

Pragmatic Strategies of Politeness in Uzbek Internet News Discourse

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Abstract: The article investigates pragmatic strategies of politeness in Uzbek internet news discourse, their linguistic expression, and their functions in journalistic communication. In the digital information environment, relations among journalists, information sources and readers are not limited to the transmission of information; they also encompass pragmatic processes such as evaluation, the expression of attitudes, the mitigation of criticism, and the management of communicative distance. From this perspective, the article examines how politeness strategies are manifested through forms of address, modal units, indirect expressions, mitigation devices, and ways of presenting quotations. The study envisages the use of pragmatic and discursive methods of analysis. Its primary focus is to interpret politeness not as a simple linguistic expression of norms of etiquette, but as a system of means that organises communicative relations in journalistic texts and regulates the force of a particular speech act. The article aims to contribute to the linguopragmatic study of Uzbek internet news discourse.

Keywords: Speech etiquette, politeness strategies, internet news, media linguistics, linguopragmatics, indirect expression, mitigation devices, journalistic discourse, addressee.

Introduction: With the development of digital communication, online media have become an important arena not only for the rapid dissemination of information, but also for establishing communication with the public, expressing attitudes towards events, and bringing socially significant issues into discussion. Under such conditions, the effectiveness of a journalistic text depends not only on the relevance of the news and the accuracy of the facts, but also on the linguistic form in which information is presented, the attitudes expressed towards participants, and the communicative distance established with the reader. Politeness is an important pragmatic component of this process. While in everyday communication it is associated with expressing respect, considering the interlocutor's interests, or preventing conflict, in journalistic discourse it may perform broader functions. These include mitigating criticism, cautiously presenting controversial information, communicating

the position of an information source to the reader, taking account of the social status of the person being addressed, and reducing the force of a particular speech act. However, it would be incorrect to equate politeness with every positive or courteous expression. The pragmatic value of a unit also depends on context, communicative purpose, the status of speech participants, and the generic characteristics of the text. For example, in some situations a direct expression of an idea may signify objectivity and clarity, whereas in others the same content may reduce communicative tension when expressed indirectly or in mitigated form. Therefore, politeness strategies should be analysed not as a list of isolated words but through the relationship between a speech act and its context.

P. Brown and S. Levinson's work *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* occupies an important place in the formation of politeness theory [1]. The authors explain politeness strategies in relation to

communication participants' needs associated with their social image, or "face", as well as within the framework of social distance, status, and the degree of imposition of a particular act. This approach provides a theoretical basis for analysing the possible effect of a speech act on the addressee. At the same time, it is insufficient to explain politeness only through universal strategies: its specific expression may differ according to national-cultural norms, genre, and the communicative situation.

O. Jegede examines pragmatic devices in digital news texts, including mitigation, emphasis, politeness, and the attribution of information to a source [2].

Studies devoted to Uzbek online media also investigate politeness, indirectness, and pragmatic mitigation devices from different perspectives. M. Salimova comparatively analysed politeness strategies in English and Uzbek newspapers [3], whereas D. Mirzahamdinova focuses on the role of indirect expression and politeness in mitigating attitudes in Uzbek political journalism [4]. In addition to demonstrating the relevance of the topic, these works highlight the need to analyse Uzbek internet news discourse in relation to its generic and communicative features.

The aim of the article is to identify the linguistic manifestations and pragmatic functions of politeness strategies in Uzbek internet news discourse and to explain how they operate within the journalistic text. To this end, the following tasks were established:

- to consider linguopragmatic interpretations of politeness strategies;
- to classify linguistic means that express politeness in internet news texts;
- to analyse the functions of indirect expression and mitigation devices in covering criticism, evaluation, and socially sensitive topics;
- to identify pragmatic differences between the speech of an information source and the journalist's authorial narration;
- to explain the role of politeness strategies in organising communicative relations with the addressee.

The main distinctive feature of the study is that it does not merely describe politeness as a general cultural

norm, but examines it through the pragmatic devices observed in real texts of Uzbek internet news and their contextual functions. Accordingly, the article separately takes account of the source to which each example belongs, whose speech it represents, and the communicative situation in which it is used.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs descriptive, pragmatic, contextual, and discursive methods of analysis to identify the features of using politeness strategies in Uzbek online-media discourse. In addition to determining the dictionary meaning of linguistic units, these methods make it possible to explain the purpose they serve in a particular communicative situation, how they organise relations with the addressee, and how they affect the overall tone of the text.

The theoretical basis of the study comprises the views set out in P. Brown and S. Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, G. Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics*, and R. Watts's *Politeness*. Whereas the Brown and Levinson approach helps analyse the effect of a speech act on the addressee's social image, Leech's views provide a basis for explaining pragmatic principles of politeness. Watts's work demonstrates the need to regard politeness not as a collection of ready-made linguistic forms, but as a phenomenon related to social relations and the communicative situation.

The research material consisted of relevant segments of texts published in Uzbek online media that express politeness or make it possible to reveal its pragmatic boundaries. The analysis considered genre, the author of the text, the source of a quotation, the communicative situation, and the function of the linguistic means used. The journalist's authorial narration, the quoted speech of an official, and the comment of an internet user were distinguished from one another.

The following criteria were considered during the analysis:

- criterion of linguistic expression: the presence of forms of address, etiquette units, modal means, indirect expressions, and evaluative units;
- criterion of communicative purpose: functions such as expressing respect, addressing someone, mitigating a demand, intensifying criticism, or expressing

opposition;

- contextual criterion: the genre in which a unit is used, its speaker, and the communicative situation in which it is used;

- discursive criterion: the contribution of the selected unit to the overall meaning of the text, the author's position, and the relationship with the addressee.

The examples in this article are examined through qualitative analysis. Therefore, their purpose is to demonstrate how politeness strategies are manifested in real journalistic texts.

RESULTS

One important manifestation of politeness strategies is the use of speech-etiquette forms when directly addressing an addressee. In such situations, address units serve not only to identify an interlocutor or draw their attention, but also to establish the status of communication, maintain a particular social distance, and shape the tone of the subsequent speech act.

The following form of address is used in an authorial article entitled "Go to Your Father, Go to Your Mother... or How the Supreme Court Continues to Harass a Citizen in Pursuit of Its Own Interests", published by Kun.uz on 25 June 2020:

"Respected Supreme Court officials, please do not bother to publish a rebuttal or response to this article of ours" [5].

In this example, the units "respected" and "please" create etiquette forms of direct address. Whereas the word "respected" is used as a form of address that acknowledges the addressee's social standing, "please" serves to express the subsequent speech act as a request rather than as a demand or instruction. However, evaluating these units only as expressions of courtesy does not fully reveal the overall pragmatic content of the text. In the continuation of the address, the author adopts a critical approach to the possible response of Supreme Court officials and emphasises that their explanation would not be sufficient to resolve the situation. Thus, units that outwardly express politeness are used in a critical and controversial communicative situation. This case reveals two important aspects of politeness. First, etiquette units establish the social form of addressing the addressee. Second, their pragmatic value is

determined by the tone of the entire text and the author's position. In some situations, a courteous form may mitigate the sharpness of criticism; in others, it may occur alongside a critical attitude and create an ironic or polemical effect. Therefore, the presence of units such as "respected" or "please" cannot automatically constitute a sufficient basis for classifying a text as polite. Their actual communicative function should be determined through contextual analysis.

When studying politeness strategies in internet news discourse, distinguishing the journalist's own narration from the speech of another person is an important methodological requirement. This is because not every etiquette unit occurring in a news text is necessarily a strategy selected by the journalist. It may belong to an interviewee, an official, or an internet user. For example, the following comment by a social-media user is cited in the Kun.uz report of 23 February 2018 entitled "Elon Musk Revealed the Global Internet 'Password'":

"Please change it to a longer password" [6].

In this sentence, the word "please" serves to express an act with imperative content in a courteous form. The principal meaning of the sentence is an urge to make the password longer. The unit "please" reduces the direct force of the demand and presents it as a request. However, this sentence is not the journalist's authorial speech, but a user comment reproduced in the report. It is therefore more appropriate to treat it not as an example of the journalist's politeness strategy, but as an example of the reflection of another communicative subject's politeness device within internet news content.

This distinction is particularly important in classifying pragmatic strategies in online media. A news text often combines several speech layers: the journalist's authorial narration, direct quotation, indirect speech, and reference to a source. The same linguistic unit may perform different pragmatic functions across these layers.

For example, the word "please" may create communicative closeness in the author's address to the reader, express a request in the speech of an official, or mitigate a demand in an internet user's comment. Thus, in determining the function of a unit, it is necessary to consider not only its form, but also the

speaker and communicative purpose.

An important feature of politeness strategies is manifested in their relationship with critical content. In mass media, a journalist may in some situations express a critical attitude towards a social institution, public official, or particular decision. In such texts, etiquette units, indirect expressions, and forms of address may be used in connection with how criticism is organised, how the addressee's social status is taken into account, and how the reader's attention is directed to the issue.

The address analysed above, "Respected Supreme Court officials, please...", is noteworthy in this respect. In it, customary markers of politeness are used together with a statement of critical content. The word "respected" retains the formal mode of address, while "please" expresses a particular communicative act in a courteous form. However, the sharp evaluation in the subsequent sentences limits the mitigating effect of these units.

On this basis, politeness cannot be equated with the presence or absence of criticism. A politeness strategy may organise the way in which a critical idea is conveyed without eliminating that idea altogether. Conversely, the use of etiquette forms may not be sufficient to soften the overall tone of a text. This situation demonstrates the need for contextual analysis of the relationship between linguistic form and pragmatic meaning in journalistic discourse. Politeness devices may be observed in individual parts of a text, but their communicative effect should be assessed within the framework of the genre of the whole text, the author's position, and the relationship with the addressee.

On the basis of the analysed materials, politeness strategies in Uzbek internet news discourse can be studied through three interrelated layers.

The first layer is the linguistic layer. At this stage, units such as "respected" and "please", forms of address, modal means, and indirect expressions are identified. This layer shows the form in which politeness is manifested in the text.

The second layer is the pragmatic layer. Here, the communicative purpose of the linguistic unit is determined: does it express an address in a courteous form, mitigate a demand, maintain social distance, or

occur alongside a critical attitude? This requires consideration of the difference between a unit's dictionary meaning and its function in context.

The third layer is the discursive layer. At this stage, the relationship of a unit with the author's position, the genre of the text, the source of the quotation, and the overall communicative orientation is analysed. In particular, it seeks answers to questions such as whether an etiquette unit belongs to the journalist's own speech or is taken from the quotation of another person, and whether the text is intended to provide objective information or also to express an authorial attitude.

The proposed model shows the limitations of classifying politeness only on the basis of an isolated word or grammatical form. The pragmatic function of a linguistic unit depends on who uses it, for what purpose, and in what discursive situation. Therefore, three-layered analysis makes it possible to consider jointly the form, function, and place of politeness strategies within the text.

DISCUSSION

The examples considered in this study demonstrate that politeness in internet news discourse cannot be interpreted as a fixed set of linguistic forms performing a single function. Units such as "respected" and "please" may provide a formal form of address in one situation and serve to mitigate a demand or express a critical idea together with an etiquette form in another. Thus, the pragmatic value of politeness is not limited to its linguistic form.

Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's theory of politeness provides important theoretical tools for analysing the social image of communication participants and the possible threat posed by speech acts. However, when studying materials from Uzbek online media, this approach should be applied together with the generic and discursive characteristics of the text. An online publication does not consist merely of direct communication between two persons: the journalist, the information source, the quoted person, and the public readership converge within one communicative space.

Geoffrey Leech's pragmatic principles are also useful for explaining the relationship between linguistic form and communicative purpose. Nevertheless, the

presence of etiquette units cannot be equated with the successful use of a particular politeness strategy. This would require additional information about the addressee's response, the subsequent development of communication, or readers' reception of the text. This aspect also defines a methodological boundary of the study.

M. Salimova's study of politeness strategies in English and Uzbek newspapers shows that the topic is also relevant to comparative media linguistics [7]. M. Abdullazoda's article on sociolinguistic features of politeness in Uzbek social networks highlights the need to study etiquette forms, address units, and indirect expressions in the digital environment [8]. However, the free communication of social-media users and the discursive norms of professional internet journalism are not the same. Therefore, this article focuses primarily on the structure of the news text and the pragmatic differences between authorial narration and quotations.

The distinctive approach of the study consists in analysing politeness jointly through linguistic, pragmatic, and discursive dimensions. Such analysis does not stop at noting the presence of etiquette forms in a journalistic text, but helps identify their relationship with communicative purpose and the overall tone of the text.

At the same time, the examples analysed and the generic coverage are insufficient for broad generalisation. In future, comparison of politeness devices across genres and separate study of readers' reception through additional methods could deepen the findings, by encompassing news reports, interviews, analytical articles, and authorial materials from different online publications.

CONCLUSION

The study of politeness strategies in Uzbek internet news discourse requires consideration not only of the form of linguistic units, but also of their communicative purpose, the situation of use, and their relationship with the overall content of the text. The examples within the study show that the pragmatic function of etiquette units may change according to context.

First, units such as "respected" and "please" may establish a courteous form of address, take account of the addressee's social status, or express a demand in

the form of a request. However, their presence is not sufficient to evaluate a text automatically as polite. The function of a unit should be analysed together with the tone and communicative purpose of the entire text.

Second, it is methodologically important to distinguish between the author's speech and the speech of a quoted person in internet news. A politeness device within a quotation may express not the journalist's own strategy but the speech choice of another communicative subject. Failure to take this distinction into account increases the likelihood of errors in the pragmatic interpretation of linguistic material.

Third, politeness and criticism may occur together in one text. Courteous forms may mitigate the sharpness of criticism in some situations, but their pragmatic effect is determined by evaluative units in other parts of the text and by the author's position.

Fourth, the joint study of politeness strategies across linguistic, pragmatic, and discursive layers makes it possible to analyse systematically their form, communicative function, and place in journalistic texts. This approach may serve as a promising methodological direction for studying Uzbek internet news discourse from media-linguistic and pragmalinguistic perspectives.

Overall, politeness in internet journalism is not merely a phenomenon associated with observing etiquette norms. It is closely connected with organising forms of address, expressing demands and criticism, marking speech distance, and representing various communicative positions in a text. A broader empirical corpus and additional research into readers' reception are necessary for a deeper investigation of these features.

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