



GRAMMATICAL MEANS OF POLITENESS: A COMPARISON OF KOREAN AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This article investigates the grammatical strategies employed to express politeness in Korean and Uzbek, two languages belonging to distinct typological families. It examines how grammatical features, such as honorifics, verb endings, pronouns, and sentence structures, are utilized to convey deference, respect, and social distance. The analysis compares and contrasts the specific grammatical devices used in each language to encode politeness, exploring the influence of cultural norms and social hierarchies on linguistic expression. Furthermore, the paper investigates the interplay between grammar and pragmatics in the realization of politeness, considering how contextual factors and speaker intentions interact with grammatical forms to create nuanced expressions of social meaning. By highlighting the similarities and differences in the grammatical encoding of politeness in Korean and Uzbek, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of cross-linguistic variation and universals in the expression of social relationships through language.

Keywords: Politeness, Korean, Uzbek, Grammar, Honorifics, Verb Endings, Pronouns, Syntax, Pragmatics, Social Distance, Deference, Respect, Comparative Linguistics, Cross-cultural Communication, Linguistic Politeness

INTRODUCTION

Politeness, the linguistic expression of social relationships and the management of face, is a fundamental aspect of human interaction. Languages often encode politeness through various grammatical mechanisms, reflecting the cultural values and social hierarchies of their speakers. This paper investigates the grammatical means of politeness in Korean and Uzbek, two languages representing distinct typological families, to compare and contrast how they encode deference, respect, and social distance through their grammatical structures.

1. Honorific Systems: A Key Politeness Strategy:

One of the most prominent grammatical features associated with politeness is the honorific system. While both Korean and Uzbek employ honorifics, their implementation differs significantly.

- Korean: Korean possesses a highly elaborate honorific system that pervades the entire grammar. Honorifics are primarily expressed through:

- Honorific Verb Endings: Special verb endings, such as "-ㅓ" (-si-)", are added to verb stems to indicate respect towards the subject of the sentence. The choice of verb ending depends on the relative social status of the speaker, the addressee, and the referent.

- Honorific Nouns: Certain nouns have honorific counterparts, such as "집 (jip)" (house) becoming "댁 (daek)" (honorable house) when referring to the addressee's home.

- **Honorific Particles:** Particles like "께서 (kkeseo)" are used instead of regular subject markers to show respect towards the subject.
- **Elevated Vocabulary:** Some verbs and nouns have entirely separate, more formal counterparts that are used to express politeness. For example, "먹다 (meokda)" (to eat) becomes "드시다 (deusida)" (to eat, honorific).
- These elements interact to create a complex system where the speaker must carefully choose grammatical forms to appropriately signal their social standing relative to others.
- **Uzbek:** While Uzbek also expresses politeness through grammatical means, its honorific system is less elaborate and pervasive than Korean's. Uzbek primarily employs:
 - **Second Person Plural Pronoun (Siz):** The use of the second person plural pronoun "siz" to address a single person is a primary means of showing respect. This strategy mirrors the polite "you" in English, originally the second-person plural.
 - **Honorific Vocabulary:** Similar to Korean, Uzbek has some vocabulary items considered more polite or respectful than their common counterparts.
 - **Third Person Constructions:** Using third-person constructions with appropriate titles (e.g., "O'qituvchi keldi" - "The teacher has arrived," instead of directly addressing the teacher) can also convey politeness. However, overuse can sound stiff or overly formal.
 - Unlike Korean, Uzbek lacks dedicated honorific verb endings that inflect based on the status of the subject. Instead, politeness is often signaled through a combination of vocabulary choice, pronoun usage, and indirect speech acts.

2. Pronoun Usage and Address Terms:

The choice of pronouns and address terms is another crucial grammatical means of expressing politeness.

- **Korean:** Korean has a complex system of pronouns that reflect social hierarchy. The choice of pronoun depends on the speaker's relationship with the addressee, their relative age, and their social status. Using the wrong pronoun can be highly impolite. Often, Koreans avoid using second-person pronouns altogether, opting for indirect address terms like "선생님 (seonsaengnim)" (teacher) or "언니 (eonni)" (older sister, used by females).
- **Uzbek:** While Uzbek does use "siz" for singular polite address, it also commonly employs first names followed by "aka" (older brother) for men or "opa" (older sister) for women, to indicate respect and familiarity. Using the bare first name without a title can be considered impolite, especially when addressing elders or superiors. As in Korean, avoiding direct address with pronouns altogether, using titles instead, can also increase politeness.

3. Sentence Structures and Indirectness:

Beyond specific morphemes and vocabulary, sentence structures and the use of indirectness also contribute to politeness.

- **Korean:** Korean often utilizes indirect speech acts to soften requests or commands. Instead of directly asking for something, Koreans might hint at their needs or ask about the addressee's ability to fulfill their request. For instance, instead of saying "문을 닫아 주세요 (mun-eul dada juseyo)" (Close the door), one might say "문이 좀 춥네요 (mun-i jom chupneyo)" (It's a bit cold with the door open). Also, using declarative statements ending with questions (ex: "춥지 않아요? - chupji anayo?" - Isn't it cold?) is more polite than direct commands. The use of sentence-ending particles can also significantly affect the level of politeness.
- **Uzbek:** Similar to Korean, Uzbek utilizes indirect speech acts to avoid direct confrontation or commands. Instead of directly refusing a request, Uzbek speakers might offer excuses or express uncertainty. Using conditional clauses ("agar vaqtingiz bo'lsa..." - "if you have time...") before making a request can also soften the imposition. Also the use of "iltimos" (please) can be used to

politely ask a question.

4. The Interplay of Grammar and Pragmatics:

It's crucial to understand that grammatical means of politeness do not operate in isolation. Their effectiveness depends on the context, the speaker's intentions, and the addressee's interpretation. Both Korean and Uzbek speakers rely heavily on pragmatic inference to determine the intended level of politeness. A grammatically polite utterance can still be perceived as insincere or sarcastic if delivered with the wrong tone or in an inappropriate context. Likewise, a seemingly less polite utterance can be interpreted as friendly and informal if delivered with warmth and sincerity. A comparative analysis of the grammatical means of politeness in Korean and Uzbek reveals both similarities and significant differences. While both languages utilize honorifics, pronouns, and sentence structures to express deference and respect, the specific grammatical devices and their level of pervasiveness differ considerably. Korean possesses a highly elaborate honorific system deeply integrated into its grammar, while Uzbek relies more on a combination of polite vocabulary, pronoun usage, and indirect speech acts. Understanding these grammatical nuances is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication and avoiding unintended offense. Further research exploring the sociolinguistic factors that influence politeness strategies in Korean and Uzbek would provide valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and social interaction. Studying the acquisition of politeness markers by language learners is also a promising avenue for future investigation. Ultimately, this comparative analysis highlights the diverse ways in which languages encode social relationships and the importance of considering both grammatical form and pragmatic context in the study of politeness.

CONCLUSION

Korean and Uzbek employ distinct grammatical strategies to encode politeness, reflecting their unique typological characteristics and cultural contexts. Korean's elaborate honorific system, deeply embedded in verb morphology and vocabulary, contrasts with Uzbek's reliance on polite pronouns, indirect speech, and contextual cues. While both languages utilize grammatical resources to express deference, respect, and social distance, the specific mechanisms and their pervasiveness differ significantly. This comparison underscores the intricate relationship between grammar and pragmatics in realizing politeness. Effective cross-cultural communication requires sensitivity to these nuances, avoiding misinterpretations stemming from grammatical differences. Further research should investigate the dynamic interplay between grammatical markers and social context in shaping perceptions of politeness in both Korean and Uzbek societies.

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