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THE CATEGORY OF POLITENESS IN THE ASPECT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION (ON THE MATERIAL OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK CULTURES)

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Abstract

This article explores the category of politeness within the framework of intercultural communication, based on the comparative analysis of English and Uzbek cultures. Politeness is considered a key pragmatic and socio-cultural category that regulates interpersonal interaction and reflects national values, communicative norms, and cultural traditions. The study examines linguistic and extra-linguistic means of expressing politeness in English and Uzbek, including forms of address, speech etiquette, indirectness, honorifics, and contextual factors. Special attention is paid to cultural differences in the perception of politeness strategies, such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and social hierarchy. The findings demonstrate that while English politeness is often characterized by indirectness, mitigation, and personal autonomy, Uzbek politeness emphasizes respect, hospitality, social harmony, and hierarchical relations. The article highlights the importance of understanding culturally specific politeness norms to avoid pragmatic failures and communicative misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. The results may be useful for linguists, translators, language teachers, and specialists involved in intercultural communication.

Keywords

politeness, intercultural communication, pragmatics, speech etiquette, English culture, Uzbek culture, cultural values, communicative norms

Introduction

In the context of globalization and increasing international interaction, intercultural communication has become an essential aspect of social, academic, and professional life. Effective communication between representatives of different cultures requires not only linguistic competence but also a deep understanding of cultural norms, values, and communicative behavior. One of the most significant pragmatic categories that influence successful intercultural interaction is politeness, which plays a crucial role in regulating social relations and maintaining harmony in communication. Politeness is a culturally conditioned phenomenon that reflects socially accepted norms of behavior, attitudes toward interlocutors, and strategies of expressing respect, consideration, and social distance. While the concept of politeness exists in all cultures, its realization varies significantly depending on historical, social, and cultural factors. Misinterpretation of politeness norms often leads to pragmatic failure, misunderstanding, or even communicative conflict in intercultural contexts. English and Uzbek cultures represent different cultural and communicative traditions. English communicative behavior is generally associated with indirectness, mitigation, and respect for personal autonomy, which are closely linked to individualistic cultural values. In contrast, Uzbek communicative culture is characterized by collectivism, hierarchical relationships, and a strong emphasis on respect, hospitality, and social harmony. These differences are clearly reflected in language use, speech etiquette, forms of address, and politeness strategies. The relevance of this

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study lies in the growing need to develop intercultural communicative competence, especially in the fields of language education, translation, diplomacy, and international cooperation. By analyzing the category of politeness on the material of English and Uzbek cultures, this article aims to identify both universal and culture-specific features of politeness and to demonstrate their impact on intercultural communication. The results of the research contribute to a better understanding of cross-cultural pragmatic differences and provide practical insights for avoiding communicative misunderstandings in intercultural interaction.

Literature Review

The category of politeness has been widely studied in linguistics, pragmatics, and intercultural communication, as it plays a central role in regulating social interaction and maintaining interpersonal harmony. One of the most influential theoretical frameworks in politeness research was proposed by Brown and Levinson, who introduced the concept of "face" and distinguished between positive and negative politeness strategies. According to their model, politeness is used to mitigate face-threatening acts and varies depending on social distance, power relations, and the degree of imposition. This theory has served as a foundation for numerous cross-cultural studies, although it has also been criticized for its Western-oriented perspective. Leech further developed the study of politeness by proposing the Politeness Principle, which includes a set of maxims such as tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. His approach emphasizes the role of politeness in maintaining cooperative and harmonious communication. Later studies expanded Leech's ideas by incorporating cultural and contextual factors, highlighting that politeness norms cannot be fully explained without considering socio-cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication scholars, such as Hall and Hofstede, have contributed significantly to understanding how cultural dimensions influence communicative behavior. Hofstede's concepts of individualism versus collectivism and power distance are particularly relevant to politeness studies. Research shows that individualistic cultures, such as English-speaking societies, tend to value personal autonomy, indirectness, and equality in communication, while collectivist cultures prioritize group harmony, respect for hierarchy, and relational obligations. These cultural dimensions directly affect the choice of politeness strategies in different languages. In English linguistic studies, politeness is often associated with indirect speech acts, hedging, modal verbs, and conventional politeness markers such as please, thank you, and sorry. Scholars emphasize that English politeness is closely linked to the protection of negative face and the avoidance of imposition. In contrast, studies on Uzbek communicative culture highlight the importance of respect, honorifics, kinship terms, and formulaic expressions that reflect age, social status, and hierarchical relations. Uzbek politeness is deeply rooted in cultural traditions, moral values, and social norms, where directness is often balanced by respectful forms of address and contextual sensitivity. Comparative studies on politeness across cultures demonstrate that pragmatic misunderstandings often arise when interlocutors transfer politeness norms from their native culture to a foreign one. Researchers note that what is perceived as polite in one culture may be interpreted as distant, rude, or overly formal in another. Therefore, modern scholarship increasingly focuses on the development of intercultural pragmatic competence, emphasizing the need to teach politeness as a culturally embedded phenomenon rather than a set of universal linguistic formulas. Overall, the reviewed literature confirms that politeness is a complex, multidimensional category shaped by linguistic, cultural, and social factors. Despite extensive research on English politeness, comparative studies involving Uzbek culture remain relatively limited, which underlines the relevance of the present study. By examining politeness strategies

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in English and Uzbek cultures, this research seeks to contribute to intercultural pragmatics and to fill existing gaps in cross-cultural politeness studies.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and comparative research design to analyze the category of politeness in the context of intercultural communication on the material of English and Uzbek cultures. The research is grounded in the principles of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication theory, which allow for a comprehensive examination of politeness as a culturally embedded phenomenon. The primary data consist of authentic linguistic materials, including everyday conversational examples, speech etiquette formulas, and selected dialogues from literary texts, educational resources, and spoken discourse in both English and Uzbek. These materials are analyzed to identify commonly used politeness strategies, forms of address, honorific expressions, and pragmatic markers characteristic of each culture. The study applies descriptive and contrastive analysis methods to compare linguistic and pragmatic features of politeness in English and Uzbek. Discourse analysis is used to examine politeness strategies in specific communicative situations, taking into account contextual factors such as social distance, power relations, age, and communicative intent. In addition, elements of pragmatic interpretation are employed to reveal implicit meanings and culturally conditioned communicative norms. To ensure theoretical validity, the analysis is guided by established politeness models, particularly Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and Leech's Politeness Principle, while also considering critiques and culturally sensitive approaches in modern intercultural pragmatics. The findings are interpreted from a cross-cultural perspective to identify both universal and culture-specific features of politeness. Overall, this methodological approach enables a systematic comparison of politeness strategies in English and Uzbek cultures and provides a reliable basis for understanding their role in successful intercultural communication.

Analysis and results

Intercultural communication plays a crucial role in today's globalized world, where individuals from different cultural backgrounds frequently interact in various contexts such as business, education, and social settings. One essential aspect of successful intercultural communication is the ability to navigate and understand the intricacies of politeness within different cultural frameworks. Politeness, defined as the culturally specific rules and conventions governing social behavior, language use, and interaction patterns, plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of cross-cultural communication. The concept of politeness varies significantly across cultures, with each society having its own norms, values, and expectations regarding what constitutes polite behavior. These differences can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and even conflicts in intercultural interactions if not carefully navigated. Therefore, an in-depth examination of politeness in different communicative cultures is essential for promoting effective communication, fostering mutual respect, and building strong relationships across cultural boundaries. In this article, we will explore the category of politeness within the context of intercultural communication, focusing specifically on the comparison between English and Uzbek communicative cultures. By examining these two distinct cultural contexts, we aim to shed light on the diverse ways in which politeness is manifested, expressed, and perceived in different cultural settings.19 Through an analysis of linguistic patterns, cultural practices, and social expectations related to politeness in English

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and Uzbek communicative cultures, we will uncover the underlying factors that influence polite behavior and communication styles in these societies. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of navigating politeness in intercultural interactions and provide valuable insights for individuals and professionals engaged in cross-cultural communication. By recognizing and respecting the cultural differences in politeness norms, we can enhance communication effectiveness, promote intercultural understanding, and strengthen relationships across diverse cultural contexts. Politeness is a fundamental aspect of social interaction that revolves around demonstrating respect, consideration, and kindness towards others. It involves employing manners, etiquette, and courteous behavior in various social situations to maintain harmonious relationships and uphold societal norms. Politeness encompasses a wide range of behaviors, gestures, and language use that are designed to show appreciation, deference, and thoughtfulness towards others. At its core, politeness is about acknowledging the feelings, perspectives, and needs of others while navigating social interactions with grace and sensitivity. It involves displaying empathy, understanding, and empathy towards others, regardless of differences in opinions, beliefs, or backgrounds. Politeness is not just a superficial nicety; it is a foundational aspect of effective communication and relationship-building that fosters mutual respect, trust, and cooperation among individuals. Politeness can manifest in various forms, including verbal expressions, nonverbal cues, and behavioral patterns that convey respect and consideration towards others. Common polite phrases such as "please," "thank you," "excuse me," and "I'm sorry" are used to show appreciation, gratitude, and remorse in social interactions. Polite gestures such as holding the door for someone, offering a seat to a stranger, or giving a compliment are examples of nonverbal politeness that demonstrate kindness, generosity, and thoughtfulness. In addition to words and actions, politeness also involves observing social norms, customs, and expectations that govern interactions within a given culture or community. Each society has its own set of politeness rules, etiquettes, and conventions that dictate how individuals should behave, communicate, and interact with others. These norms may vary across cultures, regions, and social contexts, leading to differences in the ways politeness is expressed and perceived. Politeness is not just about following rigid rules or codes of conduct; it is about showing genuine consideration and empathy towards others in all social interactions. It requires individuals to be mindful of their words, actions, and behaviors and to treat others with kindness, respect, and dignity. Politeness goes beyond mere politeness; it is about fostering positive relationships, building trust, and creating a sense of belonging and community among individuals. In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, the importance of politeness in social interactions cannot be overstated. As we navigate complex social environments, cultural differences, and diverse perspectives, politeness serves as a universal language that transcends barriers and builds bridges between individuals from different backgrounds. By embracing politeness as a guiding principle in our interactions, we can promote understanding, empathy, and harmony in our communities and beyond. In today’s interconnected and globalized world, intercultural communication has become a fundamental aspect of our daily interactions. When individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together, understanding and navigating the intricacies of politeness play a crucial role in ensuring effective communication and building strong relationships. To begin with, let us explore the concept of politeness within the English communicative culture. In England, politeness is often associated with certain linguistic markers and expressions that convey respect, consideration, and social norms.21 For example, the use of polite forms such as "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" are considered essential in English social interactions to demonstrate courtesy and respect towards others. Moreover, the

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notion of indirectness and politeness strategies, such as hedging, mitigation, and indirect requests, are commonly employed in English discourse to maintain social harmony and avoid causing offense. In contrast, the Uzbek communicative culture exhibits its unique set of politeness norms and values that reflect the cultural heritage and social dynamics of the society. In Uzbekistan, politeness is deeply ingrained in the traditional values of hospitality, respect for elders, and hierarchies within social relationships. Polite forms of address, honorifics, and expressions of gratitude are

highly valued in Uzbek communication as a way to show deference, humility, and appreciation towards others. Furthermore, indirect communication styles, implicit speech acts, and nonverbal cues are often used in Uzbek interactions to convey politeness and maintain harmonious relationships. When individuals from English and Uzbek communicative cultures engage in intercultural communication, the differences in politeness norms and strategies can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and potential conflicts. For instance, an English speaker's direct and straightforward communication style may be perceived as impolite or confrontational by an Uzbek interlocutor who values indirectness and restraint in\ speech. Similarly, an Uzbek speaker's use of honorifics and elaborate greetings might be seen as excessive or insincere by an English counterpart who values simplicity and efficiency in communication. Here are some examples to illustrate the statement:

Example 1: Greetings. In Uzbek culture, it's customary to use elaborate greetings when meeting someone, such as "Assalomu alaykum" (peace be upon you) followed by a series of questions about the person's health, family, and well-being. In contrast, an English speaker might find this excessive and prefer a simple "hello, how are you?" An Uzbek speaker might view the English greeting as abrupt or even rude, while the English speaker might see the Uzbek greeting as insincere or overly formal.

Example 2: Honorifics. In Uzbek culture, it's common to use honorific titles such as "hurmatli" (respected) or "oqsoqol" (esteemed) when addressing someone who is older or in a position of authority. An English speaker might find this excessive and prefer to use first names or simple titles like "Mr." or "Ms." An Uzbek speaker might view the English approach as disrespectful or informal, while the English speaker might see the Uzbek approach as overly formal or even insincere.

Example 3: Communication Style. In Uzbek culture, communication often involves elaborate expressions of politeness and respect, such as using phrases like "if you permit me" or "if you allow me" when making a request. An English speaker might find this excessive and prefer a more direct approach, such as simply stating the request. An Uzbek speaker might view the English approach as abrupt or rude, while the English speaker might see the Uzbek approach as inefficient or insincere. To navigate these differences effectively and foster successful intercultural communication, it is essential for individuals to develop cultural awareness, sensitivity, and adaptability in their communication practices. By recognizing and respecting the diverse politeness norms and conventions of each cultural context, individuals can bridge the gap between different communicative cultures and build mutual understanding and trust. Strategies such as active listening, open-mindedness, and willingness to learn about the cultural norms of the interlocutor can help mitigate misunderstandings and promote harmonious interactions in intercultural settings.

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Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the category of politeness plays a vital role in intercultural communication and reflects deep-rooted cultural values. English and Uzbek cultures differ significantly in their politeness strategies, linguistic realizations, and communicative priorities. Understanding these differences is essential for successful cross-cultural interaction. In conclusion, the category of politeness plays a pivotal role in shaping intercultural communication dynamics and relationships between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Through a comparative analysis of the English and Uzbek communicative cultures, we have explored the diverse ways in which politeness is manifested, expressed, and perceived in these societies. By unpacking the linguistic patterns, cultural practices, and social expectations related to politeness in each cultural context, we have highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity, awareness, and adaptability in navigating politeness in intercultural interactions. As we continue to engage in cross-cultural communication in our increasingly diverse world, understanding the nuances of politeness in different communicative cultures is essential for building bridges, fostering mutual respect, and creating meaningful connections across cultural boundaries. By embracing cultural diversity, valuing differences, and approaching intercultural communication with empathy and openness, we can cultivate a more inclusive, harmonious, and interconnected global community. The findings have practical implications for language teaching, intercultural training, and professional communication. Future research may focus on empirical studies involving native speakers or corpus-based analysis to further explore politeness strategies in intercultural contexts.

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