

MODESTY AND POLITENESS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LINGUACULTURE

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Abstract. This article provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of modesty and politeness in Uzbek and English linguacultures from a pragmalinguistic perspective. The study focuses on speech acts such as compliments, responses, and expressions of gratitude as key indicators of cultural values. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Brown and Levinson and Leech, the research explores how the Modesty Maxim and the Agreement Maxim function differently across cultures. The findings reveal that Uzbek communicative behavior is largely governed by modesty, indirectness, and collectivistic values, whereas English communication emphasizes agreement, clarity, and individualism. The study highlights the importance of cultural awareness in avoiding pragmatic failure in intercultural communication.

Keywords: modesty, politeness, pragmatics, linguaculture, speech act, intercultural communication.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada o'zbek va ingliz lingvomadaniyatlarida kamtarlik va xushmuomalalik tushunchalari pragmalingvistik nuqtai nazardan har tomonlama qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda madaniy qadriyatlarning asosiy ko'rsatkichlari sifatida komplimentlar (maqtovlar), ularga javob qaytarish va minnatdorchilik bildirish kabi nutq aktlariga e'tibor qaratilgan. Braun va Levinson hamda Lichning nazariy asoslariga tayangan holda, tadqiqotda "Kamtarlik maksimasi" (Modesty Maxim) va "Rozilik maksimasi" (Agreement Maxim)ning turli madaniyatlarda qanday farqlanishi o'rganiladi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, o'zbek kommunikativ xulq-atvori asosan kamtarlik, bilvositalik va kollektivistik qadriyatlarga asoslanadi; ingliz muloqotida esa rozilik, aniqlik va individualizm ustunlik qiladi. Tadqiqot madaniyatlararo muloqotda pragmatik muvaffaqiyatsizlikka (pragmatic failure) yo'l qo'ymaslik uchun madaniy xabardorlik muhimligini ta'kidlaydi.

Tayanch so'zlar: kamtarlik, xushmuomalalik, pragmatika, lingvomadaniyat, nutq akti, madaniyatlararo muloqot.

Аннотация. В данной статье представлен всесторонний сравнительный анализ категорий скромности и вежливости в узбекской и английской лингвокультурах с прагмалингвистической точки зрения. Исследование фокусируется на таких речевых актах, как комплименты, ответные реакции и выражения благодарности как на ключевых индикаторах культурных ценностей. Опираясь на теоретические основы Брауна, Левинсона и Лича, работа исследует различия в функционировании «Максимы скромности» (Modesty Maxim) и «Максимы согласия» (Agreement Maxim) в разных культурах. Результаты показывают, что узбекское коммуникативное поведение в значительной степени

регулируется скромностью, косвенностью и коллективистскими ценностями, в то время как английская коммуникация делает акцент на согласии, ясности и индивидуализме. Исследование подчеркивает важность культурной осведомленности для предотвращения прагматических неудач в межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: скромность, вежливость, прагматика, лингвокультура, речевой акт, межкультурная коммуникация.

Introduction

Language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a reflection of cultural norms, values, and social expectations. Every linguistic community develops its own communicative conventions, which are shaped by historical, cultural, and social factors. Among these conventions, modesty and politeness play a crucial role in regulating interpersonal interaction.

Politeness, as a central concept in pragmalinguistics, refers to the strategies that speakers use to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict. According to Brown and Levinson, communication is guided by the need to preserve “face,” which represents an individual’s public self-image. Speakers employ various linguistic strategies to protect both their own face and that of others. Modesty, as an integral component of politeness, reflects cultural expectations regarding self-presentation. In some cultures, modesty is highly valued and explicitly expressed in communication, while in others, openness and self-affirmation are more acceptable.

The aim of this study is to examine how modesty and politeness are realized in Uzbek and English linguacultures and to identify the key differences and similarities between them. The research also seeks to demonstrate how cultural values influence communicative behavior and may lead to misunderstandings in intercultural contexts.

Literature Review. The study of politeness has been a major focus in linguistic research for several decades. Brown and Levinson proposed a universal model of politeness based on the concept of face. They distinguished between positive politeness, which seeks to create solidarity, and negative politeness, which aims to avoid imposition.

Leech expanded this framework by introducing a set of politeness maxims, including the Modesty Maxim and the Agreement Maxim. The Modesty Maxim encourages speakers to minimize self-praise, while the Agreement Maxim promotes agreement between interlocutors.

Previous research suggests that these maxims are not equally prioritized across cultures. For example, Kramsch argues that language reflects cultural patterns, and differences in politeness strategies are rooted in broader cultural values. Similarly, Wierzbicka emphasizes that cultural norms are encoded in language and shape communicative behavior.

In Uzbek linguaculture, modesty is deeply embedded in social norms and is often expressed through indirectness and humility (Safarov, 2008). In contrast, English communication tends to favor directness and explicit expression of appreciation.

Methodology. This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on comparative pragmalinguistic analysis. The following methods were employed:

- Comparative analysis to identify similarities and differences between Uzbek and English communicative behavior
- Descriptive method to analyze linguistic forms and expressions

– Pragmatic analysis to interpret the communicative functions of speech acts.

The data were collected from authentic sources, including everyday conversations, literary texts, and academic literature. Particular attention was given to speech acts such as compliments, responses, and expressions of gratitude, as these are key indicators of politeness and modesty.

Discussion. In Uzbek linguaculture, modesty is considered a fundamental moral value and an essential component of proper behavior. It is closely linked to social expectations and cultural norms that emphasize humility, respect, and social harmony.

Speakers often avoid direct self-praise and tend to downplay their achievements. For instance, when receiving a compliment, an Uzbek speaker may respond with expressions such as:

"It's nothing special"

"I still have a lot to learn"

"Thanks to God"

These responses reflect the Modesty Maxim (Leech, 1983), which encourages speakers to minimize praise of themselves. Accepting a compliment without hesitation may be perceived as arrogance or lack of humility.

Furthermore, modesty in Uzbek communication is often expressed through indirect language and culturally specific formulas, including blessings and respectful expressions. This reflects the collectivistic nature of Uzbek society, where maintaining social harmony is more important than emphasizing individual achievements.

In English linguaculture, politeness is typically expressed through clarity, directness, and positive reinforcement. Speakers are encouraged to openly express appreciation and accept compliments graciously.

Common responses to compliments include:

"Thank you"

"That's very kind of you"

"I appreciate it"

These responses align with the Agreement Maxim (Leech, 1983), which promotes agreement and avoids disagreement in conversation. Rejecting a compliment may be interpreted as disagreement or even as impolite behavior.

English politeness strategies also emphasize efficiency and clarity. Unlike Uzbek communication, which often relies on indirectness, English communication tends to favor straightforward expression.

The differences in modesty and politeness strategies can be explained through cultural dimensions. English-speaking societies are generally characterized by individualism, where personal achievements, independence, and self-expression are highly valued.

In contrast, Uzbek society reflects collectivistic values, where individuals are closely connected to their family and community. As a result, communication emphasizes respect, humility, and social harmony.

These cultural orientations influence not only what is said but also how it is said. For example, while English speakers may openly highlight their achievements, Uzbek speakers are more likely to attribute success to external factors such as family support or divine will.

The divergence in politeness strategies may lead to pragmatic misunderstandings in intercultural communication. For instance, an English speaker may interpret Uzbek

modesty as lack of confidence or sincerity. Conversely, an Uzbek speaker may perceive English directness as arrogance or excessive self-promotion.

Such misunderstandings highlight the importance of intercultural competence. Being aware of cultural differences in communication can help individuals avoid pragmatic failure and improve mutual understanding.

For language learners, mastering grammatical structures is not sufficient; it is equally important to understand the cultural norms that govern communication.

Results. The analysis of linguistic data and communicative behavior reveals several key findings:

- Uzbek linguaculture prioritizes modesty and indirectness
- English linguaculture emphasizes agreement and directness
- Cultural values significantly influence politeness strategies
- Differences in communicative norms may lead to pragmatic misunderstandings.

In conclusion, modesty and politeness are universal concepts, but their expression varies significantly across cultures. Uzbek communication is characterized by humility, indirectness, and a strong emphasis on social harmony, while English communication values openness, agreement, and individual expression. Understanding these differences is essential for effective intercultural communication. The findings of this study contribute to the field of pragmalinguistics and provide practical insights for language learners, educators, and researchers.

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