

CULTURAL FEATURES OF POLITENESS STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT

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.

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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.

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.

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.

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