

PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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MEANS OF EXPRESSION OF POLITENESS IN ENGLISH AND AZERBAIJANI

Abstract

Speech communication is considered one of the most important types of human activity, and politeness is one of the basic components of this communication. In fact, politeness is a mandatory element of this communication, ensuring its success and smooth, conflict-free flow. It is also the most important regulator of human behaviour to achieve effective social interaction.

This study is devoted to the study of lexical, grammatical and syntactic means of expressing the category of politeness in the English language. The relevance of this article lies in the fact that modern linguistics is characterised by a great interest in pragmatic studies of language and the category of politeness itself. Due to the expansion of the boundaries of international cooperation, with the increasing role of intercultural communication, there is a need to know and implement speech strategies that lead to a successful communication process.

The purpose of this article is to identify the linguocultural specificity of the functioning of linguistic means of expressing the category of politeness in the English language.

Key words: *politeness, speech communication, verbal behavior, intercultural communication, ethical category*

INTRODUCTION

Speech communication is one of the attractive areas of research. The fairly high degree of prevalence of the dialogic type of speech in the conditions of modern communication makes the study of speech units an urgent problem. Researchers have focused on phenomena that were previously on the periphery of linguistic science: the action of speech, the speaker's intention, speech influence, problems of interaction between communicants, features of the speech situation, causes of communicative failures, communication strategies and tactics of spoken language.

The field of linguistics has recently seen a growing interest in the study of the anthropocentric aspects in general – and the category of politeness in particular. Politeness is studied on the material of one language within a single linguocultural community and on the material of several languages in different linguocultural communities, which allows for cross-cultural comparisons in this area.

In fact, there are numerous theories related to the category of politeness. We will mention some of them further, but first, we will define what politeness is. We will also consider how it realises itself in verbal communication.

Let us therefore begin with the definitions of the concept of politeness in dictionaries. *The Dictionary of Ethics* defines politeness as: "...a moral quality that characterises a person for whom respect for people has become an everyday norm of behaviour and a habitual way of treating an interlocutor" (Gusseyanova and Kona, 1975). From this definition, it follows that politeness is a manifestation of respect. Politeness is a willingness to do a favour for someone who needs it, delicacy, and tact. And, of course, timely and appropriate speech display, so-called speech etiquette, is an integral element of politeness.

As N. I. Formanovskaya (1989) notes: "Politeness is an ethical category abstracted from specific people, which is reflected in language, which, of course, should be studied in linguistics".

In English dictionaries, we find many ways to express the concept of politeness: politeness, courtesy, civility, comity, urbanity, courtliness, decency, suavity, affability, and mannerliness (Robins, 1988).

Based on these definitions, we can conclude that politeness is compliance with the rules of decency in speech and actions; the manifestation of good manners, which is the basis of etiquette behaviour; and an integral feature of any communicative act.

DEVELOPMENT

Lexical means of expressing politeness in English

At the lexical level, preference is given to normative vocabulary. Universal means of politeness are not only clichéd, standard phrases but also such positively emotionally charged words as fine, nice, good, please, kind, happy, and very well. But positively coloured emotional words are not always used in stable expressions to express politeness.

Many scientists consider standard speech situations to identify this or that phenomenon. We know that situations can be formal and informal, but besides this, the speaker also plays a role in each situation. There are speech acts where both speakers are in equal social roles, we will call such situations equally social, and situations where speakers are in unequal social roles – unequally social. The relationship between the speakers can also differ as speakers may be in close, good relationships, unfamiliar or poorly acquainted. Depending on the level of relationships in the process of a speech act, the category of politeness will be implemented in one way or another.

Human verbal behaviour is characterised not only by occasional, but also by recurrent, repeating characters, which is reflected, in particular, in the presence of various kinds of standardised expressions, ready-made phrases, sentences of a formulaic nature and so on.

Modern English is replete with such formations of varying degrees of stability, specialising in the expression of various kinds of communicative meanings: greetings, apologies, thanks, congratulations, refusal, consent, requests, etc. In addition, they are also capable of performing a communicative organising and text-organising role, which also connects with the speaker, emanating from them in accordance with their particular intention.

Such units of heterogeneous component composition, structural organisation and degree of stability, the specificity of which is due to their specialisation in expressing the communicative intention and intonation of the speaker, various kinds of personal meanings associated with the speaker, i.e. basic, dominant and additional pragmatic meanings, can be called colloquial clichés.

Let us for example consider greetings. In all of the above social relationships, greetings take place. In equal social situations, the following are most often used:

Hello! – Salam

How are you? – Necəsiniz?

Nice to meet you. – Sizinlə tanış olmaq xoşdur.

In unequal social situations, the following are most often used:

I am pleased to meet you. – Sizinlə tanış olmaqdan məmnunam.

How do you do? – İşlər necədir?

Good morning (evening, afternoon). – Sabahınız xeyir (axşam, günorta).

Welcome! – Xoş gəlmisiniz!

From the above, we can conclude that greetings are mainly stable lexical units while more generally we can note that formal speech situations are, in general, determined by the observance of a large number of etiquette verbal and non-verbal norms. In English, there is no formal distinction between the formal and informal *you*, as in many other languages. The more formal pronoun *thou*, which in theory would correspond to the pronoun *you*, fell out of use in the 17th century, surviving only in poetry and the Bible. Instead, all registers of contacts, from emphatically official to rudely familiar, are conveyed by other means of language – intonation, choice of appropriate words and constructions. Therefore, we, again, see the same greeting expressions with the pronoun *you*: *Nice to meet you! How do you do!*

Grammatical means of expressing politeness in English

In the examples above, we also noticed grammatical manifestations of politeness. At the grammar level, complete sentences with correct grammatical forms are used. Politeness semes are realised through the grammatical form of the subjunctive mood, interrogative and negative constructions, as well as modal verbs. In English, these are most often the conditional mood and modal verbs.

The conditional mood is most often used specifically to implement a request. Requests, at the same time, turn out to be very polite and unobtrusive.

It would be great if you could help me! – Ümid edirəm ki, mənə kömək edə bilərsiniz!

I would be most grateful if you could do it for me! – Ümid edirəm ki, bunu mənim üçün edə bilərsiniz!

Of course, it should be noted that lexical units are closely related to grammatical ways of expressing politeness.

Modal verbs are most often used in requests. So, for example, for a polite informal request *can* and *will* are used, for a more formal and polite request – *could* and *would*:

Can you pass me the plate? – Mənə boşqabı verə bilərsiniz?

Will you open the door? – Qapını açarsınız?

Could you make me a coffee, please? – Zəhmət olmasa, mənə qəhvə hazırlaya bilərsiniz?

Would you wait a moment, please? – Zəhmət olmasa, bir az gözləyə bilərsinizmi?

Informal requests in English are also expressed using an additional infinitive phrase.

I want you to visit me – Məni ziyarət etməyinizi istəyirəm.

However, this statement will refer to a low level of politeness.

If permission is asked to do something, the verbs *can*, *could*, and *may* are used:

Can I speak to Mr Brown, please? – Mən cənab Braunla danışa bilərəmmi? (telefonda)

Could I take this book? – Bu kitabı götürə bilərəm?

May I come in? – Gəlmək olar?

Modal verbs *must*, *should*, *can*, *may/might* are used as a means of softening the categoricalness of a statement in its secondary function, primarily for polite address. There are certain semantic and pragmatic differences between them.

May I borrow your pen? – Certainly! (or Sure!) – Qələminizdən istifadə edə bilərəm? – Əlbəttə edə bilərsiniz.

The use of *may* in English is more formal and less common than *can* or *could*.

If an Englishman wants to ask permission and is afraid that he will disturb another person with his actions, then he uses the conditional mood *Do you mind if...?, I was wondering if...?* For example:

Do you mind if I smoke? – Siqaret çəksəm etiraz etməzsiniz?

I was wondering if you would help me? – Mənə kömək edə bilərsiniz?

Do you mind if I ask you a question? – Sizdən bir söz soruşsam olar?

However, there are also other grammatical means of expressing a polite request. The request in English is softened by the final format (*will you*, *would you*, *could you*, *right*, *all right*, *OK*), as if trying, in this way, to gain the addressee's consent to perform the action, to make sure that he does not object:

Pass me that canola would you, nurse? Thank you.

(*Əməliyyat zamanı həkim tibb bacısına*) - *Tibb bacısı, zəhmət olmasa mənə kanolanı (tibdə istifadə olunan yağ) verərdiniz? Təşəkkür edirəm.*

In statements of this type, the final format *will you / would you* has lost the meaning of a question and has become a marker of politeness, approaching in meaning the word *please*. This is evidenced by the fact that after such statements a response is often absent and not even expected (Larina, 2004).

When making an offer, the speaker does not always know how the interlocutor will react. As in all other cases we are considering the role of the speaker in order to choose the appropriate grammatical means of expressing a polite sentence. A proposal or a request can be expressed by the conditional mood in English, using the expressions mentioned above. For example:

It would be nice if you come with me! – Mənimlə gəlsəydiniz, yaxşı olardı!

And the more polite form *do you mind if..., would you mind if.....*:

Do you mind giving me a hand tomorrow? – Kinoya getməyimizə etiraz etməsiniz?

To suggest something, the modal verbs *can* and *would* can also be used in English. *Can* – less polite, *would* – more polite.

Can I help you? – Mən sizə kömək edə bilərəm?

Would you like a cup of tea? – Bir fincan çay istərdiniz?

In addition to lexical means, grammatical means are also used to formally express gratitude. These are mainly modal verbs.

I wish/would like to thank you! – Mən sizə təşəkkür etmək istəyirəm!

Note that from a syntactic point of view, these are mostly complete sentences, since in addition to lexical means of expressing politeness, they also use grammatical ones, which immediately leads to a complication of syntax.

Syntactic means of expressing politeness in English

Syntax is the main formative beginning of a speech work; the importance of syntax for any type of utterance is difficult to overestimate. The main syntactic unit is the sentence, while the main difference between polite and impolite speech is seen in the sentence structure, completeness, and length. It is necessary to begin with the fact that polite speech acts are characterised by complete sentences.

One of the main classifications of sentences in syntax is the classification according to the purpose of the statement, into declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative. It is also known to divide sentences into affirmative and negative. Each sentence can, however, be found in the meaning of any of the others, acquiring a special modal or emotional meaning, expressiveness or stylistic colouring. So, for example, sentences that are affirmative in form can be used as questions if the questioner wants to show that he already knows what the answer will be and he is not indifferent to it. They can also serve as incentives to action. This transformation of a sentence is called transposition. Rhetorical questions also play a huge role in

the syntactic features of the category of politeness and serve as an emphatic statement.

In the speech situations we are considering, we see the manifestation of politeness mainly in interrogative, exclamatory and incentive syntactic constructions.

Can I help you? – Mən sizə kömək edə bilərəm?

Thank you so much! – Təşəkkür edirəm.

Would you mind giving me a hand tomorrow? – Kinoya gedəcəksiniz?

Even stable lexical units of greeting in English contain interrogative constructions. For example, *How do you do?* is, in a meeting situation, not a question but a greeting, and the best answer would be a repetition of the same lexical unit.

In this interrogative speech act, transposition and a rhetorical question are evident. Transposition is the use of syntactic structures in unusual or denotative meanings and with additional connotations. A rhetorical question does not require an answer and is posed in order to encourage the listener to tell something unknown to the speaker. The function of a rhetorical question is to attract attention, strengthen the impression, increase the emotional tone, and create elation. The answer has already been suggested, and the rhetorical question only involves the reader in reasoning or experience, making him more active, and forcing the addressee to draw a conclusion. The rhetorical question is found in all styles of speech.

Further, greetings can be expressed with exclamatory constructions, such as:

Hello! – Salam!

Transposition of interrogative sentences is possible with the transition to imperative and exclamatory sentences, which are necessarily more expressive than forms without transposition. A simple imperative mood, even softened by the word *please*, sounds too rude to the English ear.

As mentioned above, a polite request requires an interrogative construction, for example: *Open the window, please* turns into *Will you open the window, please?* or *Would you mind opening the window?* or in an indirect question: *I wonder whether you might possibly open the window?*

A request, as a manifestation of an imperative, for greater politeness, carries within itself grammatical, syntactic, and lexical means of expressing politeness. The main syntactic indicator of a polite request will be a complete sentence. Dividing by the degree of formality, we can say that complete sentences are found in both formal and informal requests.

If we talk about attracting attention, we see affirmative and interrogative syntactic constructions, which are also subject to transposition. Getting attention always implies some kind of question or request, so we see an additional connotation.

I am sorry to trouble you, but could you move up a bit? – Narahatçılığa görə üzr istəyirəm, amma bir az kənara çəkilmə bilərsinizmi?

Excuse me, where can I get a blood test? – Bağışlayın, qan testini harada edə bilərəm?

A polite sentence can also be expressed using interrogative syntactic constructions.

Will you go to the cinema? – Kinoya gedəcəksiniz?

Would you mind if we go to the cinema? – Kinoya getməyimizə etiraz etməirsiniz?

We observe transposition in this situation, as interrogative syntactic constructions act as sentences, that is, they contain additional connotations.

Transposition from the point of view of politeness in the English language plays a big role because the contrast between form and content, and the appearance of additional connotations give the sentence greater politeness.

Thus, lexical, grammatical and syntactic means of expressing politeness to one degree or another exist inextricably, and the communicative units that perform the actual function are stable stereotypical complexes that ensure the success of the communication process.

CONCLUSION

In English, the category of politeness is represented by grammatical means in combination with lexical and syntactic ones.

The main grammatical means should be considered modal verbs and the conditional mood. Formal speech means of expressing politeness are characterized by the presence of complete sentences and transpositions, while informal ones are characterised by elliptical sentences. It is important to note that politeness plays the greatest role in situations of requests and proposals, which can be expressed by both imperative and declarative sentences using a complex of grammatical, syntactic, and lexical means of expressing politeness.

There are fewer linguistic means of expressing politeness used in informal situations than those used in neutral and formal situations. It can be assumed that this is due to the category of politeness considered in

the study, which presupposes a certain level of formality, for the expression of which stylistically higher vocabulary is used.

The use of modal verbs, to one degree or another, contributes to marking the principle of politeness and defining social roles. In addition, modal verbs, along with other means of expressing politeness, help enhance illocutionary power and achieve a positive communicative effect.

Considering all the features we have identified, we are convinced that the politeness category is universal. It is a universal category and characterises both the speaker and the nation as a whole.

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