

POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH FICTION AND THEIR UZBEK TRANSLATIONS

Beknazarova Gavharoy Muxtoraliyevna

2nd year student of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

gavharnazarova0101@gmail.com

+998935631716

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This article explores politeness strategies in English fiction and their translation into Uzbek from a pragmatic and comparative perspective. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study examines how politeness-related meanings are adapted in translation. The findings reveal that translators frequently employ explicitation and functional adaptation to ensure pragmatic acceptability, resulting in culturally motivated shifts in politeness expression.

Introduction

Politeness constitutes a fundamental pragmatic category in human communication, reflecting social norms, power relations, and interpersonal distance. In literary discourse, politeness strategies play a crucial role in character construction, narrative development, and the representation of social hierarchies. When literary texts are translated, these strategies often pose significant challenges, as politeness is deeply culture-specific and closely tied to sociocultural conventions of speech behavior. Consequently, the translation of politeness strategies requires not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic and cultural awareness.

The English–Uzbek language pair presents a particularly complex case for the study of politeness in translation. English politeness is often characterized by indirectness,

mitigation, and negative politeness strategies, whereas Uzbek communicative norms tend to emphasize respect, social hierarchy, and explicit honorific markers. These differences significantly affect how politeness strategies are encoded and interpreted in literary texts. As a result, translators must carefully negotiate between preserving the pragmatic force of the original utterance and adapting it to target-culture norms.

Despite growing interest in pragmatic aspects of translation, politeness strategies in English–Uzbek literary translation remain underexplored. Most existing studies focus on lexical or grammatical equivalence, leaving pragmatic shifts insufficiently addressed. This article aims to fill this gap by analyzing how politeness strategies in English fiction are rendered in Uzbek translations and by identifying dominant translation patterns and pragmatic transformations.

Literature review

The study of politeness in linguistics is largely grounded in the seminal work of Brown and Levinson, who conceptualized politeness as a system of strategies designed to manage face-threatening acts [1, 61]. Their distinction between positive and negative politeness has been widely applied in discourse analysis and pragmatics, including literary studies. However, scholars have noted that politeness systems vary significantly across cultures, which complicates their transfer in translation [2, 84]. Leech's politeness principle further expanded the pragmatic framework by emphasizing maxims such as tact, generosity, and approbation, highlighting the role of social values in polite interaction [3, 107]. In translation studies, these models have been used to analyze how pragmatic meaning is preserved or altered in target texts. Several researchers argue that literary translation often involves pragmatic shifts due to differences in politeness conventions between source and target cultures [4, 52].

In the context of translation, House emphasizes the importance of pragmatic equivalence, arguing that politeness-related meaning should be assessed in terms of discourse function rather than formal structure [5, 45]. Studies focusing on culturally distant languages demonstrate that translators frequently resort to explicitation, mitigation, or adaptation when rendering politeness strategies [6, 93]. However, research on English–Uzbek literary translation remains limited and largely descriptive, underscoring the need for systematic comparative analysis.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive-comparative methodology grounded in pragmatics and translation studies. Politeness strategies in the English source texts are analyzed within their discourse context and compared with their Uzbek translations to identify pragmatic shifts and strategy transformations. The analysis applies established politeness theory frameworks and focuses on functional equivalence, examining how interpersonal meaning and social relations are reconstructed in the target text without the use of quantitative data or empirical surveys.

Results and discussion

The analysis of politeness strategies in English fictional dialogue and their Uzbek translations reveals systematic pragmatic shifts shaped by differences in sociocultural norms, communicative conventions, and models of interpersonal relations. The findings demonstrate that translators consistently prioritize pragmatic acceptability in the target culture, often at the expense of formal or structural equivalence. As a result, politeness strategies are frequently reconfigured rather than directly reproduced. One of the most salient patterns observed in the data is the explicitation of implicit politeness. In English fiction, politeness is often encoded through indirect speech acts, modal verbs, hedging devices, and understatement. For example, requests formulated through tentative modal constructions (Could you possibly..., I was wondering if...) rely heavily on negative politeness strategies aimed at minimizing imposition. In Uzbek translations, such utterances are frequently rendered using explicit markers of respect, honorific verb forms, or lexical items signaling deference. While this strategy enhances clarity and pragmatic transparency for the target reader, it often reduces the degree of indirectness present in the source text. This finding supports the view that implicit politeness in English tends to be transformed into overt respect marking in languages with stronger hierarchical politeness systems [1, 67; 5, 48].

Another recurring tendency is the pragmatic amplification of politeness. In several instances, neutral or mildly polite English utterances are translated into Uzbek using forms that convey a higher level of respect. This is particularly evident in interactions involving age difference, social status, or institutional authority. For example, English address forms using first names or neutral titles are frequently replaced with Uzbek honorific expressions or respectful kinship terms. Such amplification aligns with Uzbek sociocultural expectations but may alter character relationships by increasing social distance beyond what is implied in

the original text. This observation resonates with claims that translators often adjust politeness levels to conform to target-culture norms, even if this leads to pragmatic overtranslation [2, 89]. The translation of positive politeness strategies presents a different pattern. English fictional dialogue often employs familiarity markers, informal address, humor, and solidarity-oriented expressions to construct intimacy between characters. In Uzbek translations, these elements are sometimes neutralized or moderated, especially when they conflict with culturally appropriate norms of respect. For instance, friendly teasing or casual imperatives between characters of unequal status may be rendered in a softened or more formal manner. While this ensures cultural appropriateness, it may weaken the expressive and relational functions of the original dialogue. Such cases illustrate that positive politeness is particularly sensitive to cultural reinterpretation in translation [3, 110].

From a functional perspective, the analysis indicates that the success of politeness translation depends on the discourse role of the utterance. In emotionally charged scenes or pivotal narrative moments, shifts in politeness strategies can affect character portrayal and reader perception. Over-explicitation may reduce subtlety, whereas excessive neutralization can diminish interpersonal tension or intimacy. These findings support functionalist arguments that pragmatic equivalence should be evaluated in terms of discourse effect rather than formal correspondence [5, 45].

Conclusion

This study has examined the translation of politeness strategies in English fictional texts and their Uzbek translations from a pragmatic and comparative perspective. The analysis demonstrates that politeness strategies are highly culture-specific and undergo systematic transformation in the translation process due to differences in sociocultural norms, models of interpersonal relations, and conventions of speech behavior. The findings confirm that direct pragmatic equivalence is rarely achievable; instead, translators rely on context-sensitive adaptation to ensure communicative effectiveness in the target culture. The results show that English implicit politeness, typically realized through indirectness and mitigation, is frequently rendered in Uzbek through explicit markers of respect and honorific forms. While such transformations enhance pragmatic clarity and cultural acceptability, they may also lead to pragmatic amplification or neutralization, affecting character relationships and stylistic nuance. This highlights the translator's role as an intercultural mediator who must balance fidelity to the source text with sensitivity to target-culture expectations.

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