

## **DIFFERENCES IN POLITENESS ACROSS LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

***Muhammadiyeva Halima Saidahmadovna***

*Associate Professor of Namangan State University*

***Mahmudjonova Gulsanam Ikromjon qizi***

*Student of Namangan state university*

***Annotation:*** This article explores the differences in politeness across various languages and cultures, highlighting how social norms, traditions and linguistic structures shape the expression of politeness. By comparing examples from different cultural and linguistic contexts, the article sheds light on the diverse ways politeness is perceived and practiced worldwide. The findings emphasize the importance of understanding cultural differences in politeness to promote effective cross-cultural communication and mutual respect.

***Keywords:*** politeness, cultural differences, social norms, non-verbal communication, taboo topics

## **РАЗЛИЧИЯ В ВЕЖЛИВОСТИ МЕЖДУ ЯЗЫКАМИ И КУЛЬТУРАМИ**

***Аннотация:*** Эта статья исследует различия в выражении вежливости в различных языках и культурах, подчеркивая, как социальные нормы, традиции и языковые структуры формируют проявления вежливости. Сравнивая примеры из различных культурных и языковых контекстов, статья освещает разнообразные способы восприятия и практики вежливости во всем мире. Результаты подчеркивают важность понимания культурных различий в вежливости для содействия эффективной межкультурной коммуникации и взаимного уважения.

***Ключевые слова:*** вежливость, культурные различия, социальные нормы, невербальное общение, табулированные темы.

## **TILLAR VA MADANIYATLAR O'RTASIDAGI MULOYIMLIK FARQLARI**

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqola turli tillar va madaniyatlar o'rtasidagi muloyimlik farqlarini o'rganadi, ijtimoiy normalar, an'analar va til strukturalarining muloyimlik ifodalanishiga qanday ta'sir qilishini ta'kidlaydi. Turli madaniy va lingvistik kontekstlardan misollarni solishtirish orqali maqola muloyimlikning dunyo bo'ylab qanday qabul qilinishi va amalda qo'llanilishini ko'rsatadi. Topilmalar muloyimlikdagi madaniy farqlarni tushunishning ahamiyatini ta'kidlaydi, bu esa samarali madaniyatlararo muloqot va o'zaro hurmatni rivojlantirishga yordam beradi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** muloyimlik, madaniy farqlar, ijtimoiy normalar, noverbal muloqot, taqiqlangan mavzular

### **Introduction**

Politeness is just more than good manners, as it is the mirror of the soul of the culture, often showed through language, gestures and behaviors of individuals around the world. Every society has its own set of actions and rules that are considered an appropriate way of interacting one another without leaving negative impression. When we compare languages and cultures, the way politeness expressed reveals subtle, but profound differences that should be explored and learnt more attentively in order to maintain harmonious relationships across nations. From the ways how Asians complement each other to making courteous requests or apologizing in formal or casual settings in Europe have significant differences which makes politeness a cultural art form that various in surprising ways. This article explores the diverse ways politeness is expressed worldwide, also helps to bridge the cultural gaps and communicate with greater sense of respect and awareness.

### **Methods**

The article is written by using various methods, mainly a combination of research and data collection, gathering information from credible sources. Gathered

relevant and accurate data organized into a structured outline to ensure logical flow and coherence. Writer's personal insights, observations, prior knowledge and also experience were included to make the analysis more detailed and meaningful. This approach ensures the content is accurate, relevant and supported by evidence. Throughout the process, multiple drafts were created and edited to achieve the polished final version.

### **Review**

The concept of politeness as a fundamental aspect of linguistic interaction has been widely explored, with researchers examining its significance in shaping communication and managing interpersonal relationships. For example, Kasper describes linguistic politeness as the process of organizing language use to suit specific communicative situations [1]. Similarly, Cutting supports this perspective, emphasizing that politeness involves making linguistic choices to achieve particular communicative objectives [2]. Other definitions shift focus to the purposes politeness serves in communication. Robin Lakoff argues that politeness functions as a societal mechanism to reduce the inherent friction in communication [3]. Grundy adds that politeness is also about the extent to which a speaker's language aligns with the listener's expectations regarding how something should be expressed [4]. Studies showed that politeness plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining social connections, revealing the nature of human social interaction as conveyed through language [5]. That is why, different cultures shaped their own norms and convictions of politeness over time, reflecting societal values and expectations. Furthermore, the politeness norms of one culture can significantly influence those of another over the years, especially through prolonged contact, such as trade, migration, or colonization. For instance, ever since ancient times, there has been a need for politeness in both written and spoken language in China. As ancient China developed and interacted with neighboring countries, the social norms of being polite and speaking politely influenced other cultures. Korean, as well as Japanese communication is heavily shaped by traditional Chinese Confucian values, including importance of politeness in interpersonal communication [6]. However, only a limited number of researchers

have explored cross-cultural politeness characteristics and their underlying causes.

## **Discussion**

### **Addressing people across different nations**

The way people address each other varies widely across cultures. For example, from my own experience as an Uzbek girl, addressing people in my home country whether we know them or not based on emphasizing respect and showing closer interaction by using words, which serve to address family members, such as 'opa' (sister), 'aka' (brother), 'xola' (aunt), 'tog'a' (uncle) and 'buvi' (grandmother). However, some Uzbek people use these words with the suffix 'jon' to add extra layer of respect and kindness when addressing a stranger by using these words, like 'opajon'. However, English people addressed according to their gender and social status most of the time: 'Miss' for unmarried women, 'Mr' for married man as well as 'Mrs' for married women or 'Professor Jone', or even simply 'Doctor' based on their profession without further adding their name. To address strangers, sometimes 'madam' and 'sir' are used by English people [7]. However, according to the Chinese culture, people are addressed by their surname with title or occupation such as 'wang xiao zhang' (Principal Wang) and 'li yi sheng' (Doctor Li) [8].

### **Non-verbal politeness**

Non-verbal politeness plays a really crucial role in communication, as our actions speak louder than our words. Cultural norms have a profound impact how people convey respect, politeness and gratitude without using language (like bowing, hand gestures, eye contact, smiling and so on). For instance, 'Namaste' gesture where hands are pressed together near the chest combined with a slight bow is a respectful greeting in India. Bowing (Ojigi) is an essential part of Japanese culture to show respect, apology, greeting and thanking. Instead of shaking hands, Japanese people bow, and it is a standard way to show respect, politeness, and gratitude. The depth and the duration of the bow vary depending on the situation and the social status of another person [9]. Also, in United States, smiling is widely used to show friendliness, openness and politeness, while smiling at strangers could be perceived as insincere or overly expressive by Russian people, as they think smiles are often

reserved for people who you feel genuine connection.

### **Being polite around the table**

In Japan, people follow strict rule of not pointing at someone with chopsticks and not leaving chopsticks standing upright position. Because, for Japanese people chopsticks standing upright, especially in rice bowl symbolizes death. Moreover, one of the unusual Japanese manners is noodle slurping as it is an integral part of the Japanese manners and etiquette which tells the chef the enjoyment of the food served [10]. Conversely, people who live in Central Asia, Uzbekistan try to be quite as much as possible as a sign of respect towards people sitting around the table. Uzbek people follow sophisticated table manners as they focus on even tiny details, from sitting places ranged from elderly people to young members of the family, no talking rule, not eating before everyone gathers around the table, not leaving until everyone finishes their meal or not leaving leftover in a bowl as it considered a sign of disrespect for the person who prepared the meal. In other countries, table manners considered appropriate and acceptable in Uzbekistan may be unacceptable by other nations. For example, if you are quite on the table, it will make the Chinese host feel that he/she does not entertain you well. On the contrary, western people only communicate with the person who sits next to him, and the voice of the conversation would be very low, otherwise people think that you are not a well-mannered person supposing not feeling shameful for interrupting others dining with you by talking loudly [11].

### **Taboos**

As a daughter of a Muslim family raised in a traditional setting, I have witnessed firsthand some cultural taboos Muslims avoid daily life and made comparisons with other nations who have diverse backgrounds. For example, men cannot directly compliment females for even their academic achievement, professional success or natural beauty most of the time as this can be perceived as an action that can trigger jealousy of female's brothers, husband or father. Furthermore, in many Muslim countries in Asia, including Uzbekistan, it is considered inappropriate for a man to excessively praise someone's wife or maintain prolonged

eye contact in public. Such actions are seen as intrusive and disrespectful, violating cultural and religious norms of privacy and modesty. But, in Europe, praising someone's spouse for their talent or appearance is often seen as harmless compliment, and direct eye contact, including also with women, is considered a sign of attentiveness and respect. Another example is the use of the left hand in countries like India and Indonesia, where it is associated with unclean tasks and considered taboo for eating and handing someone an object. However, in Western countries, there is no such rule related to the left hand, and its use in daily activities is totally normal.

### **Complementing style of different nations**

Some cultural differences when it comes to complementing others exist around the world. In western cultures like United States and Canada, compliments are often casual, direct and frequent, focusing on personal achievement, appearance or possessions. For instance, someone might say 'your shoes look amazing'. Compliments are typically received with a simple 'thank you' by westerners, showing positivity as well self-confidence. However, in East Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, compliments are more reserved and focus on effort, hard work rather than natural talent. For instance, Japanese colleague might say 'You must have worked very hard on this project' stressing determination and diligence rather than inherent talent. In these cultures, accepting compliments and responding with humble answers is normal. Chinese generally murmur something implying that he or she is not worthy of the praise in order to show modesty, because in China modesty is the best policy, but to westerners, honesty is the best policy [12].

### **Conclusion**

Understanding cultural differences in politeness, such as how people compliment, address or greet each other, navigate taboos, is crucial in this interconnected world. These differences have their deep roots in cultural beliefs and understandings that have been long before shaped and preserved over the years by people. For instance, praising someone's wife or sister may be a taboo in Muslim countries; it is seen as polite action in many European countries. Similarly, gestures

like finger pointing or leaving chopsticks upright carry vastly different meanings depending on the cultural context. By embracing these nuances, we can foster mutual respect, avoid misunderstandings, and build stronger, meaningful cross-cultural relationships. Awareness of these differences is not only a sign of good manners but also the first step towards building greater global cultural understanding and harmony.

### **References:**

- Kasper, G. 1990. Linguistic politeness: current research issues. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, 193-218.
- Cutting, Joan. 2002. *Pragmatic and discourse. A resource book for students.* London: Routledge.
- Lakoff, R. 1973. The logic of politeness: Or, minding your p's and q's. *Papers from the 9<sup>TH</sup> Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 292-305.
- Grundy, P. 2000. *Doing Pragmatics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) London: Arnold.
- Brown, P. (2015). Politeness and language. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 18 (2), 326-330.
- Stowell, J. (2003). The influence of Confucian values on interpersonal communication in South Korea, as compared to China and Japan. *International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies*. 105-116.
- Hanson, W. 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023. How to address people. The english manner.
- Yin, L. June 2009. *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 5, No. 6. Foreign Language Department.
- <https://www.no.emb-japan.go.jp> September 22, 2009, Embassy of Japan.
- Varga, C. 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024. 'You should travel' magazine.
- Yang, X. September 2018. Vol. 5, No. 3. *Journal of Education & Social Policy*.
- Luo Ningxia, 2000.