

# INTERCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN UZBEK AND SPANISH LANGUAGES

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## Abstract

The objective of this study is to fill part of the lagoon above mentioned by contrastive analysis of a series of prototypical differences between the verbal politeness in Spanish and in Uzbek. According to research topic we will use two frames of reference, one pragmatic, other linguistic. The pragmatic framework is determined by the two categories fundamentals of the theory of verbal politeness of Brown and Levinson (1987), to know, positive courtesy and negative courtesy. Within the frame itself linguistic, the representative courtesy strategies of the two cultures will be studied compared on the basis of the distinction between assertive, exhortative speech acts and expressive.

**Keywords:** Verbal politeness, intercultural communication, speech act, positive politeness, negative politeness, utterance, verbal interaction, pragmatics, proposition.

## INTRODUCTION

It should be noted that contrastive grammar deals with the systematic comparison of the linguistic categories of two or more different languages. The main part of this research is usually the construction of teaching foreign languages methods and it is for this reason that the analysis in the grammatical categories that represent idiosyncratic parameters, that is, categories that function differently in investigated languages. Needless to say, this is particularly true for those categories that appear in one of the compared languages and missing in the other or the others. What is lacking, however, in most contrastive studies is the consistent approach to pragmalinguistic phenomena, which, from the point of view of view of intercultural communication, it is an unacceptable omission, since pragmalinguistic errors can seriously impair social contact between sender and receiver.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Since it was introduced into the pragmalinguistic literature (Brown and Levinson, 1978), the concept of image has played a major role in the analysis of verbal courtesy. This concept can be described in terms of two factors complementary, indicated by the terms positive and negative. The first designates the positive image that the individual has of himself and that he aspires to be recognized and reinforced by the other members of the society of which it is a part. The second refers to the desire of each individual that their actions not be seen prevented by others. Brown and Levinson (1987: 13) define the concept of image. On purpose of this, it is useful to refer to a study by Sifianou (1992) dedicated to the comparative analysis of the expression of verbal politeness in the English and Greek cultures. In this study, the author concludes that English culture is oriented predominantly towards distancing and the Greek towards solidarity.

## DISCUSSION

Starting from the universal validity of the concept of image we can sustain that social interaction in general and verbal interaction in particular imposes on interlocutors the rule that they mutually respect their positive and negative images by developing the appropriate courtesy strategies. As far as terminology is concerned, it would be convenient to replace positive courtesy with solidarity courtesy and negative courtesy with distancing courtesy, as these terms are clearer and more representative of the concepts they purport to denote.

The opposition of the two categories of courtesy generates the hypothesis that when fewer parts of the world's cultures can be divided into two classes on the basis of criterion that the representatives of some cultures show a preference for the expression of courtesy of solidarity, while the representatives of others give specific value to the expression of courtesy of distancing. Based on the results of his research, Sifianou also formulates a generalization in the sense that he assumes that in Mediterranean cultures positive courtesy predominates.

As we will have the opportunity to see in the following sections, the differences intercultural studies pointed out by Sifianou between English and Greek are manifested, *mutatis mutandis*, similarly in the comparison of Spanish cultures and Uzbek. This is not enough to verify the hypothesis that Spanish and Uzbek are representative languages of cultures focused on solidarity and interactional distancing, respectively. In order to classify expressions of verbal politeness, each kind of speech act is characterized by a series of specific strategies. As indicated above, in the context of this research we will focus our attention on assertive, exhortative, and expressive speech acts.

The illocutionary object of the assertive speech act must be defined by the intention of the speaker to convince the listener that he, that is, the speaker, sincerely believes that the stated proposition corresponds to a real state of affairs. It is not necessary, as is often assumed, that the speaker tries to convince the listener of the truth of the proposition. If that is what you are trying to achieve, perform a certain kind of assertive act, that is, an argumentative act.

Now, what are the main expressions of assertive courtesy the speaker uses? In what follows we will limit ourselves to the analysis of three prototypical strategies, namely assertive force mitigation, repetition lexical and irony. Each of these pragmatic devices can be said that serves to protect or reinforce the positive image of the speaker. From the contrastive point of view, it is only assertive force mitigation that seems to be handled with more or less the same frequency by Spanish and Uzbek speakers. Lexical repetition and irony, on the other hand, are strategies characteristics of Spanish and Uzbek verbal interaction, respectively. At the linguistic level, the three strategies differ as follows:

The mitigation of assertive force has repercussions on the syntactic subordination of the proposition expressed;

Lexical repetition is manifested by the entire or partial copy of the proposition expressed by the interlocutor in the preceding turn of the conversation;

The irony – produced by manipulating the value truth of the expressed proposition.

Assertive force mitigation is done particularly through the use of doxastic predicates. This class of predicates constitutes a subclass of the class of cognitive predicates, which also encompasses the predicates epistemic and doubtful. Lexical differences between the three subclasses can be defined as follows: epistemic predicates express that the subject is aware that what is described by the subordinate proposition corresponds to factual reality. The marker of this class is knowing. Doxastics predicates express that the subject has good reasons to consider that what is described by the subordinate proposition corresponds to factual reality. The marker of this class is to believe. The doubtful predicates, finally, express that the subject has good reasons to consider that what is described by the subordinate proposition does not correspond to the factual reality. The marker of this class is doubting.

Among the cognitive predicates, doxastics are those that are used in a paradigmatic way to express assertive courtesy. Specifically, the speakers claiming to be in a doxastic state show that they are not entirely certain that the content of their belief corresponds to a real state of affairs. This is the reason why doxastic

expressions can be emitted to provide mitigating effects.

Thus, for example, it is not uncommon for speakers who are in an epistemic state, convinced of the truth of the expressed proposition, to attenuate the strength of their assertion by embedding it in a parent clause of the type *creo que ...*, *pienso que...* y me parece que.... Obviously, these speakers try to avoid giving the impression that they impose their opinion on the interlocutor; The interlocutor is therefore given the opportunity to formulate a divergent opinion, without any of the parties seeing their positive image threatened. For a concrete example, see the following observation by Moliner (1967: 640): "[*me parece*]" is used very often to attenuate a judgment, a censure or a reproach: "*Me parece que no has hecho bien*".

The foregoing considerations lead us to conclude that mitigation of assertive force through the use of a doxastic predicate represents a bifocal courtesy strategy. On the one hand, doxastic attenuation protects the positive image of the interlocutor, who can choose to reject the point of view of the announcer without running the risk that his reaction threatens the continuity of verbal interaction. On the other hand, the announcer simultaneously protects his own positive image, since a negative reaction from the listener only affects the doxastic representation of the assertion. For this reason, it would not be risky to assume that it is the bifocal character of the strategy that explains the frequency with which is used in both Spanish and Uzbek.

Lexical repetition is a prototypical strategy of courtesy expression of solidarity. It manifests itself in the adjacent assertion-response pairs to the assertion in which the response contains a complete or partial copy of the proposition of the original assertion. In this way, the second speaker announces who entirely shares the point of view of his interlocutor, which is equivalent to assert that it contributes unequivocally to the reinforcement of the positive image of this one. The strategy is very unpopular in Uzbek, where it is preferred to express agreement with the opinion of others by means of synonymous qualifications of the chosen by the original announcer, for which a patent is created or maintained interactional distance. In Spanish, however, lexical repetition occurs with so regularly that it would be justified to

characterize it as a kind of echo language. On this, Beinhauer's (1985: 184) comparison between two languages, vehicle of expression of a culture that, like the English, does not seem to pay particular attention to the expression of courtesy of solidarity:

And now a phenomenon of particular interest: I am referring to the perfect linkage between speech and replica proper of the conversation. Spanish seems to listen to the words of the interlocutor in a more concrete than, for example, the Uzbek. That is to say, it seems that it focuses more on the form of what you hear than in content. Uzbek, on the other hand, usually pay more attention to content than form. Capture the ideas of the interlocutor assimilating them and then answering in an entirely independent way, without influencing his reply by the way in which he was manifested by the interlocutor. In other words: he adopts a more egocentric attitude in conversation than the Spanish.

## RESULTS

In the framework of this study, it is relevant to add to all this that the total or partial repetition of the interlocutor's words generates the implication that his opinion or point of view could not be formulated more adequately, which, logically, it provides a marked courtesy effect of solidarity.

Compare two examples from a Spanish interview below:

(1)MR-... Carmen Riera es de las que vende más, yo misma también vendo muchísimo, pero a la hora de ser estudiadas por la crítica, no se nos tiene en cuenta porque siempre se considera que el mundo visto a través de la intuición de la mujer es el mundo en pequeño, el mundo menor, como me dijo a mí un crítico.

GN- ¡Como si fuera menos mundo por eso!

MR- ¡Como si fuera menos mundo por eso! Yo los he criticado por eso, diciendo que a pesar de ellos siempre habría novelistas en este país... (Nichols, 1989: 150).

(2) MR-... Entonces, volviendo a la sensibilidad, la mujer catalana no es que sea inhibida, pero se autorreprime para poder ser feliz. GN- Bueno, para compaginar.

MG- Para compaginar. Esto lo digo a raíz de conversaciones con mujeres casadas y así (Nichols, 1989: 180).

Cela's, distinguished by the insistence with which one of the participants repeat the other's words:

(3) Pasábamos por el cementerio... El ciprés parecía un fantasma alto y seco, un centinela de los muertos. - Feo está el ciprés. -Feo. En el ciprés una lechuza, pájaro de mal agüero, dejaba oír su silbo misterioso. - Mal pájaro ese. - Malo. - Y que todas las noches está ahí. - Todas. - Parece como si gustase de acompañar a los muertos. - Parece (1976: 213).

Returning to the comparison with the Dutch, we can affirm that, despite the somewhat far-fetched character of the previous example, it would be nothing short of unthinkable for a Dutch author to construct a literary dialogue comparable to that of the enlightenment by the fragment quoted above.

From the contrastive perspective, irony constitutes the recast image of the lexical repetition, that is, it represents a fairly common assertive strategy in Dutch everyday verbal interaction, quite rare in Spanish. Between the strategies that we have called assertive courtesy strategies, irony is the unique whose interpretation depends intrinsically on contextual factors. Specifically, the propositional structure of an ironic speech act does not contain lexical clues that allow characterizing the utterance as a member of the class of ironic statements. This is treated by Muecke (1973: 36), who, referring to the words "Very well expressed!" written by a teacher on the sidelines of a student's work, note that no one who has not seen the text can determine whether the intention of the assessment is ironic or not.

The concept of irony is usually delimited in two different ways. In most cases it is characterized as a rhetorical figure that consists of giving to understand the opposite of what is said. The second type of definition starts from a more global criterion, taking as a basis not the opposite meaning, but a meaning other than that explicitly referred to. Without going into notional details, we can say that the global definition is essential to qualify as ironic statements such as "Could you tread on your own feet?", whose proposition does not include

explicit lexemes that contrast with other implicit ones. Compare:

... that is, the definition of irony as a rhetorical device by which one thing is said about such that the speaker attributes to it a meaning more or less opposite to that which he could infer from what was explicitly said (Scari, 1974: 87).

Regarding the perlocutionary analysis of the speech act, it is important to emphasize that irony serves par excellence to express a negative or contemptuous. Although it seems a contradiction, the formulation of evaluations ironic words of this kind can be interpreted as a polite strategy that protects positive image of the interlocutor. Compare:

... under ordinary conditions, straightforward expression of unfavourable beliefs is more irritating than ironic expression of the same. And it is more irritating, because its unfavourable message is clearer, being less dependent upon interpretation and inference which leave a wide margin of doubt with respect to the content of the message (Kasher, 1986: 108).

From this quote it follows that ironic politeness represents an interactional distancing strategy caused by the contextual manipulation of a specific lexical meaning. In other words, irony produces an implicature conversational mocking Grice's first quality maxim, which reads: Don't say what you think is false.

In general terms, Spanish culture is reluctant to indirect use language, which not only applies to the use of irony, but also to the performing so-called indirect speech acts, as we will see in the section dedicated to exhortative courtesy. This predilection for direct expression of the linguistic message is eloquently embodied in the saying 'Call the bread bread and wine wine'. However, all this does not mean that the Spanish announcer lacks means of expressing himself ironically, but what draws attention to the purpose of this is that in not a few cases ironic expressions are characterized by a prefixed syntactic structure, so that in the interpretive process inferential problems do not arise. Compare, for example, the emphatic intonation and the use of stereotypical adjectives, always placed before the noun, in the following examples: 'I was in a good mood for ...!', 'Nice You scared me!', 'Happy jacket! How uncomfortable it makes me!', 'I'll throw

myself if he doesn't come! ' (Beinhauer, 1985: 230-231). In other situations, we see that the conversational implicature inherent in the ironic statement is deduced from the immediate context, so that, from the interpretive point of view, the expression loses its indirect character. The following example is taken from Beinhauer (1985: 181):

Guzmán - How much do you need to save yourself from this conflict?

Second - A low point: three hundred thousand pesetas.

Unlike the Spanish, there are other cultures, in which the distancing rather the rule rather than the exception, it does not usually impose any restriction to the use of ironic expressions. Needless to say, finally, that this cross-cultural contrast can easily lead to misunderstandings interethnic and that, for this reason, must be carefully analyzed in the pragmalinguistic component of contrastive grammar.

The speaker who performs an exhortative speech act is intended to influence the interactional behavior of the listener so that he carries out the action described by the propositional content of the statement. Regarding its linguistic manifestation, the exhortation is expressed preferably through the formulation of a request, which is usually considered as the prototype of the speech act cuts. Three interactional contexts can be distinguished in which speakers make use of the request: (1) the speaker has power or authority over the listener, but refrains from expressing it; (2) between speaker and listener there is no hierarchical social relationship; (3) the listener has power or authority over the speaker. Focusing on the perlocutionary effects of the request, we can formulate the following maxim of exhortative courtesy:

If you want your interlocutor to perform a certain action on your own benefit, address him in the first instance with a plea, regardless of whether or not you have power or authority over him. It follows from the foregoing that the courtesy manifested by the plea is intended to attenuate the force of the exhortative speech act, which contains an inherent threat to the listener's freedom of action; thus serves to compensate for the fact that the speaker enters the speaker's intentional domain.

Although it seems likely that prayer is a universal pragmalinguistic category, its formal realization often differs from language to language. Limiting ourselves to comparing Spanish and Uzbek, we find that Uzbek speakers make much more frequent use of the great variety of courtesy strategies than Spanish speakers. This difference manifests itself particularly in the performance of indirect speech acts, very common in the interaction Uzbek exhortative, little in Spanish. Note that this asymmetric distribution reflects the distancing character of Uzbek courtesy and the solidarity of the Spanish courtesy. To have an overview of the structure and function of the indirect exhortation let us examine the following examples, in which the Uzbek variants precede the Spanish ones because they are in more general use:

1)Menga toza sochiq keltira olasizmi?/¿Quiere usted traerme una toalla limpia?

2)Xonani tartibga solib qoyasizmi?/ ¿Se podría arreglar la habitación?

3)Bu uyda suv bormi?/¿Hay un agua en esta habitación?

4) Bu yer rosa sovuq ekan/'Hace frío aquí'

Obviously, this series of examples illustrates various types of indirect speech acts. What stands out first is the contrast between the interrogative form and the declarative form. Then, the structural differences between the examples can be represented by means of a four-point scale reflecting varying degrees of indirect courtesy. That is to say, (1) corresponds to the least indirect point since it contains a complete description of the act called thus as a specific reference to the agent of the act, that is, to the interlocutor. The structure of (2) is different in the sense that it lacks a specific reference to the interlocutor. (3) shares with (2) the fact that it does not contain a reference explicit to the listener, but it is more indirect because its proposition does not describe the exhorted act; the only thing that is specified is the concrete object towards which the act is oriented. (4), finally, occupies the most indirect position of the scale, since the correct interpretation depends entirely on the knowledge of arranged by the interlocutor regarding the communicative situation in which he emits the statement.

Among the four indirect requests that we are examining, (1) and (2) are the more currents, but, as we have already observed, their frequency is considerably higher in Uzbek than in Spanish. To that is added that requests of the type illustrated by (1) are almost never emitted in Spanish, which we can explain taking into consideration that in cultures where the expression of solidarity questions about the availability of the interlocutor are inherently superfluous or even impolite, since such availability is budgeted.

## CONCLUSION

The solidarity factor also explains that the Spanish announcer does not usually feel the need to resort to an indirect strategy to formulate the beg; for that, it is enough to perform a direct speech act, that is, to make use of an imperative statement. Regarding this, it is relevant to refer to a study empirical based on a representative corpus of modern Spanish dialogues (Mulder, to appear), in which the conclusion is drawn that the Spanish request is formulated by means of an imperative statement in seventy percent of the cases. The previous analyzes allow us to conclude that the predilection of the Uzbek for indirect exhortation or mitigated imperative sentence is characteristic of a culture oriented towards interactional distancing. The Spanish predilection for direct exhortation, on the other hand, is characteristic of a culture in which that solidarity occupies a central place in everyday verbal interaction. This type of culture applies the following pragmatic principle: where relations of solidarity predominate, the right to threaten freedom is understood of the interlocutor's action

The research carried out in this study has shown that contrastive grammar should not be limited to the comparison of categories purely linguistic. It needs to be completed with a pragmalinguistic module that allows analyzing and contrasting relevant intercultural strategies. Referring to expression of verbal courtesy, the phenomena examined show that there are good reasons to classify Spanish culture as a culture oriented fundamentally towards the courtesy of solidarity. In Uzbek culture, on the other hand, a predilection for the polite expression of detachment predominates. Specifically, the analysis of the three major classes of speech acts

has allowed us to conclude that, on the assertive level, the courtesy of solidarity is manifested typically by the repetition of the interlocutor's words; in the plane exhortative, by the direct performance of the speech act, and on the expressive plane, for avoiding expressing gratitude in those communicative situations in those in which the grateful act is a routine act.

The courtesy of distancing on the other hand, it manifests itself in this way: on the assertive plane, by use it is spontaneous of irony to hide negative or derogatory evaluations; at exhortative plane, by the conventional performance of indirect speech acts, and on the expressive plane, by the use of gratitude formulas as a reaction verbal to both routine and non-routine acts.

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