Article

Units Expressing the Content of Humility in the Uzbek and German Languages

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative linguopragmatic analysis of the speech act of humility in the Uzbek and German languages, focusing on the culturally shaped communication strategies and pragmatic norms that govern polite interaction. Humility is examined as a culturally embedded linguistic behavior that functions to express respect, manage interpersonal relations, and prevent conflict in communication. Through the application of Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and cross-cultural pragmatics, the study reveals how expressions of modesty, apologies, requests, and gratitude vary across the two language cultures. While Uzbek humility is often indirect and socially ritualized, German humility tends to be formal, concise, and structured. The findings have practical implications for translation, language learning, diplomacy, and intercultural communication, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity and pragmatic awareness in cross-linguistic interactions.

Keywords: Humility, Speech Etiquette, Linguopragmatics, German Language, Uzbek Language, Intercultural Communication, Speech Act

1. Introduction

Humility is a speech strategy used in social communication to avoid misunderstandings and discomfort, and these acts are expressed differently in each language and culture. Speech Act Theory was first proposed in linguistics by J. L. Austin and J. R. Searle [1]. Within the framework of this theory, the speech act of humility was considered an "illocutionary act", that is, it does not only convey information, but also performs functions such as showing respect, recognizing social status, and preventing conflict [2], [3], [4], [5].

Linguist and philosopher P. Grays created the Cooperative Principle. According to this principle, participants in communication purposefully strive to understand each other. Humility adds an additional socio-functional layer to this principle, that is, it provides "active conflict avoidance" in communication. American P [6]. Brown and British S. Levinson developed the "Politeness Theory" and interpreted the units expressing the meaning of modesty as a form of "negative face" within the framework of this theory. The speech act of modesty is used to express one's opinion with caution, apology, and a certain restraint in order to "not invade the social space" of the interlocutor [7], [8].

2. Materials and Methods

M. Halliday interpreted language as an action in a social context and emphasized that the speech act of modesty is manifested in the interpersonal function of the language system as a contextual indicator dependent on culture.

Wierzbika, analyzing cross-cultural semantics, emphasizes that the concepts of "modesty", "respect" are coded differently in each culture. For example, the English "modesty", the German "bescheiden" and the Uzbek "kamtarlik", "tavoze" do not always fully correspond, because these concepts are based on cultural values. From a linguopragmatic point of view, it is important to identify and analyze the differences and similarities between the speech etiquette act of modesty and the units expressing the meaning of humility in the Uzbek and German languages.

Units expressing the meaning of modesty are reflected in such acts as humility, request, gratitude, apology. The following are distinguished as their common features, that is, these acts of modesty in both languages perform the functions of maintaining etiquette, expressing respect for the interlocutor, softening speech and indirect appeal.

In Eastern cultures, for example, in Uzbek, Japanese and Koreans, modesty is more of a voluntary social norm, and in these societies, being humble is considered a positive quality.

3. Results and Discussion

In Western culture, in countries such as the USA, Germany, and France, open and direct expression is more valued. Excessive modesty can sometimes be perceived as uncertainty and lack of self-confidence [9], [10].

The issue of the importance of studying units expressing the meaning of modesty in intercultural communication is one of the important research areas at the intersection of linguistics, pragmatics, and intercultural communication.

Research has shown that the speech act of humility as a communication strategy is interpreted and analyzed differently in each language [11], [12]. For example, in Uzbek, expressions such as "Biz sizning oldingizda kim bo'libmiz...", "Biz bu sohada sizdan o'rnak olishimiz kerak..." are used to acknowledge social inequality, show respect, and soften the conversation.

In German, expressions such as "Ich habe damit noch wenig Erfahrung, aber..." (I don't have much experience in this yet, but...), "Ich weiß nicht, ob ich richtig liege, aber...") demonstrate the strategy of expressing an objective and cautious opinion and putting forward one's opinion without strong pressure [13].

Since humility is considered a speech act that serves to maintain balance in communication and respect the interlocutor by keeping oneself low and showing humility, it can usually be manifested in the following forms: For example, downplaying one's own achievements ("It was just luck."), acknowledging the interlocutor's superiority ("I don't have the same experience as you, of course."), expressing one's opinion cautiously ("If I'm not mistaken...").

In the Uzbek language, acts of humility are an important part of speech, and in communication with the elderly, the elderly, or unfamiliar people, one can observe the use of soft, modest words and sentences. Modalities such as "please" "if possible" "if you don't mind" are often used. Humility is shown to the interlocutor by using sentences such as "May I speak for a moment?" and "Maybe your opinion is correct...", which are considered indirect expressions [14].

In German, humility is a cultural value, but it is more formal, precise, and based on maintaining individual boundaries. The form of "Sie" (You) is constantly used in modern society as a sign of respect. Humility is often expressed in standard formal forms, with expressions such as "Wären Sie so freundlich...?" (Would you be so kind as to...) and

"Entschuldigung" (Excuse me) and "Verzeihung" (Excuse me) being widely used. In German, more direct but polite expressions are preferred. In addition, knowing when and how to use humility is crucial to the success of a conversation [15]. For example, in German, openness and precision are the mainstays of communication, while in Uzbek, politeness and discretion are important aspects. Misunderstanding humility - for example, perceiving someone who is humble as truly insecure - can lead to cross-cultural mistakes.

Therefore, misunderstanding or incorrect use of politeness units in intercultural communication can lead to misunderstandings. By studying these units, it becomes easier to understand the communication styles and values of representatives of different nationalities. This is especially important in the fields of diplomacy, business and education.

These differences in politeness acts play an important role in intercultural communication. For example, in German, simple, clear and short expressions are considered polite, while in Uzbek they can be perceived as somewhat rude or cold. Therefore, it is very important to pay special attention to these differences in translation and language teaching.

4. Conclusion

The units expressing the meaning of politeness are a speech tool that provides respect, caution and social balance in intercultural communication. Learning them increases cultural sensitivity, prevents mistakes and helps to successfully conduct international communication. The study of these units is of practical importance not only for linguistics, but also for such areas as intercultural communication, translation, foreign language teaching, diplomacy, and international business. Through this act, the participants in the dialogue express mutual respect, ensure social balance, and prevent cultural conflicts. Acts of polite speech etiquette in German and Uzbek express values inherent in both cultures. Their linguopragmatic analysis allows us to identify differences and similarities in speech etiquette, culture, contextual connections, and communication style. The results of this study may be useful for translators, language teachers, and specialists active in intercultural communication.

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