

Politeness and Culture

Yuldasheva Feruza Erkinovna

An Assistant Teacher of English Linguistics Department, BSU

Abstract: *This article investigates the area of linguistic politeness and the translatability of politeness formulas in English. Expressions of linguistic politeness are attempted for translation into English and the concept of politeness as a reflection of both normative and linguistic behavior is defined and discussed.*

Keywords: *English, linguistic politeness, translatability, lingua- pragmatics, social values, language-specific, culture-specific.*

Every language and culture develops a linguistic system in order to enable speakers of that language to communicate effectively. Therefore, understanding people's cultural and linguistic behavior can facilitate communication and increase understanding across-cultures.

Before discussing the politeness phenomenon across cultures, it is important to discuss a definition about what culture means in our current research, although it is arduous to define it. The term *culture* is a very complex concept which made scholars view within various ways.

Culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but it is a fragile phenomenon. It is constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in our minds. Our written languages, governments, buildings, and other man-made things are merely the products of culture. They are not culture in themselves. Most obviously it is the body of cultural traditions that distinguish a specific society. When people speak of Italian, Arabic or Japanese culture, they are referring to the shared language, traditions, and beliefs that set each of these peoples apart from others. In most cases, those who share the same culture do so because they acquired it as they were raised in the same community and have the same social and cultural backgrounds [2,138].

Thus, different cultures around the world can have different notions of politeness, and how they expect polite people to behave. For instance, offering food to an Arab more than once is considered polite and generous in the Arab culture, while in the Western cultures this could be considered as impolite and rude.

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that politeness strategies function in one culture might be addressed more to support positive face than to avoidance of threatening negative face in another culture, and to assume that there is a cultural spectrum of politeness types ranging from negative politeness cultures to positive politeness cultures. Thus, there is no such thing as positive or negative cultures.

In the works conducted by Lakoff (1973, 1977), politeness appears to be a phenomenon by means of which cultures can be categorized, or vice versa, a phenomenon which can be categorized according to culture.

<https://academiascience.org/>

In the politeness literature, the term 'culture' ranges from national groupings through languages, gender-specific differences, social classes, subcultures determined by interests groups, ages groups, in groups, etc; and back to broad, sweeping notions such as 'Western European and North American culture', 'Asian culture', The number of ways in which the term 'culture' is used in literature mostly leads to the conclusion that it is a various notion which appears to help the discussion of politeness" (Watts, 2003:101).

Mills and Kadar (2011) argue that "the relationship between culture and politeness can in fact be studied but should be approached with some caution. We believe that it is possible to critically study politeness in [...cultural] settings, provided that one refrains from generalizing statements based on the languages practices of certain dominant groups or stereotypes of those groups.

In other words, the dominant politeness norms of these areas can be faithfully represented as long as it is not claimed that they are absolute norms, and as long as other "norms" are discussed in relation to them." (Cited in Chiappini & Kadar 2011)

In this same context Mills (2009; 1054) argues that it is important to be cautious when dealing with politeness norms within and across cultures, because when statements about linguistic cultural norms are made, they appear to be conservative, ideological and stereotypical. She cites (Hamza, 2007) to give an example of the critical judgment of Arabs speaking English in relation to impoliteness, which condemns Arabs to be too rude or too direct. She adds that this judgment is because of the difference in pragmatic emphasis between Arabic and English. She sees that these judgments are purely ideological and that they may have more to do with the current political climate. I agree with her when she says that negative feelings about certain nations are shown by negative judgment about their politeness and impoliteness norms. Therefore, these judgments are seen as an evaluation of the people and their cultural values rather than an evaluation of their language. [2, 139].

Mills (2009: 1048) discusses some of the theorizing which is made about "positive politeness" and "negative politeness" cultures, which is, the assertion that certain cultures tend towards being globally more likely to use camaraderie (positive politeness) rather than distancing strategies (negative politeness) . She argues that "it is very difficult to make these assertions about whole cultures tending towards either positive or negative politeness, particularly if we bear in mind that positive and negative politeness does not have the same function or meaning in different cultures."

Thus, Brown and Levinson's (1987: 245) assumption of negative-politeness cultures and positive-politeness cultures can no longer hold, because each group makes use of the two types of politeness but to a different extent. Therefore, culture is a decisive factor in determining what is polite and how politeness is pursued by the members of one speech community in actual verbal communication. (Shammas, 2005:6)

Uk-ky (2001: 1) says that the fundamental principle of politeness is to "preserve harmony by showing good intentions and consideration for the feelings of others." He then says that the interpretation of "real" politeness operating across cultures is extremely difficult. This is because the cultural presuppositions held by each interlocutor may be radically different. What is seen as "good/bad", "honest/dishonest", "polite/impolite" and many other moral axes may vary greatly from one culture to another. For instance, cultural signals of politeness by a man from one culture to a woman of another culture may be miss-decoded as intrusive, rude, hypocritical ... and so on. Eelen (2001: 164) considers that the notion of politeness differs from culture to culture and that cultural norms reflected in speech acts differ not only from one language to another, but also from one

<https://academiascience.org/>

regional and social variety to another. Probably this is why he chooses to base his critique on a sociological theory. He claims that his approach takes full account of the hearer's position and the evaluative moment; deals with both politeness and impoliteness; and provides a more dynamic, bi-directional view of the social- individual relationship. He also believes that the driving force behind the system of politeness is the socio-culturally shared norms [1, 59].

Eelen (ibid, 169) claims that politeness and impoliteness are captured by the same concept: the empowerment of the hearer and of individual in general in spite of the belief that only polite behavior can ever be culturally appropriate, while impoliteness is somehow non-cultural in nature. „The most important characteristics of the notion of 'culture' as employed in theories of politeness are its vagueness and its transformation from an observational into an explanatory notion".

The form of politeness might differ from one culture or subculture to the next and the ways they are understood are different and consequently, the conceptualization of linguistic politeness is rather vague especially when the technical term of politeness is used in the pragmatic and sociolinguistic study of socio-communicative verbal interaction. In all human cultures we will meet forms of social behavior that we can classify as culturally specific forms of consideration for other cooperative social interaction and displaying consideration for others are universal characteristics of every socio-cultural group, so we might say that the theoretical second- order terms "polite social behavior " or simply polite behavior, and "politeness" can serve to refer universally to such social behavior. (Watts, 2003:30).

Blum-Kulka (1992: 270) point out that cultural notion interferes in the features of politeness across societies."... Cultural notions interfere in determining the distinctive features of each of the four parameters and as a result significantly affect the social understanding of politeness across societies in the world [3,76].

She assumes that the social understanding of politeness is affected by four parameters: 1- social motivations, 2- expressive modes, 3- social differentials and 4- social meanings. Social motivation for politeness is the need to maintain face; the expressive modes refer to the wide range of linguistic expressions available in any language to realize politeness. Social differentials is a term referring to such factors as social distance, power and degree to which speech acts constitute an imposition on the addressee.

According to Blum Kulka, it appears that culture is a self- evident entity. But is it an objective entity that can be used to explain politeness, or anything else for that matter? The problem with the term is that it can be expanded and contracted at will.

As has been mentioned earlier, politeness is a culture specific convention; what is considered politeness in a culture may not be considered so in other cultures. Based on studies on linguistic politeness conveying a wide range of cultures, we could see that more detailed studies are needed in order to establish a theory of politeness which may have a stronger universal claim.

To conclude, we can say that in a sense, as suggested by Mills (2009: 1058) "cultural norms are mythical; the nation, whatever we take that to mean, cannot speak with one voice, according to one view of what is appropriate or inappropriate. At any one time, there will be a range of different norms or notions of appropriateness circulating within the Communities of Practice and within the culture as a whole." In the process of social interaction, people communicating inter-culturally produce polite,

<https://academiascience.org/>

impolite and neutral utterances. But when people of different cultures communicate with each other, they employ different codes of politeness which leads to cultural differences.

References:

1. Usmonova, Z. H. (2016). Ingliz va o'zbek tillarda so'z birikmalarining grammatik xususiyati va sintaktik (binar) tahlili. International scientific journal, (4 (2)), 58-60. [http://www.irbis-nbu.gov.ua/cgi-bin/irbis_nbu/cgiirbis_64.exe?C21COM=2&I21DBN=UJRN&P21DBN=UJRN&IMAGE_FILE_DOWNLOAD=1&Image_file_name=PDF/mnj_2016_4\(2\)__18.pdf](http://www.irbis-nbu.gov.ua/cgi-bin/irbis_nbu/cgiirbis_64.exe?C21COM=2&I21DBN=UJRN&P21DBN=UJRN&IMAGE_FILE_DOWNLOAD=1&Image_file_name=PDF/mnj_2016_4(2)__18.pdf)
2. Ruzieva, N. X., & Yuldasheva, F. E. (2017). The use of mingles in the communicative way of teaching. Міжнародний науковий журнал Інтернаука, (1 (1)),138-139. <https://repo.journalnx.com/index.php/nx/article/download/3292/3207/6426>
3. Ibragimovna, G. M. Features of Connotative Meaning of Somatizms as Part of Phraseological Units. International Journal on Integrated Education, 3(3), 73-78. <https://www.neliti.com/publications/333835/features-of-connotative-meaning-of-somatizms-as-part-of-phraseological-units>
4. Djumayeva, N. D. "SPECIFIC FEATURES OF MAGIC MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FOLKLORE." Теория и практика современной науки 4 (2018): 21-24. <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=35192565>
5. Izomovich, R. Z., & Shavkatovich, S. X. UDC: 82 REDUCTION AS THE WAY OF THE LANGUAGE ECONOMY MANIFESTATION. SCIENTIFIC REPORTS OF BUKHARA STATE UNIVERSITY, 68.
6. Zarifovna, Ruzieva Nafisa. "The viewpoint to the study of euphemisms in different languages and epochs." ACADEMIA: AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH JOURNAL 11.2 (2021): 1600-1605. <https://www.indianjournals.com/ijor.aspx?target=ijor:aca&volume=11&issue=2&article=261>
7. Z.Kh. Saidova "Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education system and the importance of online teaching", International journal of discourse on innovation, integration and education, Vol.1. №. 5 (2020): December. P.58-60. <https://summusjournals.com/index.php/ijdiie/article/view/359>.
8. Akhmedova, S. (2018). INTEGRATING SKILLS THROUGH TASK BASED TEACHING APPROACH. Теория и практика современной науки, (5), 989-991. <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=35545588>
9. Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1978), Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena", in 2.Goody, E. (ed.), *Questions and Politeness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp: 56--289.
10. Akramov, I. (2021). Linguistic Culture Expressing Happiness and Contentment in The English And Uzbek. ЦЕНТР НАУЧНЫХ ПУБЛИКАЦИЙ (buxdu.Uz), 1(1). извлечено от http://journal.buxdu.uz/index.php/journals_buxdu/article/view/2881
11. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987), *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Lakoff, R. (1973a), The Logic of Politeness; or Minding Your P's and Q's", Chicago Linguistics Society, 8: 292-305.

<https://academiascience.org/>

13. Mills, S. & Kadar, D.Z. (2011), *Politeness in East Asia*, Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press
14. Uk-ky, Kang. (2001), *When Is It Rude To Be Rude*, Available Online From: <http://thormay.net/koreadiary/politeness.html>
15. Eelen, G. (2001), *A Critique of Politeness Theories*, Manchester: St. JeromePublishing.
16. Blum-Kulka, S. (1992), *the Metapragmatics of Politeness in Israeli Society*“, in R, Watts, R.J. Ide and S. Ehlich (eds), *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. pp: 255-81.