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**COMPARATIVE-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS
UNITS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH**

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Abstract: *This article presents a comparative-pragmatic analysis of politeness units in Uzbek and English. The aim of the research is to identify how politeness is expressed through address forms, request formulas, apologies, gratitude expressions, honorific vocabulary, hedges and indirect speech acts in the two languages. The study is based on descriptive, comparative, linguopragmatic and cultural-pragmatic methods. The analysis shows that Uzbek politeness is strongly connected with age, social hierarchy, kinship-based address, respect for elders and collective values, while English politeness is more frequently realized through indirectness, modal verbs, hedging, personal autonomy and the avoidance of imposition. Uzbek units such as siz, aka, opa, ustoz, domla, otaxon, onaxon, marhamat, rahmat, uzr and baraka toping demonstrate culturally embedded respect and solidarity. English units such as please, thank you, sorry, excuse me, would you, could you, Mr., Ms., sir and madam indicate politeness through social distance, formality and mitigation. The results prove that politeness units are not merely lexical elements; they function as communicative strategies that reflect national mentality, social norms and cultural values.*

Keywords: *politeness units, pragmatics, comparative pragmatics, Uzbek language, English language, address forms, speech etiquette, indirectness, cultural values, communication.*

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada o'zbek va ingliz tillarida xushmuomalalik birliklarining qiyosiy-pragmatik xususiyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi ikki tilda murojaat shakllari, iltimos, uzr, minnatdorchilik, hurmat bildiruvchi birliklar, yumshatuvchi vositalar va bilvosita nutq aktlari orqali xushmuomalalik qanday ifodalanishini aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqotda tavsifiy, qiyosiy, lingvopragmatik va madaniy-pragmatik metodlardan foydalanildi. Tahlil natijalari o'zbek tilida xushmuomalalik yosh, ijtimoiy mavqe, qarindoshlik asosidagi murojaat, kattaga hurmat va jamoaviy qadriyatlar bilan chambarchas bog'liqligini ko'rsatdi. Ingliz tilida esa xushmuomalalik ko'proq bilvositalik, modal fe'llar, hedj birliklar, shaxsiy hudud va suhbatdoshga bosim qilmaslik tamoyili orqali ifodalanadi. Natijada xushmuomalalik birliklari leksik vosita bo'lish bilan birga, milliy mentalitet va kommunikativ madaniyatni aks ettiruvchi pragmatik strategiya sifatida namoyon bo'ladi.

Kalit so'zlar: xushmuomalalik birliklari, pragmatika, qiyosiy pragmatika, o'zbek tili, ingliz tili, murojaat shakllari, nutq odobi, bilvositalik, madaniy qadriyatlar, kommunikatsiya.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются сравнительно-прагматические особенности единиц вежливости в узбекском и английском языках. Цель исследования состоит в выявлении способов выражения вежливости через формы обращения, просьбы, извинения, благодарности, почтительную лексику, смягчающие средства и косвенные речевые акты. В работе применяются описательный, сравнительный, лингвопрагматический и культурно-прагматический методы. Результаты показывают, что в узбекском языке вежливость тесно связана с возрастом, социальной иерархией, родственными обращениями, уважением к

старшим и коллективными ценностями. В английском языке вежливость чаще выражается через косвенность, модальные глаголы, хеджирование, личную автономию и стремление не навязывать собеседнику действие. Следовательно, единицы вежливости являются не только лексическими средствами, но и прагматическими стратегиями, отражающими национальный менталитет, социальные нормы и коммуникативную культуру.

Ключевые слова: *единицы вежливости, прагматика, сравнительная прагматика, узбекский язык, английский язык, формы обращения, речевой этикет, косвенность, культурные ценности, коммуникация.*

INTRODUCTION

Politeness is one of the central categories of human communication. It regulates interpersonal relations, reduces possible conflict, protects the dignity of the interlocutor and helps speakers achieve communicative goals without violating social norms. In every language, politeness is expressed through specific lexical, grammatical, pragmatic and cultural means. These means are especially important in cross-cultural communication because a polite expression in one language may not have the same pragmatic force in another language.

The Uzbek and English languages represent different cultural and communicative traditions. Uzbek speech etiquette is closely related to respect for elders, social hierarchy, family relations, collective values and traditional forms of address. English speech etiquette, especially in contemporary standard usage, is often associated with individual autonomy, indirectness, personal space, mitigation and avoidance of direct imposition. Therefore, a comparative-pragmatic analysis of

politeness units in Uzbek and English can reveal not only linguistic differences but also deeper cultural and communicative patterns.

In Uzbek, politeness is frequently encoded through address units such as *aka*, *opa*, *ustoz*, *domla*, *otaxon*, *onaxon*, *janob* and *xonim*, through the respectful pronoun *siz*, through polite request formulas such as *iltimos* and *marhamat*, and through culturally marked good wishes such as *baraka toping*, *sog' bo'ling* and *umringiz uzun bo'lsin*. These units often express respect, social closeness, age hierarchy and moral etiquette. In English, politeness is typically expressed by *please*, *thank you*, *sorry*, *excuse me*, *would you*, *could you*, *may I*, *sir*, *madam*, *Mr.*, *Ms.* and various hedging expressions such as *perhaps*, *maybe*, *I think* and *if you do not mind*. These forms often reduce directness and protect the interlocutor's negative face.

The relevance of this topic is determined by the increasing importance of intercultural communication, translation studies, language teaching and pragmatic competence. A person may know the vocabulary and grammar of a foreign language, but still fail in communication if he or she does not understand the rules of politeness. For example, a direct imperative may be acceptable in some Uzbek family contexts when used by elders, but the same level of directness can sound impolite in English formal communication. Similarly, English learners may use *please* in every request and still fail to express appropriate respect in Uzbek because Uzbek politeness often requires correct address forms and pronoun choice.

The aim of this article is to analyze the pragmatic and national-cultural features of politeness units in Uzbek and English. The objectives are: to classify major politeness units in both languages; to identify their communicative functions; to compare Uzbek and English

strategies of request, apology, gratitude and address; to reveal the cultural values reflected in these units; and to determine the significance of comparative-pragmatic analysis for language teaching and translation.

The scientific novelty of the article lies in the integrated comparison of lexical politeness formulas, address terms, pronoun choice, indirect speech acts and culturally specific good wishes in Uzbek and English. The research treats politeness units not as isolated words but as pragmatic instruments functioning within social relations, cultural expectations and communicative situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

The theoretical basis of the research is formed by speech act theory, politeness theory, pragmatics and linguocultural studies. J. L. Austin introduced the idea that language is not only a system of naming objects but also a form of action. His theory of performative utterances created a foundation for understanding requests, apologies, thanks and other politeness formulas as speech acts [1]. J. R. Searle further developed speech act theory by classifying utterances according to their illocutionary force [2]. From this perspective, politeness units may be interpreted as linguistic means that soften, strengthen or organize speech acts.

H. P. Grice's cooperative principle is also important for pragmatic analysis because politeness often works together with conversational implicature [3]. Speakers may not express their intention directly, but the listener understands it through shared norms. For example, the English question *Could you open the window?* is formally a question about ability, but pragmatically it is a polite request. In Uzbek,

Derazani ochib yuborsangiz, iltimos also expresses a request indirectly and politely.

P. Brown and S. Levinson's politeness theory is one of the most influential approaches to comparative pragmatics. According to their model, speakers use positive politeness to show closeness and solidarity, and negative politeness to avoid imposing on the interlocutor [4]. This distinction is useful for comparing Uzbek and English. Uzbek communication often combines positive politeness with hierarchical respect, while English formal communication frequently relies on negative politeness strategies such as indirectness and modal verbs.

G. Leech's politeness principle explains communication through maxims such as tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy [5]. These maxims help analyze why speakers choose polite expressions even when direct forms are grammatically possible. For instance, the English expression I was wondering if you could help me and the Uzbek expression Imkon bo'lsa, yordam berib yuborsangiz both reduce communicative pressure and show tact.

Cross-cultural pragmatics emphasizes that politeness is not universal in its form. A. Wierzbicka argues that speech patterns reflect cultural scripts, and therefore the same speech act may be realized differently in different languages [6]. This idea is especially relevant to Uzbek and English because Uzbek politeness is deeply connected with social roles and kinship terminology, while English politeness is strongly connected with personal autonomy and indirectness.

Uzbek linguistics has also paid attention to pragmatics, speech culture and the relationship between language and culture. Sh. Safarov's works on pragmalinguistics, M. Hakimov's research on Uzbek pragmatic studies, N. Mahmudov's studies of language and culture, and

Uzbek works on speech etiquette provide an important basis for analyzing national-cultural features of Uzbek politeness units [11; 12; 13; 14]. These studies show that language is inseparable from social experience, national consciousness and communicative tradition.

The present research uses descriptive, comparative, linguopragmatic and cultural-pragmatic methods. The descriptive method is used to identify and explain major politeness units in Uzbek and English. The comparative method is used to reveal similarities and differences between the two languages. The linguopragmatic method helps determine how politeness units function in speech acts. The cultural-pragmatic method allows the analysis of politeness units as expressions of national mentality, social norms and communicative values.

The material of the research consists of common Uzbek and English politeness units used in everyday speech, educational communication, formal interaction, family dialogue and public discourse. The analysis focuses on address forms, pronouns, request formulas, apology units, gratitude expressions, good wishes, hedges and indirect speech acts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that politeness in Uzbek and English is realized through both universal and culture-specific mechanisms. Universal mechanisms include apology, gratitude, mitigation, respectful address and indirect request. Culture-specific mechanisms include the Uzbek use of kinship terms for non-relatives, the strong pragmatic contrast between *siz* and *sen*, the high value of blessings and good wishes, and the English preference for modal verbs and indirectness in formal requests.

Address units form one of the most important groups of politeness markers. In Uzbek, address forms such as aka, opa, uka, singlim, amaki, xola, otaxon and onaxon are widely used not only for relatives but also for non-relatives. This shows that Uzbek communication often symbolically extends family relations to social relations. Calling an older man otaxon or an older woman onaxon is not merely a lexical choice; it is a pragmatic act of respect. Similarly, ustoz and domla indicate recognition of knowledge, authority and moral prestige.

Table 1. Major politeness units in Uzbek and English

Type	Uzbek examples	English examples	Main pragmatic function
Address forms	aka, opa, ustoz, domla, otaxon	Mr., Ms., Dr., sir, madam	Respect, status, distance
Requests	iltimos, mumkinmi, marhamat	please, could you, would you	Mitigation of imposition
Apologies	uzr, kechirasiz, afv etasiz	sorry, excuse me, pardon me	Repair of social harmony
Gratitude	rahmat, tashakkur, baraka toping	thank you, thanks, I appreciate it	Recognition of benefit
Hedges	menimcha, balki, shekilli	perhaps, maybe, I think	Softening of statement

In English, address forms such as Mr., Ms., Mrs., Dr., Professor, sir and madam are used to mark formality, professional status or social distance. Unlike Uzbek, English does not commonly use kinship terms such as brother, sister, uncle and aunt as general polite address forms for strangers in standard formal communication. In some contexts, brother and sister may express solidarity, but they do not have the same broad etiquette function as Uzbek aka and opa.

The second major difference concerns pronoun choice. Uzbek has the politeness opposition *siz/sen*. The pronoun *siz* marks respect, distance, formality or politeness, while *sen* expresses closeness, equality or informality. However, *sen* may also sound rude if used toward an older or socially higher person. English no longer has a productive T/V distinction in standard modern usage because *you* is used for both formal and informal situations. Therefore, English compensates for the absence of this pronoun distinction through titles, modal verbs, intonation, indirectness and lexical politeness formulas.

Requests provide especially clear examples of pragmatic difference. Uzbek polite requests often combine softening constructions with *iltimos*, *mumkinmi*, *marhamat*, *-sangiz* forms and respectful pronouns: *Iltimos, shu hujjatni ko'rib bersangiz*; *Mumkin bo'lsa, yordam berib yuboring*. English polite requests often use modal verbs and indirect question forms: *Could you please check this document? Would you mind helping me? I was wondering if you could send the file*. In both languages, the purpose is to reduce imposition, but the linguistic tools are different.

Gratitude expressions also show both similarity and difference. Uzbek *rahmat*, *katta rahmat*, *tashakkur*, *minnatdorman* and *baraka toping* express thankfulness and positive evaluation. *Baraka toping* is especially culturally marked because it includes a blessing component. English *thank you*, *thanks*, *thank you very much* and *I appreciate it* are widely used, but they usually do not contain the same blessing semantics. Therefore, in translation, *baraka toping* may require contextual rendering rather than literal translation.

Apology units in Uzbek include *uzr*, *kechirasiz*, *afv etasiz*, *ma'zur tutasiz* and *xafa bo'lmang*. These forms may express apology, attention-

getting, request mitigation or respect. English apology units include sorry, excuse me, pardon me, apologies and I am sorry to bother you. A major difference is that excuse me is frequently used before interrupting, asking a question or passing by someone, while Uzbek *kechirasiz* can perform similar functions but is often combined with other politeness markers.

Good wishes and blessing formulas are more culturally prominent in Uzbek than in English. Uzbek expressions such as *sog' bo'ling*, *omon bo'ling*, *baraka toping*, *umringiz uzun bo'lsin*, *ishlaringizga omad* and *xudo xohlasa* carry strong social and emotional meanings. They create warmth, solidarity and moral approval. English also has good wishes such as take care, have a nice day, good luck and bless you, but their communicative distribution is different and generally less connected with age hierarchy or traditional blessings.

Hedges and softeners are important in both languages. Uzbek hedging expressions include *menimcha*, *balki*, *shekilli*, *ehtimol*, *nazarimda*, *agar mumkin bo'lsa* and *to'g'risini aytsam*. English hedges include I think, maybe, perhaps, kind of, a little, it seems and if possible. Hedges help the speaker avoid categorical judgment and make the utterance more acceptable to the listener. In academic and formal English, hedging is especially important because it protects the writer from overstatement and shows respect for alternative views.

The comparative analysis also indicates that Uzbek politeness is often relational and status-sensitive. The speaker selects a politeness unit by considering the interlocutor's age, social position, family role and moral status. English politeness is often situation-sensitive and autonomy-oriented. The speaker selects a polite form by considering the level of imposition, formality and the listener's freedom to accept or

reject the request. These tendencies are not absolute, but they reveal the dominant pragmatic orientation of each language.

Table 2. Pragmatic orientation of Uzbek and English politeness

Criterion	Uzbek	English
Dominant cultural basis	Age, social hierarchy, kinship, collective respect	Autonomy, individual space, formality, indirectness
Pronoun politeness	Clear distinction siz/sen	One general pronoun you; politeness through modality
Request strategy	Respectful address + iltimos/mumkinmi/-sangiz	Modal verbs + indirect question forms
Respect markers	Kinship and status terms are very active	Titles and honorific forms are more limited
Blessing formulas	Highly productive and culturally marked	Limited and context-dependent

From the point of view of Brown and Levinson's theory, Uzbek politeness frequently uses positive politeness strategies because it emphasizes solidarity, warmth and shared social identity. Kinship-based address forms are a clear example: aka and opa create a respectful but close atmosphere even between unrelated speakers. At the same time, Uzbek also uses hierarchical politeness because correct address to elders and respected persons is socially required. Therefore, Uzbek politeness can be described as a combination of solidarity, hierarchy and moral etiquette.

English politeness, especially in institutional and formal contexts, often relies on negative politeness. Speakers prefer not to impose directly on the listener. Modal verbs, indirect questions and hedges are

therefore very common: Could you possibly...? Would it be possible...? I was wondering if... Such forms allow the listener to refuse without losing face. This does not mean that English lacks warmth or solidarity; rather, its standard polite forms often prioritize the listener's autonomy.

For Uzbek learners of English, one of the main difficulties is the transfer of directness. A request that sounds acceptable in Uzbek when softened by respectful address may sound too direct in English if it is translated word-for-word. For example, Send me the file, please may be grammatically correct, but in formal English Could you please send me the file? is more appropriate. Similarly, English learners of Uzbek may overuse iltimos but fail to choose the correct address form, which can make their Uzbek sound incomplete from the standpoint of etiquette.

Table 3. Examples of politeness strategies in communicative situations

Situation	Uzbek polite form	English polite form	Pragmatic meaning
Requesting help	Iltimos, yordam berib yuborsangiz	Could you please help me?	Reduced imposition
Addressing a teacher	Ustoz, savolim bor edi	Professor, I have a question	Respect for authority
Apologizing	Kechirasiz, bezovta qildim	Sorry to bother you	Repair and tact
Thanking	Katta rahmat, baraka toping	Thank you very much	Gratitude and appreciation
Soft disagreement	Menimcha, biroz boshqacharoq	I think it may be slightly different	Face-saving disagreement

The translation of politeness units requires pragmatic equivalence rather than literal equivalence. Uzbek ustoz cannot always be

translated simply as teacher because it may express deep respect and moral authority. Uzbek baraka toping cannot always be rendered as thank you because it includes blessing and positive wish. English would you mind cannot be translated literally into Uzbek in all contexts; it should often be rendered as iltimos, mumkin bo'lsa or -sangiz constructions depending on the situation.

The comparison also has practical value for foreign language teaching. Teaching vocabulary and grammar alone is not enough. Students should learn how requests, apologies, thanks and address forms function in real communication. They should understand when to use could you, would you mind, may I, excuse me and I appreciate it in English, and when to use siz, aka, opa, ustoz, kechirasiz, marhamat and baraka toping in Uzbek. This develops pragmatic competence, which is a key component of successful communication.

Another important issue is gender and age. In Uzbek, age often determines the level of politeness more strongly than in English. A young person is expected to use respectful address toward older speakers. In English, age matters, but the choice of politeness is more closely connected with institutional roles, degree of familiarity and social setting. Gendered address forms also differ: Uzbek opa, singlim, xola and onaxon carry age and respect meanings, while English Ms., Mrs. and madam are more formal and status-related.

The analysis confirms that politeness units are culturally loaded. They cannot be fully understood outside social norms. Uzbek politeness reflects community-centered values, respect for elders, family symbolism and moral evaluation. English politeness reflects personal autonomy, indirectness, contractual clarity and respect for individual choice. Both systems serve the same general communicative goal -

maintaining harmonious relations - but they do so through different linguistic and cultural mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

The comparative-pragmatic analysis of Uzbek and English politeness units shows that politeness is a complex linguistic and cultural phenomenon. In both languages, politeness units help speakers express respect, reduce conflict, soften requests, apologize, thank, greet and maintain social harmony. However, the forms and pragmatic principles of politeness differ significantly.

In Uzbek, politeness is strongly connected with age, kinship, social hierarchy and collective values. Address forms such as aka, opa, ustoz, domla, otaxon and onaxon, the respectful pronoun siz, and formulas such as marhamat, rahmat, kechirasiz and baraka toping express not only communicative intention but also national-cultural values. They reflect respect for elders, family-centered communication, moral etiquette and social solidarity.

In English, politeness is frequently expressed through indirectness, modal verbs, apology formulas, gratitude expressions, titles and hedges. Forms such as please, thank you, sorry, excuse me, could you, would you, may I, Mr., Ms., sir and madam help speakers protect the listener's autonomy and reduce imposition. Since English does not have an active siz/sen opposition, politeness is often encoded through syntax, modality and discourse strategies.

The study proves that politeness units are not merely lexical or grammatical elements. They are pragmatic strategies that reveal national mentality, social norms, cultural expectations and communicative values. The findings are useful for linguistics, translation studies, intercultural communication and foreign language

teaching. Further research may focus on politeness units in Uzbek-English translation, social media discourse, gendered communication or specific speech acts such as requests, compliments and refusals.

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