

POLITENESS IS A FUNDAMENTAL FEATURE OF COMMUNICATION AMONG PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT CULTURE

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Abstract. *Politeness is a social phenomenon that can be investigated in each language within the world. Every language has its own way of expressing through the speakers relying on their tradition and consequently politeness principle suffers from shortcomings that decrease its performance in the analysis of the act of communication. It is hypothesized that politeness strategy used is positive politeness whilst the negative is not used right here within the coming data, and it could be considered as a type of etiquette which is not the same as one society to another. The current study examines the strategies of politeness in Kunduz's advice. There are two types of politeness strategies (positive and negative). Both types of politeness strategies contain preserving and readdressing the social distance among the speaker and the hearer. The goal of the study is to analyze the types of politeness strategies might be proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), the use of discourse analysis which is found out that politeness is used in lots of approaches to construct and maintain the friendly mood.*

Keywords: *politeness, impoliteness, values, Japanese lingua-culture, British lingua-culture, Persian lingua-culture, family discourse, communicative style.*

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Science and scientific activity" Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 29, 2020 No. PF-6097 tasks provided for by the resolution, including "Development of science until 2030, in order to ensure the implementation of the "Development Concept" this scientific and practical activity was carried out.

Strategies of Positive Politeness:

- Positive politeness strategies aim to establish and maintain a friendly and harmonious relationship between the speaker and the hearer. They involve showing appreciation, solidarity, and respect towards the hearer.
- Positive politeness strategies can include the use of compliments, expressions of gratitude, and expressions of solidarity with the hearer's interests and feelings.
- These strategies are used to enhance the social bond between the speaker and the hearer, by emphasizing shared values, interests, and positive attributes.

Politeness strategy is a strategy in the use of language related to the use of good and polite verbal communication, which can make communication work cooperatively. In terms of communicating, politeness strategies are very important to avoid conflicts in communication which means avoiding face-threatening acts of the hearer. Politeness strategies can vary depending on the context and culture. The abstract provided mention several types of politeness strategies. According to Brown and Levinson, there are four main types of politeness strategies: bald-on-record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off-record strategy [1] [2]. Positive politeness strategies aim to minimize threats to the listener's positive face

and make the listener feel good [3]. Negative politeness strategies are based on avoidance and assume that the speaker is imposing something on the listener [4]. Off-record strategies use indirect speech to avoid imposing on the listener [5]. It is important to note that different cultures and languages may have their own unique ways of expressing politeness. From many perspectives, politeness is a universal phenomenon, however, as numerous cross-cultural studies have shown understanding of politeness, as well as politeness norms differ across cultures (e.g.

Culpeper, Haugh & Kadar 2017, Leech 2005, Leech & Larina 2014, Larina 2008, Marquez 1999, among many others). The way people communicate is guided by cultural values which shape their communicative styles. The aim of the study is to explore how the Japanese, British and Persians understand politeness and how Japanese, British and Persian cultural values shape the style of interpersonal interactions in the family setting. We analyze the norms and politeness strategies focusing on a few speech acts which are regularly performed in everyday interactions, namely addressing, asking for request, thanking and complimenting. It was analyzed drawing on (Im)Politeness theory, speech act theory, cross-cultural pragmatic and discourse analysis, research on identity construction and the impact of politeness on communicative styles. Our findings confirm that in British culture, privacy, distance and equality are highly valued, while, in Persian culture, people value greatly closeness, age and status. The norms are negotiable and changeable across cultures and that linguistic politeness strategies are embedded in cultural context and ideologies of conduct.

INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a fundamental feature of communication among people, which nowadays attracts a great interest of scientists from various fields, such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, intercultural communication and others. Primarily, the main theories of politeness concentrated on illuminating politeness within a particular culture and then, on comparing politeness forms and practices cross-culturally.

Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory based on the notions of face, face-threatening acts and politeness strategies, has given an impetus to politeness research with the focus on the performance of speech acts through interactions. However, among the numerous criticisms of Brown and Levinson's view of politeness, there was a lack of social, cultural, historical, and contextual perspectives. Norms of politeness are characterized by regional, class and gender variations which are permanently reflected in interactions among people. These variations in politeness norms between different cultures lead to questions about intercultural politeness study field in contrast to the research of popular cross-cultural politeness. (Feng, 2017) Politeness is a culturally constructed concept. Watts (2003) claims that the lexemes *polite* and *politeness* and the terms matching them in other languages may vary in meaning and connotations associated with them (Watts 2003: 14). The conceptualization of politeness also differs across cultures. In Britain it is mostly associated with consideration of others, good manners and linguistic etiquette, based on keeping distance and respecting other's privacy, while in Greece and Russia with consideration of others through kindness, warmth and friendliness (see Sifianou 1992, Larina 2009, 2020).

The aim of this study is to explore how British and Persian understanding of politeness and polite behaviour differ and how British and Persian cultural values guide communicative behaviour and shape the style of interpersonal interactions. We limited ourselves to the study of the family discourse and explore the norms and politeness strategies in a few speech acts which

are regularly performed in everyday interactions, namely asking for request, thanking, and complimenting. First, we will discuss some theoretical issues concerning culture and communication. Further we will present some preliminary results of our research focused on the Japanese, British and Persian values, understanding of politeness and their impact on everyday interactions in the family context.

Japanese culture is a set of values that puts importance on social harmony and hard work. Up until the 10th century, Japanese culture was similar to the Chinese culture, but the rise of the samurai in the Heian Period and the isolation during the Edo Period changed the rules of society. Japanese is an agglutinative, mora-timed language with relatively simple phonotactics, a pure vowel system, phonemic vowel and consonant length, and a lexically significant pitch-accent.

CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The key concept in understanding behavioral differences resulting from differences of backgrounds is culture (Guirdham 1999: 48). This is a subject which has attracted a great amount of attention in both the communication as well as the management literature. There are many and distinct definitions of culture. Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts, the essential core of culture consists of traditional (that is historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values, culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioned elements of further action (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952: 181) (Guirdham 1999) According to anthropologists, the distinction should be made between.

Surface culture includes the elements which can be perceived by individuals who visit a foreign country by their sensory organs – for instance, different dressing style, dishes or music, gestures and artifacts as well as more exquisite elements such as norms and roles. The elements of this type of culture could be outlined as shared symbols. On the other hand, *Deep culture* is a hidden part of culture which is not accessible directly by the human sensory organs. It includes worldview, language, kinship systems, social organization, as well as other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices which, set a group apart as a distinctive group.

Cultural factors have considerable impact on communication. The English word “*communication*” is derived from the Latin word “*communicare*” with the meaning of imparting, partaking, sharing or making common.

Thus, it means “to share with or to make common, as in giving to another a part or share of your thoughts, hopes, and knowledge” (Jandt 2003:28). Communication and culture are inseparable. As it was stated by Smith (1966), culture is a code we learn and share, and learning and sharing require communication. Jandt (2003) points out the similar ideas, saying that communication can only be understood with an understanding of culture (Jandt 2003: 29). Communication is an element of culture, while culture is a context of communication.

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Japanese is an agglutinative, mora-timed language with relatively simple phonotactics, a pure vowel system, phonemic vowel and consonant length, and a lexically significant pitch-accent. Japan's culture of formal politeness, difference and respect is reflected in the long winded language of apology and the linguistic etiquette for social matters such as declining an invitation. Japanese

Linguistics covers all aspects of linguistics as they pertain to the Japanese language—from issues in phonetics, phonology, and syntax to sociolinguistics, the history of the Japanese language and its teaching as a foreign language. SOV stands for subject-object-verb, which is the sentence structure used in Japanese.

Degrees of politeness Hierarchy is one of the foundations of Japanese culture, and this also extends to language. It is important to be aware of your social status in relation to the person with whom you are speaking, so that you do not accidentally offend them with too common or familiar speech. The different degrees of politeness in Japanese require their own sentence structure. The polite forms – collectively referred to as keigo (敬語) – can be divided into three main categories. *Teineigo* (丁寧語) *Teineigo* is a common form of politeness that is suitable in most situations. The characteristics of *teineigo* are the verb suffixes *desu* (です) and *masu* (ます) and the prefixes *o* (お) and *go* (ご). For example, the basic form of the word water is *mizu* (水) and the *teineigo* form is *omizu* (お水). Some words are almost exclusively used in the *teineigo* form, regardless of the situation, such as *ocha* (お茶, tea) or *okane* (お金, money).

Sonkeigo (尊敬語) *Sonkeigo* is a form that designates respect. It is used when the speaker is addressing people who are in a higher social position than themselves, such as a boss, customers or older people. The speaker does not use it to refer to themselves or their immediate family.

Kenjougo (謙讓語) *Kenjougo* is a form that designates humility. The speaker uses it to refer to themselves and their immediate family in a humble way, especially when talking to people in high social positions. Under no circumstances should it be used to refer to other people.

Etiquette

- Tipping is not part of Japanese customs and can sometimes even be considered insulting. Local guides are the only persons to whom it is customary to leave a tip, but this is still entirely discretionary.
- Public baths, or *noses*, are popular in Japan. Always check the etiquette before you go, but a good general rule is that before taking a public bath, wash your whole body and hair and rinse well in one of the dedicated showers, it is very much frowned upon to enter with soap or suds on you.
- When you enter a temple, house or a *ryokan*, be sure to take off your shoes. It's very bad manners to keep them on. Almost all places will have slippers for you to wear indoors. However, remove all footwear before stepping on *tatami*.
- In Japan, the respect for the elderly is a sacrosanct rule, and this includes anybody that is older than yourself.
- If sitting on the ground, don't switch from side-to-side or leg-to-leg, and if sitting on a chair, do not turn your feet towards anyone. Posture is very important and seen as a sign of good education and manners.
- In temples and shrines, carefully follow the instructions of behavior and talk quietly.
- Only cross the street when the pedestrian light is green.
- If going to somebody's house, taking a small gift is very polite, such as wine, chocolates or flowers. However, don't give gifts in sets of four as the word for four is close to that of the word of death.
- Be on time for appointments and make sure you have business cards if it is a business meeting (business card is essential to any working relationship: it shows your rank and

position within the company you represent which is important to the Japanese; the behavior and language of the person you meeting with will adjust to this situation).

METHODOLOGY

The study pursues three main objectives: (a) to find out how Japanese, British and Persian understand politeness, (b) to make a comparative social and cultural analysis of Japanese, British and Persian values which shape the style of interpersonal communication (c) to investigate how these values manifest in interpersonal interactions in the family setting. The data for the analysis were obtained from two questionnaires. The goal of the first questionnaire was to specify and elaborate Japanese, British and Persian understanding of politeness and reveal the main cultural values on which politeness is based. In the first questionnaire, the Japanese, British and Persian objects were asked to give definition of politeness, describe a (im)polite person and bring an example of polite and impolite behavior.

The second questionnaire was aimed at discursive data collection. It was designed in the form of Discourse Completion Task. The Japanese, British and Persian objects were given a short description of some situations with the specification of the setting and family relationship between the persons and asked to complete the dialogues in a way they find most natural. The questionnaire was designed to elicit requesting, response to request, thanking, response to thanking, and complementing. As we have not finished the process of empirical data collection, in this paper we will present some preliminary results which we obtained drawing on Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987, Watts, 2003,

Leech 2014), cross-cultural pragmatics (Wierzbicka 2003/1991), and communicative styles theory (Larina 2009, 2015). We focus on the following research questions:

1. How do Japanese, British and Persian people understand politeness?
2. What cultural values are in the core of Japanese, British and Persian politeness?
3. How do Japanese, British and Persian communicative values and politeness strategies manifest in everyday interaction in the family setting and shape communicative styles?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding of Politeness

British Politeness and Values

The analysis of the responses obtained from the British objects show that most of them define politeness as: a) showing respect to people in manners and in words b) respecting privacy and keeping distance c) respecting independency and personal autonomy d) respecting equality of rights e) being reserved f) respecting other people`s feelings.

Based on the answers, the most emphasized phrases in the British objects` definitions of politeness are:

“having a respectful behaviour and manner toward people”, “respecting people”, “showing good behavior and manners to people”, “treating with respect to others”, “showing respect to people” and *“showing a high regard for people”*. Therefore, it could be concluded that British people stress obviously on *“showing respect to people”*, or, in other words, *“treating people with respect”* as the most common definition of politeness. Many of the respondents have indicated that to show politeness and to be polite one should say polite words often. In their opinion, saying *“please”* and *“thank you”* often in daily conversations shows respect to other people and facilitates social interactions. Among polite words, they also mentioned the apologizing phrase *“(I’m) sorry”* which is used in many occasions, e.g., *“when one interrupts someone”, “when one is late to an*

appointment” or even “when one has booked a seat on a train or flight and somebody has occupied their place mistakenly”. A careful study of the answers revealed that “(I’m) sorry” to the British is not per se a phrase for apologizing, but also it is a polite behavioral strategy for making respectful social interaction with other people.

A significant number of the British respondents have defined politeness as “*respecting people’s privacy and keeping distance*”, “*respecting people’s personal space*”, and “*respecting people’s privacy*”. They have stated that ignoring people’s privacy is an absolute impolite behavior and manner. British people like to determine and maintain some space as a personal zone around them. They believe that every person is supposed to have a non-observable bubble around him/her which should be respected by others. As our findings show another characteristic of British politeness refers to “*emotions in communication*”.

A number of the British objects have stated that politeness is “*being reserved*” and “*behaving conservatively*”. Thus, British respondents characterize politeness as “*being reserved*” and “*treating people conservatively in expressing opinions consisting of agreements and disagreements*”. They believe that hiding personal feelings as well as not displaying their emotional experiences in public is an important characteristic of polite behavior. According to the examples which have been provided by British participants, avoiding crying at funeral as well as guffawing when hearing something funny contribute to the above conclusions. Meanwhile, some of the British objects believe that politeness is “*being considerate of other people*” and “*being considerate of people’s feelings and concerns*”.

Thus, our results show that the British definitions of politeness are consistent with the English values, including “*equality*”, “*independency*”, and “*privacy*”. In interpersonal interactions, they also value “*social etiquette*” and “*manners*” as a manifestation of polite behavior in this culture. In other words, from their perspectives, sticking to social etiquettes constitutes the most principal part of British politeness.

Persian Politeness and Values

The analysis of the Persian objects’ responses shows that most of them define politeness as: a) respecting elder people b) respecting parents and grandparents c) honoring persons in a higher status such as teachers and seniors d) respecting social etiquettes e) maintaining solidarity and keeping contact f) being extraverted

Persian people consider “*respecting elder people*” as an absolute definition of politeness. Based on these responses, the most emphasized phrases in the Persian participants’ definitions are: “*respecting elder people*”, “*having good behavior and manners with elders*”, “*honoring elders*” and “*holding elders in a high esteem*”. With delving more into the presented definitions of politeness by the Persian objects, we can see that “*respecting elder people*” constitutes the most principal part of politeness in this culture. In fact, Persian people emphasize explicitly the importance of “*treating elder people with great respect*” as an absolute definition of politeness in this culture.

Our findings also show that a significant number of Persian objects have indicated “*respecting parents and grandparents*” as definition of politeness. Here are some examples: “*having a respectful behavior and manner with parents and grandparents*”, “*respecting parents and grandparents*” and “*holding parents and grandparents in a high regard*”. In other expressions, having respectful and honorable behaviors and manners with parents and grandparents have reserved a great part of politeness definitions in this culture.

Since a teacher in Persian culture, as well as in Muslim culture as a whole, is a highly respected person, it was not surprising to see frequently “*respecting teachers and seniors*” as a definition of politeness among the Persian responses. The most typical phrases in these definitions are: “*paying a considerable attention and respect to teachers and seniors*” “*treating with respect teachers and seniors*” and “*being kind and respecting to teachers and seniors*”.

As our findings indicate a considerable number of Persian objects have emphasized on “*respecting social etiquettes*” as a definition of politeness. One of the most vivid manifestations of respecting social etiquette among Persian people is enshrined in the specific politeness system which is known as “*Taarof*” in Iran. The participants believe that sticking to this strict Persian politeness system is one of the most important criteria in order to be recognized as a polite person. They explain that “*Taarof*” is a collection of compliments, courtesy, stating kind sentences and treating with great respect to people. In other expressions, “*Taarof*” is standing on ceremonies obsessively.

According to the Persian participants’ responses, there are some examples of Iranian “*Taarof*” politeness system. For instance, in an evening gathering, after serving tea and cakes, host(-ess) expresses freely his/her happiness and satisfaction about spending pleasant time with guest(s) and insists persistently on keeping them for dinner. Although host(-ess) had not planned beforehand to keep guest(s) for dinner. This type of manner which in this case has been formed in “*insisting greatly for keeping guest(s) in order to have dinner without previous plan and announcement*” is called “*Taarof*” in Persian culture. The examples above evidence another influential value in interpersonal communication in Persian culture which is “*maintaining solidarity and keeping contact*”. The relations are built on the principle of interdependency which manifests in helping and supporting each other. In this culture, it is totally polite, if you offer to keep somebody company or extending a helping hand towards others in order to do things together. In fact, this type of behavioral orientation in Persian politeness system is conceived as an obvious manifestation of respectful feelings, courtesy and goodwill towards other people. According to the examples mentioned by Persian objects, it is polite, if someone gives food and drink to a new neighbor who has just moved to the building and has not settled down yet. Some examples show that helping a blind person to pass the road, helping a woman to carry a shopping basket or heavy bag, helping someone to patch a flat tire, helping elders to get on or off the bus or train are instances which confirm the above characteristics of politeness in Persian culture.

It is also typical of the Persian people to share their problems with others being open and extraverted. As our respondents stated, they are used to holding weekly family gatherings in which their happy experiences as well as problems are discussed. Their happy experiences would give the feelings of satisfactions and pride to their family members while their problems and difficulties would make them aware that their help and advice is needed. Some of them pointed out that holding monthly gatherings of friends has also the same emotional importance for Persian people. This type of Persian behavior refers to one of the most important Persian religious instructions on consulting others especially elders, parents, grandparents or seniors in order to get their advice and find the most logical and practical solution for a problem. This popular type of behavior once again shows that elders – parents, grandparents as well as seniors – are highly appreciated and respected in this culture because of their worthy experiences which have been accumulated over the years. At the same time this is the best strategy for being polite and paying respect to people in this culture.

Summing up we may conclude that Persian politeness involves respecting elder people (parents and grandparents), honouring persons in a higher status (such as teachers and seniors), maintaining solidarity and keeping contact and being extraverted. Therefore, our results show that the Persian definitions of politeness are consistent with the Persian values of “*respect to age and status*”, “*solidarity and contact*” and “*interdependence*”. In interpersonal interactions, they also value “*social etiquette*” as a manifestation of polite behavior. Sticking to social etiquettes specifically Persian strict politeness system as “*Taarof*” constitutes the one of the most important part of politeness in this culture.

Family Discourse Analysis

In our analysis of family discourse, we have focused on a few speech acts, which were elicited by the designed situations. These speech acts were requesting, response to requesting, thanking, response to thanking, addressing and complementing.

However, in Persian families the form of request depends on the context. According to our findings, as well as our ethnographic observations, children addressing their parents perform request indirectly and in an extra polite manner through long indirect utterances:

Parents in the conversation with children prefer direct style. In most cases their request is formulated without “please” or “may”. It is often made in an imperative form:

Your room needs to be tidied up (Otaghet bayad moratab she)

Tidy your room up. (Otaghet ro tamiz kon)

اتاققت باید مرتب شه.

اتاققتو مرتب کن.

Responses to requests have also revealed some interesting differences. In British families, they are friendly and unofficial as in the situation below in the father’s response to the request of his son for some money for buying a birthday present:

Sure. How much do you need? I will give you money next week.

Responding to their parents’ request Persian children demonstrate less independence and more obedience to their parents in comparison with their British counterparts. Instead of negotiating their parents’ request, they demonstrate their permanent willingness to immediately react to it. As our results show, they often use the word “*chasm*” which is a polite affirmative word in the Persian language for showing respect to someone as soon as performing his/her request(s) without hesitation.

Another situation which also manifests some stylistic differences between British and Persian family discourses, is thanking. Here we can also observe some culture-specific differences. As our findings show, in British families, thanking from parents towards children and from children towards parents is performed more or less with the same frequency and in the same way.

That’s ok. Good

It is really kind of you.

Thank you very much. It shows your kindness.

خوبه. باشه.

واقعا محبت می کنيد.

اين مهربونی شما رو می رسونه. خیلی ممنونم.

To intensify their gratitude to parents for their kindness, Persian children use complimentary polite phrases such as “that is really kind of you”, “how could I appreciate you”, “it shows your favour” and “you are always kind to me” (in vaghean mehrabani shomaro neshoon

mide, chetor mitoonam mohabatetoono jobran konam, in lotf shomast, shoma hamishe be man mohabat darid).

این واقعا مهربونی شمارو نشون میده، چطور میتونم محبتتونو جبران کنم، این لطف شماست، شما همیشه به من محبت دارید. In this way Persian children emphasize their respect to parents.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we explored Japanese, British and Persian concepts of politeness. We aimed at highlighting how Japanese, British and Persian understand politeness, what cultural values shape this understanding and explore how communicative values and politeness strategies manifest in everyday interactions in the family setting. For that purpose, we designed two questionnaires (a sociocultural one and a discourse completion task) which provided us with empirical data.

Our findings obtained through contrastive analysis have shown that Japanese, British understanding of politeness include: (a) showing respect to people in manners and in words, (b) respecting privacy and keeping distance, (c) respecting independency and personal autonomy, (d) respecting equality of rights, (e) being reserved, (f) respecting other people`s feelings. These characteristics of politeness are consistent with the English values, including “equality”, “independence”, “privacy and distance”. Persian understanding of politeness consists of: (a) respecting elder people, (b) respecting parents and grandparents, (c) honouring persons in a higher status (such as teachers and seniors), (d) following social etiquettes, (e) maintaining solidarity and keeping contact, (f) being extraverted. These characteristics of politeness are consistent with the Persian values of “respect to age and status”, “solidarity and contact” and “interdependence”.

The discursive analysis of everyday interactions in the family setting has provided us with interesting results, which confirm that in communicative behaviour people are guided by their cultural values and notion of politeness. In Persian families` children apply more formal speech acts towards parents, their style is more indirect and elaborate. To show respect towards their parents and being polite, they use longer complimentary utterances and emphasize great respect and gratitude to parents. This type of behavioral tendency in Persian culture emerges from Persian religion and belief that parents are to be highly respected and appreciated.

Thus, our findings is another confirmation of Anna Wierzbicka`s statements: “(1) In different societies, and different communities, people speak differently. (2) These differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic. (3) These differences reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values. (4) Different ways of speaking, different communicative styles, can be explained and made sense of, in terms of independently established different cultural values and cultural priorities”. (Wierzbicka 2003: 69).

In this paper we presented our preliminary results. In order to have more detailed results, concerning preferable politeness strategies and features of communicative styles in Japanese, British and Persian lingua-cultures we are going to continue our qualitative as well as quantitative analysis.

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