

**ORIENTAL JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY**

journal homepage:

<http://www.supportscience.uz/index.php/ojp/about>**INTERPERSONAL CLOSENESS AS A SOCIOPRAGMATIC FACTOR IN
POLITENESS STRATEGY SELECTION IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK SOCIAL MEDIA
DISCOURSE****Sevara Anvarovna Ziyayeva***DSc, Associate Professor, Uzbekistan State World Languages University**E-mail: s-ziyaeva@uzswlu.uz**Tashkent, Uzbekistan***Madina Abdullazoda***Phd Student, Uzbekistan State World Languages University**E-mail: madinaabdullazoda0828@gmail.com**Tashkent, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: politeness, relationship closeness, social distance, English discourse, Uzbek discourse, social media, Brown and Levinson, positive politeness, negative politeness, computer-mediated communication.

Received: 03.07.26**Accepted:** 04.07.26**Published:** 05.07.26

Abstract: This article investigates the influence of relationship closeness on the use of politeness markers in English and Uzbek social media discourse. The study is based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, particularly the notions of "face", social distance, power relations and ranking of imposition. The analysis also draws on discourse-oriented approaches to relational work and computer-mediated discourse studies. The research uses real examples reported in reliable scholarly sources on English online interaction, Facebook compliments, Uzbek youth social media communication and Uzbek speech etiquette. The findings show that relationship closeness does not eliminate politeness; rather, it changes its linguistic form and pragmatic orientation. In close relationships, politeness is more often realized through positive politeness strategies such as solidarity, praise, informal address, joking, emojis and shared-group markers. In socially distant or asymmetrical relationships, speakers tend to use negative politeness strategies, including modal verbs, indirect requests, apologies, respectful pronouns, honorific verb forms and conventional etiquette formulas. The study concludes that English and Uzbek social media

discourse share similar pragmatic goals but differ in their structural realization: English relies more on modal and syntactic indirectness, whereas Uzbek actively uses pronominal, morphological, address-based and cultural-etiquette devices.

SHAXSLARARO YAQINLIK INGLIZ VA O'ZBEK IJTIMOY TARMOQ DISKURSIDA XUSHMUOMALALIK STRATEGIYALARINI TANLASHNING SOTSIOPRAGMATIK OMILI SIFATIDA

Sevara Anvarovna Ziyayeva

DSc, dotsent

O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

E-mail: s-ziyayeva@uzswlu.uz

Toshkent, O'zbekiston

Madina Abdullazoda

PhD tayanch doktoranti

O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

E-mail: madinaabdullazoda0828@gmail.com

Toshkent, O'zbekiston

MAQOLA HAQIDA

Kalit so'zlar: xushmuomalalik, munosabat yaqinligi, ijtimoiy masofa, ingliz diskursi, o'zbek diskursi, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, Braun va Levinson, ijobiy xushmuomalalik, salbiy xushmuomalalik, kompyuter vositasidagi kommunikatsiya.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada ingliz va o'zbek ijtimoiy tarmoq diskursida suhbatdoshlar o'rtasidagi munosabat yaqinligining xushmuomalalik markerlari qo'llanishiga ta'siri tadqiq etiladi. Tadqiqotning nazariy asosini P. Braun va S. Levinsonning xushmuomalalik nazariyasi, xususan, «yuz» (face), ijtimoiy masofa, hokimiyat munosabatlari hamda nutqiy akt yuklamasi darajasi kabi tushunchalar tashkil etadi. Tahlilda, shuningdek, munosabatni boshqarishga qaratilgan diskursiv yondashuvlar hamda kompyuter vositasidagi diskurs tadqiqotlariga ham tayaniladi. Tadqiqot materiali sifatida ingliz tilidagi onlayn muloqot, Facebook diskursidagi maqtoqlar, o'zbek yoshlarining ijtimoiy tarmoqlardagi kommunikatsiyasi va o'zbek nutq etiketi bo'yicha ishonchli ilmiy manbalarda keltirilgan real misollardan foydalanildi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, munosabat yaqinligi xushmuomalalikni yo'qotmaydi, aksincha, uning lisoniy shakli va pragmatik yo'nalishini o'zgartiradi. Yaqin munosabatlarda xushmuomalalik ko'proq birdamlik, maqtoq, norasmiy murojaat, hazil, emoji va guruhga mansublikni bildiruvchi

markerlar kabi ijobiy xushmuomalalik strategiyalari orqali namoyon bo'ladi. Ijtimoiy jihatdan masofali yoki assimetrik munosabatlarda esa kommunikantlar, odatda, modal fe'llar, bilvosita iltimoslar, uzr formulalari, hurmat bildiruvchi olmoshlar, ehtirom ifodalovchi fe'l shakllari hamda an'anaviy etiket formulalarini o'z ichiga olgan salbiy xushmuomalalik strategiyalaridan foydalanadilar. Maqolada ingliz va o'zbek ijtimoiy tarmoq diskursi o'xshash pragmatik maqsadlarga ega bo'lsa-da, ularning strukturaviy realizatsiyasi farqlanishi xulosa qilinadi: ingliz tili ko'proq modal va sintaktik bilvositalikka tayansa, o'zbek tili olmosh, morfologik, murojaatga oid hamda madaniy-etiket vositalaridan faol foydalanadi.

МЕЖЛИЧНОСТНАЯ БЛИЗОСТЬ КАК СОЦИОПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ФАКТОР ВЫБОРА СТРАТЕГИЙ ВЕЖЛИВОСТИ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ И УЗБЕКСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ

Севара Анваровна Зияева

Доктор наук (DSc), доцент

Узбекский государственный университет мировых языков

E-mail: s-ziyaeva@uzswlu.uz

Ташкент, Узбекистан

Мадина Абдуллазода

Докторант (PhD)

Узбекский государственный университет мировых языков

E-mail: madinaabdullazoda0828@gmail.com

Ташкент, Узбекистан

О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: вежливость, межличностная близость, социальная дистанция, английский дискурс, узбекский дискурс, социальные сети, Браун и Левинсон, позитивная вежливость, негативная вежливость, компьютерно-опосредованная коммуникация.

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуется влияние межличностной близости на употребление языковых маркеров вежливости в английском и узбекском дискурсе социальных сетей. Теоретической основой исследования служит теория вежливости П. Браун и С. Левинсона, в частности понятия «лицо» (face), социальная дистанция, властные отношения и степень обременительности речевого акта. В анализе также учитываются дискурсивно ориентированные подходы к реляционной работе и исследования компьютерно-опосредованного дискурса. Материалом исследования послужили реальные примеры, представленные в достоверных

научных источниках, посвящённых англоязычному онлайн-взаимодействию, комплиентам в Facebook-дискурсе, коммуникации узбекской молодёжи в социальных сетях и узбекскому речевому этикету. Результаты исследования показывают, что межличностная близость не устраняет вежливость, а изменяет её языковую форму и прагматическую направленность. В близких отношениях вежливость чаще реализуется посредством стратегий позитивной вежливости, таких как выражение солидарности, похвала, неформальное обращение, шутка, использование эмодзи и маркеров групповой принадлежности. В социально дистанцированных или асимметричных отношениях коммуниканты, как правило, прибегают к стратегиям негативной вежливости, включая модальные глаголы, косвенные просьбы, извинения, уважительные местоимения, почтительные глагольные формы и конвенциональные этикетные формулы. В статье делается вывод о том, что английский и узбекский дискурсы социальных сетей имеют сходные прагматические цели, однако различаются по способам их структурной реализации: английский язык в большей степени опирается на модальные средства и синтаксическую косвенность, тогда как в узбекском языке активно используются местоименные, морфологические, адресативные и культурно-этикетные средства.

Introduction. Politeness in social media discourse should be understood not only as a matter of etiquette, but also as a complex pragmalinguistic mechanism that regulates interpersonal relations in digitally mediated communication. Social media interaction differs from traditional face-to-face communication because it is often written, rapid, multimodal, publicly visible and shaped by platform affordances such as likes, emojis, reactions, comment threads and private messages. Herring argues that computer-mediated discourse should be studied through empirically observable online behavior and its sociocultural context rather than through generalized assumptions about a single homogeneous “Internet language” [2, p. 338–376].

The theoretical basis of the present study is Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness. In this model, politeness is interpreted as face-work, that is, linguistic behavior aimed at protecting

or supporting the public self-image of participants. Brown and Levinson distinguish between positive face, which refers to the speaker's desire to be approved of and included, and negative face, which refers to the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition [1]. Accordingly, requests, criticism, disagreement, correction and advice may function as face-threatening acts. Their seriousness depends on three variables: social distance between speaker and hearer, relative power and the ranking of imposition in a given culture [1].

Relationship closeness is therefore one of the central sociopragmatic factors in politeness. When interlocutors are close, direct requests, jokes, shortened forms or affectionate address terms may be interpreted as signs of solidarity rather than impoliteness. When interlocutors are socially distant, the same forms may be interpreted as inappropriate or face-threatening. However, closeness does not mean the absence of politeness. Rather, it usually shifts politeness from deference-oriented strategies to solidarity-oriented strategies. Locher and Watts argue that politeness should not be reduced only to the mitigation of face-threatening acts; instead, it should be understood as a part of relational work through which participants negotiate what is appropriate, polite or impolite in a particular context [3, p. 9–33].

This issue is particularly significant for the comparison of English and Uzbek social media discourse. English does not grammatically distinguish between informal and respectful second-person pronouns, whereas Uzbek has the opposition *sen/siz*. Uzbek politeness is also strongly associated with kinship terms, honorific address, respectful verb forms and culturally embedded etiquette formulas. Muminova's study of Uzbek speech etiquette shows that *sen* and *siz* are not merely grammatical pronouns but socially loaded markers of respect, affection, distance, age, hierarchy and communicative role [7, p. 95–103].

The purpose of this article is to examine how relationship closeness influences the choice of politeness markers in English and Uzbek social media discourse and to identify the main similarities and differences between the two languages.

Methods. The article uses a qualitative comparative method based on secondary analysis of reliable published scholarly sources. The English-language material is drawn mainly from studies of computer-mediated discourse and Facebook interaction. Park's research is especially relevant because it applies Brown and Levinson's politeness framework to real-time online group discussions and demonstrates how directness, informal markers and nonverbal devices function in online peer interaction [8, p. 2199–2209].

The Uzbek-language material is drawn from Khamraeva's study of Uzbek youth social media interaction. This study analyzes authentic Telegram and Instagram exchanges among Uzbek university students and discusses positive politeness, negative politeness, tactful refusals, emojis, code-switching and pragmatic mitigation in Uzbek digital communication [6, p. 511–516].

The article also uses Muminova's work on Uzbek speech etiquette to interpret the broader cultural and grammatical background of Uzbek address forms, especially the *sen/siz* distinction [7, p. 95–103]. Although this source is not limited to social media discourse, it is relevant because the same honorific and address system is transferred into digital communication. In addition, Placencia and Lower's research on compliments in Facebook interaction is used to explain how compliments function as positive politeness in online family and friend networks [9, p. 617–646]. Rhee's study of politeness and impoliteness in social network service communication is also used to support the analysis of emojis and other digital-paralinguistic devices [11, p. 39–66].

Only short examples reported in scholarly sources are used in the analysis. The examples are cited for analytical purposes and are interpreted within Brown and Levinson's politeness framework.

Results. The analysis shows that relationship closeness influences politeness markers in three main ways. First, it affects the degree of directness. Second, it determines the choice of address forms. Third, it influences the use of digital paralinguistic markers such as emojis, punctuation and reactions.

Table 1. Relationship closeness and politeness markers in English and Uzbek social media discourse

Language / context	Real example from source	Dominant politeness strategy	Marker of relationship closeness	Pragmatic interpretation
English online peer-group chat	“Ya, help us out :-)”	Bald on-record + positive politeness	Informal marker <i>ya</i> and smiley	The request is direct, but the smiley and informal marker soften the imperative and create a friendly tone [8, p. 2199–2209].
English online peer-group chat	“Same”	Positive politeness	Agreement marker	The speaker signals agreement and common ground, thereby reducing interpersonal distance [8, p. 2199–2209].
English online moderator-student interaction	“I am sorry, could you please answer my question?”	Negative politeness	Apology + modal request + <i>please</i>	The request is softened through apology, conventional indirectness and the politeness marker <i>please</i> [8, p. 2199–2209].
English Facebook family/friend network	“Your kids are so stinkin' cute! :-)”	Positive politeness	Compliment + intensifier + smiley	The compliment enhances the addressee's positive face and indexes closeness within a Facebook network of

Language / context	Real example from source	Dominant politeness strategy	Marker of relationship closeness	Pragmatic interpretation
				family and friends [9, p. 617–646].
Uzbek Telegram/Instagram youth discourse	“Zo‘r! 🙌🙌 Endi dam olishning mumkin 😊”	Positive politeness	Praise + clapping emojis + smiley	The message expresses approval, emotional
				closeness and solidarity [6, p. 511–516].
Uzbek Telegram/Instagram youth discourse	“Bugun vaqtim ozroq... balki ertaga ko‘risharmiz? 😊”	Off-record / tactful refusal	Hedge <i>balki</i> , ellipsis and emoji	The refusal is not expressed directly; instead, the speaker mitigates disagreement by using uncertainty and an emoji [6, p. 511–516].
Uzbek Telegram/Instagram youth discourse	“Okay, I get it, lekin biroz vaqtida yozsang yaxshi bo‘lardi...”	Mitigated criticism / relational work	Code-switching + softened Uzbek clause + ellipsis	The speaker first acknowledges the interlocutor, then softens criticism through code-switching and indirect evaluation [6, p. 511–516].
Uzbek speech etiquette background	<i>sen / siz</i>	Address-based politeness	Pronoun choice	The choice between <i>sen</i> and <i>siz</i> encodes closeness, respect, social distance, age and hierarchy in Uzbek communication [7, p. 95–103].

The examples demonstrate that English close online interaction often permits directness when it is accompanied by informal markers, smileys or expressions of solidarity. In Park’s online peer-group data, direct forms are not necessarily impolite because they occur in a context of low social distance and collaborative task performance [8, p. 2199–2209]. By contrast, in more socially distant contexts, English speakers tend to use apology, modal verbs and indirect requests.

The Uzbek examples show that closeness is expressed through praise, emojis, affective wording and informal interactional style. However, Uzbek discourse also preserves traditional norms of tact and indirectness. Khamraeva’s data show that Uzbek youth use both modern digital

devices and traditional politeness norms to maintain interpersonal harmony in Telegram and Instagram communication [6, p. 511–516].

Discussion. The first major finding is that relationship closeness licenses directness, but only when the interlocutors share sufficient common ground. In English peer-group online interaction, direct requests may be interpreted as acceptable because power difference and social distance are low. The example “Ya, help us out :)” illustrates how an imperative request can be softened by a smiley and an informal discourse marker [8, p. 2199–2209]. This confirms Brown and Levinson’s view that the weight of a face-threatening act depends partly on social distance and power [1].

The second finding is that positive politeness becomes more salient in close relationships. In English, this can be observed in agreement, compliments, informal markers and emotionally supportive comments. Park’s data show that common ground, agreement, small talk, informal style and reduced distance contribute to solidarity in online interaction [8, p. 2199–2209]. In Facebook family and friend networks, compliments such as “Your kids are so stinkin’ cute! :)” support the addressee’s positive face and strengthen relational ties [9, p. 617–646].

In Uzbek social media discourse, positive politeness is realized through praise, approval, emojis and tactful interpersonal attention. The example “Zo‘r! 🍌🍌 Endi dam olishing mumkin 😊” combines verbal praise with digital-paralinguistic markers, thereby intensifying solidarity and positive emotional involvement [6, p. 511–516]. This form differs structurally from English compliments but performs a similar pragmatic function: it supports the addressee’s positive face.

The third finding is that social distance activates negative politeness strategies. In English, social distance is commonly marked through modal verbs, apologies and indirect requests. The example “I am sorry, could you please answer my question?” includes three mitigation devices: apology, modal interrogative and please [8, p. 2199–2209]. In Brown and Levinson’s terms, such forms attend to the hearer’s negative face by reducing imposition [1].

In Uzbek, negative politeness is closely connected with pronouns, respectful verb forms and indirect constructions. The *sen/siz* opposition is central because it encodes not only closeness but also respect, hierarchy and social role. Muminova’s analysis confirms that the choice between *sen* and *siz* depends on the type of relationship, communicative situation and social roles of speakers [7, p. 95–103]. Therefore, in Uzbek digital discourse, even emotionally close interlocutors may retain *siz* when age, status or cultural etiquette requires respect.

The fourth finding concerns the role of digital multimodality. Emojis, punctuation, code-switching and reactions are not merely decorative. They carry pragmatic meaning and contribute to the interpretation of politeness. In the Uzbek example “Bugun vaqtim ozroq... balki ertaga ko‘risharmiz? 😊”, the ellipsis, hedge *balki* and emoji soften a refusal and prevent direct

confrontation [6, p. 511–516]. Rhee's study of social network service communication confirms that emoticons, fragments, slang, exaggerated punctuation and nonstandard spelling can signal polite or impolite stances in digital communication [11, p. 39–66].

The fifth finding is that relationship closeness is not a purely quantitative variable. It does not simply mean that close speakers use less politeness and distant speakers use more politeness. Rather, close speakers use different politeness. Close relationships favor involvement strategies such as joking, complimenting, agreement, first names, emojis, shorthand and direct but friendly requests. Distant relationships favor independence strategies such as indirectness, apologies, deference, respectful address and formal wording. This interpretation corresponds to Locher and Watts's view of politeness as relational work rather than a fixed set of linguistic formulas [3, p. 9–33].

The English-Uzbek comparison reveals an important typological difference. English tends to mark politeness through syntax and modality: could, would, please, apologies, indirect questions and hedging. Uzbek tends to encode politeness through morphology, pronouns, address forms and etiquette formulas: *siz*, *-sangiz*, respectful verb forms, kinship terms, honorific address and culturally embedded greetings. Thus, the pragmatic goal is often similar, but the linguistic realization differs according to the structural and cultural features of each language.

Conclusion. The study confirms that relationship closeness is a major sociopragmatic factor in the use of politeness markers in English and Uzbek social media discourse. In close relationships, both languages allow more directness, informality, humor and emotional marking. However, this does not mean that politeness disappears. It shifts toward positive politeness: solidarity, shared experience, approval, compliments, emojis and affectionate or in-group markers.

In socially distant or asymmetrical relationships, English speakers tend to rely on modal verbs, indirect requests, apologies and hedges, while Uzbek speakers rely more strongly on *siz*, respectful verb forms, kinship-based or status-based address terms, indirectness and conventional etiquette formulas. Uzbek digital discourse also demonstrates the coexistence of traditional politeness norms and modern platform-based cues such as emojis, punctuation and code-switching.

The central conclusion is that closeness changes the form of politeness rather than its necessity. In English social media discourse, closeness is often indexed by informality, directness and solidarity. In Uzbek social media discourse, closeness may coexist with grammatical respect, especially where age, status or cultural etiquette requires *siz* forms. Therefore, politeness in online discourse should be studied as a dynamic interaction between relationship closeness, cultural norms, language structure and platform affordances.

Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar ro'yxati:

1. Brown P., Levinson S. C. Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. – 345 p.
2. Herring S. C. Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis: An Approach to Researching Online Behavior // Designing for Virtual Communities in the Service of Learning / ed. by S. A. Barab, R. Kling, J. H. Gray. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. – P. 338–376.
3. Locher M. A., Watts R. J. Politeness Theory and Relational Work // Journal of Politeness Research. – 2005. – Vol. 1, No. 1. – P. 9–33.
4. Haugh M., Bousfield D. Mock Impoliteness, Jocular Mockery and Jocular Abuse in Australian and British English // Journal of Pragmatics. – 2012. – Vol. 44, No. 9. – P. 1099–1114.
5. Park J. Linguistic Politeness and Face-Work in Computer-Mediated Communication, Part 1: A Theoretical Framework // Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology. – 2008. – Vol. 59, No. 13. – P. 2051–2059.
6. Khamraeva B. Politeness and Tact in Uzbek Youth's Social Media Interaction: A Pragmatic Perspective // Foreign Linguistics and Linguodidactics. – 2025. – Special Issue 5. – P. 511–516.
7. Muminova A. A. Uzbek Speech Etiquette: “You” Expressing Politeness and Affection // RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics. – 2015. – No. 3. – P. 95–103.
8. Park J. Linguistic Politeness and Face-Work in Computer-Mediated Communication, Part 2: An Application of the Theoretical Framework // Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology. – 2008. – Vol. 59, No. 14. – P. 2199–2209.
9. Placencia M. E., Lower A. Your Kids Are So Stinkin' Cute! :-): Complimenting Behavior on Facebook among Family and Friends // Intercultural Pragmatics. – 2013. – Vol. 10, No. 4. – P. 617–646.
10. Placencia M. E., Lower A., Powell H. Complimenting Behaviour on Facebook: Responding to Compliments in American English // Pragmatics and Society. – 2016. – Vol. 7, No. 3. – P. 339–365.
11. Rhee S. Politeness and Impoliteness in Social Network Service Communication in Korea // Russian Journal of Linguistics. – 2023. – Vol. 27, No. 1. – P. 39–66.