Politeness strategies in English and Uzbek newspapers

Salimova Mavluda Samadovna
Uzbekistan State University of World Languages
Department of Linguistics (English Language)
2nd year master's degree student

Annotation. *This research analyzes the application of politeness strategies in English and Uzbek newspapers with particular attention to language impact on interaction, trustworthiness, and attention. Guided by Brown and Levinson's (1987) theories on politeness and Leech's (1983) maxims, the study looks at how newspapers use positive and negative politeness as well as bald-on-record and off-record strategies to influence media discourse. This study analyzes political, economic, and social news articles and reports that, compared to English newspapers, Uzbek newspapers are more polite and formal. English newspapers strive for transparency, especially in political reporting where they are bald on record to verify immediacy and factual representation. On the other hand, off-record and negative politeness strategies are used in Uzbek newspapers to align with culturally collectivist norms while maintaining a diplomatic tone. Face threatening acts (FTAs) of politeness strategies, neutrality, and perception management have been retained. In addition, the shift from traditional print journalism to digital platforms has created new standards of audience engagement characterized by informality and directness in online spaces. This research adds to the body of cross-cultural pragmatics and media discourse analysis by illustrating how English and Uzbek journalism uses politeness strategies in relation to underlying cultural and political orientations.*

Keywords: politeness strategies, politeness maxims, face threatening acts, positive, negative, bald on- record, off-record strategies

Стратегии вежливости в английских и узбекских газетах

Салимова Мавлуда Самадовна
Узбекский государственный университет мировых языков
Специальность лингвистики (английский язык)
Магистрантка 2-го курса

Аннотация. *Это исследование анализирует применение стратегий вежливости в английских и узбекских газетах с особым вниманием к влиянию языка на взаимодействие, доверие и внимание. Руководствуясь теориями вежливости Брауна и Левинсона (1987) и максима Лича (1983), исследование рассматривает, как газеты используют стратегии позитивной и негативной вежливости, а также стратегии прямой (bald-on-record) и косвенной (off-record) коммуникации для влияния на медиадискурс.Исследование анализирует политические, экономические и социальные статьи и отчёты, выявляя, что по сравнению с английскими газетами узбекские издания более вежливы и формальны. Английские газеты стремятся к прозрачности, особенно в политической журналистике, где они используют стратегию прямой коммуникации (bald on record) для обеспечения оперативности и точности передачи информации.С другой стороны, в узбекских газетах используются косвенные (off-record) и негативные стратегии вежливости, что соответствует коллективистским культурным нормам и способствует поддержанию дипломатического тона. Акты, угрожающие лицу (Face Threatening Acts, FTA), нейтральность и управление восприятием сохраняются.Кроме того, переход от традиционной печатной журналистики к цифровым платформам создал новые стандарты вовлечения аудитории, характеризующиеся неформальностью и прямотой в онлайн-пространствах.Данное исследование вносит вклад в межкультурную прагматику и анализ медиадискурса,*

иллюстрируя, как английская и узбекская журналистика применяют стратегии вежливости в зависимости от культурных и политических ориентиров.

Ключевые слова: стратегии вежливости, акты, угрожающие лицу, позитивная, негативная, прямая (bald on record), косвенная (off-record) стратегии.

Ingliz va o'zbek gazetalarida xushmuomalalik strategiyalari

Salimova Mavluda Samadovna
O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti
Lingvistika (ingliz tili) mutaxassisligi
2-kurs magistranti

Annotatsiya, Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va o'zbek gazetalarida xushmuomalalik strategiyalarining qo'llanilishini tahlil qiladi hamda tilning o'zaro ta'sirga, ishonchlilikka va e'tiborga qanday ta'sir qilishiga alohida e'tibor qaratadi. Brown va Levinsonning (1987) xushmuomalalik nazariyalari hamda Leechning (1983) maksimalariga asoslanib, ushbu tadqiqot gazetalar ommaviy axborot diskursiga ta'sir o'tkazish uchun ijobiy va salbiy xushmuomalalik, shuningdek, to'g'ridan-to'g'ri (bald-on-record) va bilvosita (off-record) strategiyalarni qanday qo'llashini o'rganadi.Tahlil qilingan siyosiy, iqtisodiy va ijtimoiy maqolalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, ingliz gazetalariga nisbatan o'zbek gazetalarida xushmuomalalik va rasmiylik darajasi yuqoriroq. Ingliz gazetalarida ayniqsa siyosiy jurnalistikada shaffoflikka intilish sezilarli bo'lib, ular tezkorlik va haqiqatni aniq aks ettirish uchun to'g'ridan-to'g'ri strategiyadan (bald on record) foydalanadilar.Boshqa tomondan, o'zbek gazetalarida bilvosita (off-record) va salbiy xushmuomalalik strategiyalar qo'llaniladi, bu esa madaniy jihatdan kollektivistik me'yorlarga mos keladi va diplomatik ohangni saqlashga yordam beradi. Xushmuomalalik strategiyalaridagi yuzga tahdid soluvchi harakatlar (FTA), betaraflik va idrokni boshqarish usullari saqlab qolingan.Bundan tashqari, an'anaviy bosma jurnalistikadan raqamli platformalarga o'tish onlayn maydonda norasmiylik va bevositalik bilan tavsiflanadigan yangi auditoriya jalb qilish standartlarini yaratdi.Ushbu tadqiqot madaniyatlararo pragmatika va media diskurs tahliliga qo'shimcha hissa qo'shib, ingliz va o'zbek jurnalistikasi xushmuomalalik strategiyalaridan madaniy va siyosiy yo'nalishlariga mos ravishda qanday foydalanishini yoritib beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: xushmuomalalik strategiyalari, yuzga tahdid soluvchi harakatlar, ijobiy, salbiy, to'g'ridan-to'g'ri (bald on record), bilvosita (off-record) strategiyalar.

Introduction

Politeness is crucial for communication, both in interpersonal relations and in conveying messages. Politeness is the action of attempting to justify potential harm to the positive or negative face caused by a certain face threat framework. Meyerhoff (2006) states that the concept of "politeness" denotes the socio-cultural competence's decorum of a member of the speech community regarding his/her social or intra-group relations that may cause incivilities. Simply put, politeness is related to people's feelings so that people need to feel at ease, and it requires a decent selection of language that makes a positive association possible. Politeness represents a particular style in which individuals are interrelated for the purpose of communication while reducing the risk of clash and conflict that exists in all human relations.

In media discourse, politeness maintains a delicate balance among credibility, objectivity, and engagement of the audience. Journalists and media stakeholders must craft their messages in ways that do not alienate their audience while at the same time being professional and ethically responsible (Holmes, 2013). Media scholars argue that readers interpret journalistic work in a more polite way, especially in sensitive areas like politics, economics, and social issues (Ekström, 2020). By employing politeness strategies, journalists can provide criticism and address controversial issues in the public

sphere in ways that minimize offense and promote constructive discourse. Likewise, politeness in media discourse affects the credibility and persuasive power of the content. Researchers argue that news audiences are more likely to trust sources who portray them using polite language than those who use hostile and confronting ways to address them (Fairclough, 1995). As a result of the rise of digital and social media, there have been changes to the norms of politeness and media discourse. Print journalism typically adheres to a rigid code of conduct, but with the emergence of online news sources and social media platforms, audiences expect more direct and informal interactions (Herring, 2012). The role of politeness in media discourse is vital for engagement and building trust. While journalists have relied on disguising extreme politeness to address sensitive issues, digital media storytelling continues to evoke new behaviors that cause deep-rooted worries about the norms of public discourse. According to Lakoff (1990) "Politeness is a system of interpersonal relations that is geared to the avoidance of conflict".

Politeness may be considered as a sociocultural phenomenon related to the maintenance of good social relations, a social construct or a social 'noun'. Within the context of pragmatic linguistics, supporters such as Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) tried to provide definitions of theories of politeness along with specific rules. As Leech (1983:82) states, Politeness Principles are a multi-faceted series of maxims that explain how a conversational exchange is politely conducted. Leech (1983:84) describes this type of behavior termed as politeness when a participant in an interaction executes in such a way as to enable the other to interact in relative peace. Leech's maxims of politeness principles provided options of realizing politeness. Leech's proposed maxims of politeness determines how the speaker relates to his or her identity and the audience. Leech (1983) set out six maxims of politeness which gave indication of strategy of politeness in the use of language. These are tact, generosity, modesty, approbation, agreement and sympathy.

The notion of politeness in this study is constructed around the politness theory of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). It encompasses three core concepts which are face, face threatening (FTA) acts, and politeness strategies. The theory of politeness developed by Brown and Levinson (1978) has become a reference paradigm in the study of politeness strategy. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, 1978), certain acts of facial threats may potentially involve the face of the speaker or the audience, which may be threatening face, either positive or negative. An FTA or Face Threatening Act which entails paying one's respect with thanks, bereavement, promises, and physical actions like tripping, falling or speech acts that endanger other person's face, which can be positive or negative, and negative face. It covers other actions like critique, disagreement, unreasonable requests, bad news, and demanding. For instance, simple demands threaten the negative face of the subject because to comply with the request is to oppose the will or intention of the subject to be independent. In addition, FTA is an act which offends the face of the interlocutor. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested that for FTA, a person must do it effectively and explicitly or try to lessen the impact of the FTA on the positive and negative face of the listener.

Brown and Levinson developed the following politeness strategies:

a.According to Brown and Levinson, the bald-on-record strategy is the most direct communication meaning that it is clear, precise, and imposes minimal use (1978). Its application is context-bound as speakers have different rationales for executing face-threatening acts (FTAs) in the most effective manner possible. These rationales can be divided into two: one set in which face insults are ignored or treated with the utmost disregard, and one where the speaker tries to compromise the threat in a manner which is more indirect than the bald-on-record strategy. Brown and Levinson (1977) provide the example of direct imperatives, which are commonly used in communication characterized by the bald-on-record style. However, they add that imperatives are frequently and mostly preceded with hedges or default politeness expressions to offset the impact of the face-threatening act (1980).

b.The second politeness strategy, positive politeness, is commonly observed among close friends or individuals who share a familiar social background. This strategy seeks to reduce social

distance by emphasizing friendliness, solidarity, and a genuine interest in the listener's needs, thereby minimizing the face-threatening act (FTA). The primary goal of positive politeness is to create a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding, making interactions feel less imposing. However, Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that positive politeness is less polite than negative politeness because the face threat is not entirely mitigated. They note that politeness is effective when it at least partially addresses the recipient's desires or aligns with their interests. Furthermore, exaggerated expressions of agreement or enthusiasm may sometimes include an element of insincerity, though they ultimately serve to enhance the speaker's social image.

c.Negative politeness, as described by Brown and Levinson (1978), is a redressive action aimed at preserving the addressee's negative face-that is, their desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. Unlike positive politeness, which seeks to minimize distance through familiarity, negative politeness is characterized by deference, indirectness, and a respect for personal boundaries. Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 130) emphasize that negative politeness is crucial in formal or hierarchical interactions, as it helps maintain social distance and avoid direct imposition. This strategy is often employed when speakers wish to establish a respectful and cautious tone, particularly in professional or unfamiliar settings.

d.Brown and Levinson (1978) describe the off-record strategy as one in which the speaker leaves room for the listener to interpret the meaning of the utterance. This strategy is deliberately indirect and ambiguous, allowing the speaker to avoid clear responsibility for the communicative act. Off-record politeness enables the speaker to express intentions subtly, reducing the risk of direct confrontation or imposition. Brown and Levinson (1978) identify several sub-strategies within the off-record approach, including giving hints, making associative references, presupposing, understating, contradictions, irony, metaphors, and rhetorical questions. Additionally, the use of vague or ambiguous language—such as generalizations, indirect requests, or incomplete statements—further enables the speaker to distance themselves from the responsibility of making a direct claim or request.

Data Analysis

This article focuses on analyzing politeness strategies in English and Uzbek newspaper texts.

"Home Secretary Yvette Cooper says a raft of new laws will help 'take back our town centres' as she presents the long-awaited Crime and Policing Bill with measures on knife crime, stalking and thefts" (Mirror, 2025)

This extract employs a positive politeness approach as it underscores unity and shared objectives. The statement "*take back our town centres*" uses the first-person plural pronoun "*our*", which creates a sense of collective ownership and interest among the public. The community-friendly language suggests that the legislation is for the benefit of the people, which responds to their safety concerns. Instead of neutral or absent-minded expressions, the statement reframes the policy in a forceful and hopeful manner, which strengthens the common goals of the government and the citizens. This is common in the language of politics and government where officials encourage people to support new policies and programs.

"Deputat mahallada bo'lib aholi muammolarini o'rgandi" (O'zbekiston ovozi, 2025)

This extract employs a positive politeness strategy because it emphasizes citizens' engagement and expresses concern over the community. The phrase "*deputat mahallada bo'lib*" indicates the engagement of the deputy with the people, indicating that he is attending to the ground issues. The phrase "*aholi muammolarini o'rgandi*" helps to mold the image of the deputy as proactive and sensitive towards the citizens, which promotes cooperative and people-oriented image. This type of engaging and people-oriented language is often found in political and governmental news directed towards the public to change their perception towards government officials and make them closer to them.

"The Conservatives are facing headwinds from rising anti-Trump sentiment and anticipation surrounding the Liberal party's new leadership," Ipsos said in a release" (The Guardian, 2025)

This extract utilizes a negative politeness strategy because it attempts to mitigate face-threatening acts with caution and impersonality. *"Headwind"s* is a euphemism for the Conservatives being and actively losing support. Instead of openly admitting defeat, it proposes the problem with a softer hand. The attribution to "*Ipsos said in a release*" adds even greater distance. This is a research finding and not the journalist or newspaper opinion, which adds more detachment. Such strategies bias the outcome of political and economic reporting where sophisticated and neutral language is needed the most to avoid bias.

"*Mahalliy Kengashlar faoliyatini kuchaytirishga qaratilgan seminar tashkil etildi*" (Xalq so'zi, 2025)

This extract employs a negative politeness strategy because formal and impersonal speech is neutral and maintains respect. The phrase "*seminar tashkil etildi*'' avoids direct attribution to any group or authority which makes it passive and more neutral. The phrase "*Mahalliy Kengashlar faoliyatini kuchaytirishga qaratilgan*" suggests an improvement without attributing any neglect before which softens the tone. This kind of politeness strategies are common in government news and formal publications which makes them delicate, neutral, and professional.

Short selling of domestically focused UK companies has increased to levels last seen in the aftermath of Liz Truss's short-lived premiership" (The Times, 2025)

This extract utilizes an off-the record politeness strategy because it suggests a relationship between the rise in short selling and Liz Truss's economic policies without assigning blame. "*Levels last seen in the aftermath of Liz Truss's short-lived premiership*" seems to state that Truss's time in office was economically damaging, but does not directly say that. Rather than stating "*due to economic instability caused by Truss,*" the author chooses to let the reader deduce meaning, which is a more polite approach. Reporters will purposefully leave out certain details and allow the reader to make assumptions, and thus add context, to build the story.

"*O'zbekistonning kelajagini shakllantirishda har bir fuqaroning fikri muhim. «O'zbekiston – 2030» strategiyasi bo'yicha fikr-mulohazalaringizni bildirish uchun imkoniyat mavjud.*" (Kun.uz, 2023)

In this extract rather than asking for feedback explicitly, the statement suggests that respondents ought to provide their input.It does not clearly instruct the public on how to behave, yet hints that participation matters. There is no strong enforcement; instead, it can be interpreted in various ways.This way, the speaker does not force anything on the audience directly, yet prompts them to take part.

"*US national security director condemns UK request for Apple data 'backdoor'*" (The Guardian, 2025)

This extract uses a bald-on record politeness technique because it entirely removes mitigating phrases or hedging devices when the writer expresses condemnation. A softened message for '*condemns*' comes indirect phrased speech, but the blunt form of '*condemns*' does not allow for such a stance. There are no indirect phrases (even negative politeness comes with "expresses reservations regarding") that soften the remark. No effort is made when it comes to the need for building connection (positive politeness) or suggesting a meaning indirectly (off record politeness). Strong statements tend to render attention, especially in political reporting, therefore making such headlines commonplace in journalism.

"*Senat chiqindi qarzlari uchun elektr to'lovlarini cheklash to'g'risidagi qonunni ma'qulladi*" (Gazeta.uz, 2025)

This extract uses bald on-record strategy because it straightforwardly implies approval of the Law without any softening or mitigation. The verb '*ma'qulladi*' is so clear and specific that it does not permit any ambiguity concerning the action of the Senate. The phrase *'chiqindi qarzlari uchun elektr to'lovlarini cheklash'* does not try to hide the aim of the law in any way. This kind of blunt and matter-of-fact language is quite natural for legislation and government news as opposed to public relations where language manipulation is the rule rather than the exception.

Conclusion

The difference between English and Uzbek newspaper texts reveals the cultural and political aspects of the media discourse. English newspapers take special interest in the problem of clarity and therefore immediacy which makes the use of bald-on record strategies especially prevalent in writing about sensitive political issues. In contrast, Uzbek newspapers emphasize the use of indirect forms and softer modifiers which results in the impregnability of the diplomatic and political speech style. Such differences are crucial in dealing with media discourse analysis in different languages and cultures.

References:

1. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some universals in language usage. Cambridge University Press.

2. Ekström, M. (2020). Journalistic authority: Legitimating news in the digital era. Oxford University Press.

3. Fairclough, N. (1995). Media discourse. Edward Arnold.

4. Herring, S. C. (2012). Discourse in Web 2.0: Familiar, reconfigured, and emergent. In Tannen, D., Hamilton, H. E., & Schiffrin, D. (Eds.), The handbook of discourse analysis (pp. 612-634). Wiley-Blackwell.

5. Holmes, J. (2013). An introduction to sociolinguistics (4th ed.). Routledge.

6. Lakoff, R. (1990). Talking power: The politics of language in our lives. Basic Books.

7. Leech, G. (1983). Principles of pragmatics. Longman.

8. Meyerhoff, M. (2006). Introducing sociolinguistics. Routledge