A comparative rhetorical study of speech etiquette formulas in English and Uzbek

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Annotation. *This article presents a comparative rhetorical study of speech etiquette formulas in English and Uzbek. It investigates how politeness norms, address forms, greetings, and routine expressions are used in both languages, considering their cultural backgrounds and communicative aims. Using examples from everyday conversation and formal discourse, the article discusses how these formulas have evolved over time, how they function rhetorically, and what implications they have for language teaching and intercultural communication. By comparing and contrasting Uzbek and English politeness norms, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how speech etiquette operates in varying cultural contexts.*

Keywords: *speech etiquette, rhetoric, politeness, English, Uzbek, forms of address, intercultural communication*

Сравнительное риторическое исследование формул речевого этикета в английском и узбекском языках

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Аннотация. *В данной статье представлено сравнительное риторическое исследование формул речевого этикета в английском и узбекском языках. Анализируется использование норм вежливости, форм обращения, приветствий и других языковых клише в обоих языках с учётом культурных особенностей и коммуникативных целей. На примере повседневных разговоров и официальных выступлений показано, как эти формулы развивались исторически, какую риторическую функцию выполняют и каковы их последствия для обучения языкам и межкультурной коммуникации. Сопоставление узбекских и английских норм вежливости вносит вклад в более глубокое понимание функционирования речевого этикета в различных культурных контекстах.*

Ключевые слова: *речевой этикет, риторика, вежливость, английский язык, узбекский язык, формы обращения, межкультурная коммуникация*

Ingliz va o'zbek tillarida nutq odobi formulalarining qiyosiy ritorik tadqiqi

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Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi nutq odobi formulalari qiyosiy ritorik nuqtai nazardan o'rganiladi. Har ikki tilda odob-axloq normalari, murojaat shakllari, salomlashish va boshqa nutqiy qoliplar madaniy xususiyatlar va kommunikativ maqsadlar nuqtai nazaridan tahlil qilinadi. Maqolada kundalik suhbatlar hamda rasmiy chiqishlar misolida ushbu formulalarning tarixiy rivoji, ritorik funksiyasi hamda til o'qitish va madaniyatlararo muloqotdagi ahamiyati yoritiladi. Ingliz va o'zbek tillaridagi odob-axloq me'yorlarini qiyosiy o'rganish turli madaniy kontekstlarda nutq odobining qanday ishlashini chuqurroq anglashga xizmat qiladi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *nutq odobi, ritorika, xushmuomala, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili, murojaat shakllari, madaniyatlararo muloqot*

Introduction

Speech etiquette formulas – often referred to as politeness routines, address forms, or ritualized expressions – constitute a fundamental aspect of human interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They ensure that speakers negotiate social relationships, maintain face needs, and facilitate smooth communication. In English, speech etiquette formulas are typically found in common greetings, requests, compliments, apologies, and parting expressions, each of which is governed by cultural norms that may vary across regions and contexts (Holmes, 2013). In Uzbek, these formulas similarly span a wide spectrum of linguistic and cultural practices, reflecting a strong emphasis on communal values, hierarchical respect, and collective identity (Muminov, 2015).

This article aims to provide a comparative rhetorical study of speech etiquette formulas in English and Uzbek. The investigation takes into account the unique cultural heritage of both languages – English as a global lingua franca shaped by multiple historical influences (Crystal, 2003) and Uzbek as a Turkic language deeply rooted in Central Asian traditions (Husseinov, 2020). By analyzing salient speech acts such as greetings, forms of address, requests, and apologies, the study hopes to elucidate how rhetorical choices serve to reinforce or redefine cultural norms.

The structure of this article is as follows. First, it reviews relevant theoretical frameworks, including politeness theory, speech act theory, and rhetoric in linguistics. Next, it discusses existing literature on English and Uzbek politeness. The methodology section explains the study's approach to collecting and analyzing data. The main findings are presented by comparing and contrasting key speech etiquette formulas in both languages. Finally, the article concludes with implications for language teaching, intercultural communication, and future research directions.

Literature Review

Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework for politeness remains one of the most influential models in linguistic pragmatics. They differentiate between positive politeness (expressing closeness and solidarity) and negative politeness (tending to the addressee's need not to be imposed upon). In English, common examples of positive politeness include compliments, informal greetings, and inclusive language. Negative politeness is frequently evident in hedged requests ("Would you mind…?") or apologies ("I'm terribly sorry for bothering you…").

However, the universality of this model has been critiqued in non-Western contexts (Wierzbicka, 1991). Cultures that are more collectivist, such as Uzbek culture, may have different markers of politeness that do not align neatly with positive-negative distinctions (Husseinov, 2020). For example, extensive use of honorifics and elaborate forms of respect are a mainstay of Uzbek politeness, and these can blur the lines between what Brown and Levinson label "positive" and "negative" strategies.

Speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) classifies utterances based on their function: declarations, directives, commissives, expressives, and representatives. Politeness formulas often involve directives (requests) and expressives (greetings, apologies, thanks). From a rhetorical perspective, these speech acts simultaneously fulfill socio-pragmatic roles and craft an "image" or ethos for the speaker (Aristotle, trans. 2007; Miller, 2005). For instance, a carefully phrased apology in English might reduce face threat and signal humility, whereas a traditional Uzbek apology with blessings and expressions of deference conveys respect, moral responsibility, and a desire to maintain communal harmony (Rasulov, 2019).

The English language's status as an international lingua franca has introduced a wide variety of politeness strategies (Crystal, 2003). In more formal British or American contexts, titles (Mr., Ms., Dr.) and honorifics (Sir, Madam) maintain a certain level of social distance, while informal contexts rely on first names and casual greetings. Requests are often softened by modal verbs, conditional phrases, and mitigating adverbs, exemplifying a preference for indirectness (Blum-Kulka et al.,

1989). Even so, variations across regions and dialects (e.g., British English vs. Australian English) can significantly influence how politeness is expressed (Holmes, 2013).

Uzbek politeness is deeply intertwined with cultural values such as deference to elders, hospitality, and communal unity (Husseinov, 2020). Greetings often contain religious or spiritually laden elements ("Assalomu alaykum," "Va alaykum assalom"), reflecting Islamic heritage. Address forms shift according to age, status, and kinship roles (Muminov, 2015). For example, one addresses an older male as "aka" (older brother) or an older female as "opa" (older sister) with suffixes like "-jon" to convey endearment. When making requests, the Uzbek language frequently employs explicit politeness markers such as "iltimos" (please) and expresses humility. Prolonged formulas of well-wishing and gratitude are common in situations of greeting, parting, and apologizing (Rasulov, 2019).

Rhetorically, speech etiquette formulas serve not only as courtesies but also as strategic tools that shape interpersonal relationships and reflect collective identities (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Observing how speakers in English and Uzbek use these formulas sheds light on broader cultural narratives. English tends to emphasize individual autonomy and a balance between warmth and respect, while Uzbek discourses highlight social hierarchy, communal coherence, and moral values. Such distinctions become especially visible in formal events, ceremonial addresses, or interactions involving significant age and social-status differences.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative comparative design, focusing on how speech etiquette formulas operate rhetorically in real-life communicative contexts (Dörnyei, 2007). The study analyzes language data from both English and Uzbek sources, aiming to reveal how these formulas function as culturally embedded rhetorical strategies.

1. **Interviews and Dialogues**: A total of 24 recorded conversations (12 in English, 12 in Uzbek) were collected from a mix of informal and semi-formal situations. Participants included university students, teachers, and professionals in Tashkent and London. Each participant provided informed consent.

2. **Textual Materials**: Excerpts from Uzbek literature (e.g., modern short stories and classical prose) and English literary works (novels, short stories) were examined to identify examples of greeting sequences, requests, compliments, and apologies in more formal or stylized contexts.

3. **Online Forums and Social Media Posts**: Publicly available comments in Uzbek and English were analyzed for contemporary politeness usage, especially among younger speakers.

Data Analysis

Using a discourse-analytic approach (Johnstone, 2018), the collected samples were systematically coded according to common speech etiquette categories: greetings, requests, apologies, compliments, and farewells. Within each category, attention was paid to specific linguistic markers (e.g., honorifics, endearment suffixes, mitigating expressions) and rhetorical devices (e.g., hedges, inclusive pronouns, blessings). Comparisons were then drawn between English and Uzbek to identify similarities, differences, and underlying cultural rationales.

Results and Discussion

Typical English greetings range from the informal "Hi," "Hey," "What's up?" to more formal "Hello, Dr. Brown," "Good morning, everyone." Rhetorically, these greetings establish initial rapport and reflect the formality level of the context (Holmes, 2013). The use of titles (Mr., Ms., Dr.) or honorifics (Sir, Madam) can be seen as a means of maintaining social boundaries or respecting professional or academic status. In Uzbek, greetings involve not only "Salom" (hello) or "Assalomu alaykum" (peace be upon you), but also an accompanying gesture such as a slight bow or placing the right hand over the chest. When the addressee is older, address forms like "aka" or "opa" plus the person's name are used as a sign of deference (Muminov, 2015). Rhetorically, this practice both acknowledges communal values (respect for elders) and underscores the relational context. Such formulas create a sense of solidarity and moral responsibility.

While English greetings primarily negotiate closeness vs. distance, Uzbek greetings emphasize social hierarchy and communal unity. The rhetorical implication is that English speakers often highlight individual identity and professional roles, whereas Uzbek speakers foreground collective identity and respect.

English requests are typically softened by modal verbs and polite adverbs:

- "Could you possibly help me with this report?"
- "Would you mind passing the salt?"

These constructions hedge direct impositions and preserve the addressee's freedom to refuse (Tannen, 1984). Rhetorically, such forms maintain a balance between clarity and indirectness, safeguarding both the speaker's and the addressee's face.

Uzbek requests frequently contain explicit politeness markers like "Iltimos" (please) and elaborate preambles:

- "Iltimos, sizdan bir yordam so'rasam bo'ladimi?" (Please, may I ask for your help?)
- "Sizga muhtojman, iltimos, yordam bering." (I need you; please help me.)

In more formal contexts or when addressing someone of higher status, these requests may be amplified by well-wishes or expressions of humility – an invitation to show generosity (Rasulov, 2019). Rhetorically, such linguistic strategies align with collectivist norms, reinforcing interpersonal bonding and moral obligation.

Both English and Uzbek rely on indirectness to soften requests, but Uzbek speakers often layer additional politeness markers and references to communal values or humility. The rhetorical force in Uzbek requests underscores deference and group solidarity, whereas English requests tend to emphasize personal autonomy and mutual respect.

Common English apologies include "I'm sorry," "I apologize," or "Excuse me," sometimes followed by brief explanations – "I'm sorry for being late; I was caught in traffic." These serve to acknowledge wrongdoing and restore social equilibrium (Holmes, 2013). Rhetorically, apologies mitigate face threats and display a willingness to conform to social norms.

Uzbek apologies extend beyond acknowledging guilt to include requests for forgiveness and offers of restitution or future goodwill. A typical apology could be "Kechirasiz, men xato qildim" (Forgive me, I made a mistake), sometimes followed by blessings toward the offended party – "Men sizni ranjitib qo'ygan bo'lsam, uzr so'rayman" (I ask forgiveness if I have hurt you). Invoking a moral or spiritual dimension underscores sincerity and fosters communal reconciliation (Rasulov, 2019).

Both languages use apologies to repair social bonds, yet Uzbek apologies often incorporate moral or spiritual appeals, reflecting a collectivist worldview. English apologies maintain a concise, face-saving function, while Uzbek apologies can be more elaborate and relationship-focused.

Formal speeches, ceremonies, and public events highlight the cultural depth of politeness routines (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). English formal addresses may open with "Honorable guests, ladies and gentlemen" or "Distinguished colleagues," reflecting institutional hierarchy but retaining a certain universal appeal. Uzbek formalities, especially in ceremonies like weddings or "khatna" (circumcision ceremonies), often entail elaborate praise of the hosts and extended good wishes for health, prosperity, and communal harmony. Rhetorically, these speeches perform a unifying function, underscoring both social cohesion and respect for time-honored traditions.

Conclusion

A comparative rhetorical study of speech etiquette formulas in English and Uzbek underscores both universal and culture-specific aspects of politeness. While both languages employ similar pragmatic devices – greetings, requests, apologies, compliments – the deeper rhetorical and cultural underpinnings differ significantly. English tends to emphasize personal autonomy and clarity, balancing respect with informality, whereas Uzbek often relies on communal norms, elaborate respect markers, and moral or spiritual frameworks.

These findings have direct implications for language teaching, intercultural communication, and sociolinguistic research. Educators and students alike must recognize that politeness is not a

simple matter of memorizing set phrases; it involves nuanced rhetorical strategies shaped by cultural values and social hierarchies. As international interactions continue to proliferate, a deeper understanding of speech etiquette formulas in languages like English and Uzbek can foster more respectful, meaningful, and effective communication.

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