITENESS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY**Nabijonova Ismigul Baxtiyor qizi**

Final-year student at Uzbekistan

State World Languages University

Scientific adviser: **Kendjayeva Zemfira Alimjanova**

Senior teacher, Uzbek State World Languages University

Abstract

Cultural lenses, namely politeness norms directly influence verbal strategies. The theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), which is the backbone of politeness, is explored in detail in this paper in contrast with Yo'ldoshev. The study analyzes how context, power dynamics, and social distance influence the choice between formal and informal language contrasts between English and Uzbek politeness.

Keywords: Politeness, Brown and Levinson, Uzbek linguistics, Pragmatics, language comparison, speech strategies, social norms, forms of address, culture, language teaching, Cross-cultural communication.

The study of politeness is a vital component of linguistic research, particularly in the field of pragmatics, which investigates how language is applied in social contexts. Politeness strategies are crucial for maintaining social harmony and preventing potential face-threatening acts (FTAs), that could negatively impact the social standing of individuals involved in a conversation. Although politeness strategies are universal, they appear distinctively across cultures, indicating social norms and values.

Because of their different cultural settings, the English and Uzbek languages present an intriguing comparison in politeness methods. English tends to emphasise indirectness and liberty, whereas Uzbek focusses on hierarchical respect and particular social positions. This comparative research digs into the theoretical underpinnings of politeness, particularly drawing from Brown and Levinson's Face Theory (1987) and

the works of Uzbek linguist O'. Yo'ldoshev. By exploring these frameworks, the research intends to give insights in the impact of politeness for productive communication across cultures.

Politeness is an important aspect of communication that helps people maintain social harmony and avoid face-threatening acts (FTAs), which could harm the listener's social standing. Brown and Levinson (1987) developed the most influential theory of politeness, categorising it into two main strategies: positive politeness and negative politeness.

Positive Politeness: This method conveys solidarity and kindness, aiming at developing social relationships. It frequently includes compliments or expressing interest in the other person's needs. For example, "You're really good at this — could you help me?"

Negative Politeness: This approach emphasizes respect and prevents imposition. It is often indirect and minimises the impact of a request. For instance, "Could you possibly help me?" or "I'm sorry to bother you, but..."

The positive and negative face theories, as a result, let people decide which tactic to utilise based on the social dynamics of a discourse, such as power, distance, and imposition.

Power refers to the speaker and listener's social rank or authority. To show respect for someone in a position of authority, a speaker may use more formal language or politeness strategies.

Distance refers to the speaker and listener's social proximity to one another. For example, in close relationships, a more informal tone is used, whereas in distant or formal situations, more indirect ways to show politeness are required.

Imposition refers to how much a request or action impresses on the listener. The more emphasis placed on imposing the action, the further courteous the speaker needs to be to soften the request or recommendation.

These three characteristics — power, distance, and imposition — have a direct impact on politeness techniques and the level of indirectness or formality used in any particular social engagement.

Thomas (1995) introduced an important distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, which plays a critical role in understanding and teaching politeness in language learning.

Pragmalinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of the linguistic forms and strategies used to perform speech acts, such as requesting, apologizing, or complimenting. For example, an English learner may know that phrases like “Would you mind...”, “Could you possibly...”, or “I was wondering if...” are common ways to make polite requests in English.

Sociopragmatic competence, on the other hand, refers to the speaker’s understanding of the social rules and cultural norms that determine when, why, and to whom these forms should be used. This includes knowing whether directness or indirectness is appropriate, what level of formality is expected, and how relationships affect language use.

A lack of sociopragmatic competence often leads to pragmatic failure, even if the grammatical sentence is correct. For example, a learner might say “Give me your pen” instead of “Could I borrow your pen, please?”, which may come across as rude or overly direct in English, although such phrasing might be acceptable or even polite in their native language.

This distinction is vital for politeness research and language teaching, contrasting vocabulary/sentence pattern accumulation with sociocultural knowledge. Consequently, teachers have to pay necessary attention to, not only language forms, but also the intercultural competence that is needed for the learners to decode and act upon social hints in varying environment.

However, politeness is not universal and is influenced by cultural differences. What one culture considers courteous may be interpreted differently in another. Politeness has received a lot of attention in Uzbek linguistics, with a focus on how

social positions and connections influence language use. O'. Yo'ldoshev (2009) is a prominent person in this area. His work emphasises the nuanced ways in which politeness is ingrained in the Uzbek language, as well as traditional values like as respect for hierarchy, age, and group identification.

According to Yo'ldoshev, politeness in Uzbek is not just about using formal language, but also about demonstrating respect through socially relevant language choices. This includes:

1. Pronoun Usage: One of the most important politeness methods in Uzbek is to distinguish between formal and informal second-person pronouns, *siz* (formal) and *sen* (informal). The relationship between the speaker and the audience determines which pronoun is used. For example, utilising *sen* with an older or someone in a higher social status may be deemed unfriendly and insulting. This demonstrates a cultural emphasis on age and rank.

2. Honorifics and Titles: Even if they are not related, Uzbek speakers frequently employ honorifics such as *aka* (older brother), *opa* (older sister), *ustoz* (teacher), and *bobo* (grandfather). This linguistic feature strengthens the speaker's position in society and relationship with the listener. Addressing people with their right title is a crucial method to show respect.

3. Verb Forms: In Uzbek, politeness also manifests itself through verb conjugations; respectful forms are used in formal situations or when speaking to a person of higher social status. For instance, the verb "to do" can be expressed as either *qilmoq* (general) or *qilishingiz mumkinmi* (respectful form). This differentiation is important to maintain politeness because using a lower form might indicate rudeness.

4. Cultural Expressions of Politeness: In Uzbek culture, politeness is also expressed through set phrases and blessings, such as *rahmat* (thank you), *iltimos* (please), and *kechirasiz* (sorry). These expressions are deeply ingrained in social practices, where humility and deference are valued. The use of polite formulas in everyday speech serves as a mechanism to maintain social harmony and refrain from acts that could endanger one's reputation.

Yo‘ldoshev’s work emphasizes that politeness in Uzbek is a socially contextual phenomenon—its use is determined by the speaker's awareness of the social context, including elements like age, social status, and familiarity. Thus, what is considered polite in one situation might be impolite in another situation if the formality is not correctly used.

By recognizing these linguistic features, we can understand the deeper cultural context that shapes politeness in the Uzbek language. Yo‘ldoshev’s works provide essential insights into how politeness strategies in Uzbek go beyond just language form, reflecting a collectivist society where social relationships and hierarchical structures are key.

The comparison of politeness strategies between English and Uzbek reveals both distinct differences and notable similarities:

Differences: English tends to favor indirectness in communication, especially in formal situations. Hedging and the use of indirect requests are common strategies to avoid imposing on others. In contrast, Uzbek emphasizes formality, honorifics, and respect for hierarchical social roles, often using specific pronouns and titles based on the relationship between the speaker and the listener.

Similarities: Both languages use politeness to maintain social harmony. In both cultures, politeness is about respect, though the forms of expressing that respect vary. For example, both languages employ polite markers such as please (English) and iltimos (Uzbek) when making requests.

Language learners must be aware of the hierarchical nature of Uzbek society and the significance of demonstrating respect based on age and social status. Understanding the politeness strategies in both English and Uzbek is essential for preventing misunderstandings and ensuring effective communication. In addition to understanding grammar and vocabulary, language learners must also comprehend the cultural norms that underpin politeness. For English learners, mastering the use of indirect speech, hedging, and tone is essential, as is understanding how the level of formality can

change depending on the social context and relationship between the speaker and listener.

This comparative investigation points out the differences and similarities between Uzbek and English politeness strategies, emphasising hierarchical respect and social roles in Uzbek and indirectness and autonomy in English, respectively. Understanding such distinctions is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication and language learning, maintaining that learners can interact with both cultures and languages with tact and respect. By mastering these politeness strategies, learners can interact more efficiently and harmoniously, improving their language skills and cultural understanding.

References:

1. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
2. Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Pantheon Books.
4. Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
5. Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Interlanguage pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
6. Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman.
7. Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*. Continuum.
8. Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. Longman.
9. Watts, R. J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge University Press.
10. Yoʻldoshev, Oʻ. (2009). *Til – tafakkur – muomala*. Toshkent: Fan nashriyoti.