

**LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF GENDERED PERCEPTIONS OF POLITENESS IN ABDULLA QODIRIY'S 'O'TKAN KUNLAR'****Fazilatkhon Ikromova**

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**Abstract:** This study investigates gendered perceptions of politeness within Abdulla Qodiriy's seminal Uzbek novel *O'tkan Kunlar (Bygone Days)*, with a focus on how linguistic expressions reflect and construct gender norms. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and modern gender and language frameworks, the paper examines speech acts, honorifics, and discourse strategies used by male and female characters.

**Key words:** politeness strategy, hedges, honorifics, discourse, masculine, feminine, gender norms.

Politeness is a key pragmatic component in language use, governed by both universal principles and culturally specific norms. In literary texts, politeness strategies offer insights into socio-cultural values, especially when examined through the lens of gender. Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan Kunlar*, a foundational work of Uzbek literature written in the 1920s, presents a rich tapestry of gender communication reflecting the sociopolitical currents of the time.

The best known and most widely used approach to the study of politeness is the framework introduced by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson<sup>1</sup> in *Questions and Politeness*; reissued with corrections as *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Brown and Levinson's theory of linguistic politeness is sometimes referred to as the "face – saving theory of politeness". Brown and Levinson state that a certain act is liable to damage or threaten another person's face; known as Face Threatening Acts (FTA)<sup>2</sup>. In order to mitigate the FTAs, they suggest four main types of politeness strategy, namely bald on record strategy, positive politeness strategy, negative politeness strategy, and off record strategy.

This paper conducts a linguistic-pragmatic analysis of politeness in *O'tkan Kunlar*, drawing on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, highlighting strategies such as indirectness, honorifics, and hedging. Additionally, the analysis incorporates perspectives from gender theory, particularly Butler's<sup>3</sup> view of gender as performative, and Tannen's<sup>4</sup> insights into gendered communication styles. Within this framework, politeness is not neutral; it is socially stratified and highly gendered.

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<sup>1</sup> Brown P, Levinson S. Universals in language usage: Politeness Phenomena in Goody E., Question and Politeness, - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. – P. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Goody N "Questions and politeness". - Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1978. -P. 102-105.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, J. Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Routledge. 1990

<sup>4</sup> Tannen, D. *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. Ballantine Books. 1990

In Uzbek, politeness is deeply embedded in the cultural and linguistic norms of respect, age hierarchy, and gender roles. By examining key conversations between characters such as Otabek, Kumush, Hasanali, this study explores how politeness is deployed as both a communicative and ideological tool. In doing so, it positions *O'tkan Kunlar* not only as a literary milestone, but also as a valuable sociolinguistic artifact that captures the complexities of politeness, power, and gender in a transitional period of Uzbek history. In Uzbek literature, gendered politeness is equally pronounced, reflecting the collectivist and patriarchal values of the culture. For example, female characters like Kumush are depicted as modest and deferential, using honorific language to address elders and men. Kumush's speech often includes phrases like *hurmat bilan* or *xo'p bo'ladi*, which align with societal expectations for women to be obedient and polite. Male characters, such as Otabek, exhibit politeness differently through protective and respectful language toward women and elders, maintaining an authoritative tone that reflects their position in the social hierarchy.

While analyzing the notion politeness in Uzbek literature we found the following semantic features of it.

1. Politeness that reflect adherence to societal norms

Otabek and Xasanali – *O'tkan Kunlar*:

When Otabek requests tea from his servant, Xasanali, he uses respectful language typical of Uzbek societal norms. Direct requests, especially from a younger person to an elder or even to someone of lower status, are considered rude. So here Otabek softens the request through conditional and indirect phrasing, reflecting a norm of humility and tact.

Otabek: – Ba'zi yumushlar buyursam... (If I may assign some tasks...)

Xasanali: – Buyuringiz, o'g'lim. (As you wish, my son.)

Otabek: – Rahmat, ota, bo'lmasa bizga choy qaynatib bersangiz– chi. (Thank you, father. Would you kindly make us some tea?)

Xasanali: – Xo'p, begim. (Yes, sir/lord.)

Otabek's speech reflects deference through honorifics like *ota* (father), while Xasanali responds with submissive politeness, showing deference to Otabek's higher social status (*bek*, a noble or respected man). Imperative is also framed as a request, using “-chi” at the end to soften the tone. It transforms a command into a polite request.

2. Politeness that illustrates discussion of personal matters

Kumush and Otabek – *O'tkan Kunlar*:

Here is a dialogue between Kumush and Otabek from “*O'tkan kunlar*” that beautifully illustrates Uzbek norms of politeness, humility, and gendered deference in their relationship:

Otabek: – Ko'ndingiz... nega, a? (Why did you agree?)

Kumush (bosh egib, muloyim ovozda): – Negaki, men sizga ishonaman... (Because, I trust you)

Otabek: – Shuning uchun... (That's why...)

Kumush: – Shuning uchun ko'ndim... (That's why I agreed)

Otabek: – Ko'nglingiz farishtalar ko'nglidek. (Your heart is like that of an angel)

Kumush: – Sizning ham ko'nglingiz...

(Birozdan keyin)

Kumush (uyalغان holda): – Menim unutmaysizmi?.. (Will you not forget me?)

Kumush uses softness, indirectness, and trust to communicate her feelings. She embodies the idealized Muslim woman of the time: quiet, obedient, but spiritually strong. Her politeness reinforces her moral superiority, which ultimately earns Otabek's deep respect and love. She places full emotional trust in Otabek – a core part of feminine virtue in traditional Uzbek culture. Rather than demanding promises, she gently asks with emotional restraint, reflecting deep humility. Otabek upholds his role as a respectful and admiring husband, aligning with norms of protective masculinity.

In collectivist cultures like Uzbekistan, politeness is intertwined with respect for hierarchy, age, and social roles. Women's language is expected to reflect modesty and deference, while men's politeness often aligns with their role as protectors and authority figures. For example, the use of honorifics and formulaic expressions in Uzbek is far more prevalent and elaborate, particularly in formal contexts.

In conclusion, the linguistic patterns in *O'tkan Kunlar* reveal politeness as a gendered social practice embedded within power dynamics. Women's use of indirectness, hedging, and honorifics reflects societal expectations of deference and humility, while men's more direct speech aligns with authority and decision-making roles. However, both genders demonstrate strategic use of politeness to navigate complex social hierarchies, underscoring its performative and context-dependent nature.

## References

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