

Phatic Communication As A Linguoculturological Aspect

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ABSTRACT: The article explores the phenomenon of phatic communication and its significance within the framework of object linguistics, emphasizing its linguoculturological dimensions. It provides analytical insights into the cultural and regional variations in the ways of expressing politeness and courtesy among people living in different parts of Uzbekistan. The study notes that these variations are largely influenced by linguistic and dialectal diversity observed in interethnic communication. Common expressions such as “Kokand politeness” and “Samarkand politeness” reflect culturally rooted communicative behaviors that have evolved through social interaction rather than emerged accidentally. In regions such as Bukhara, Surkhandarya, and especially Khorezm, the practice of showing excessive politeness—even towards guests—is not traditionally widespread. The article further discusses the objective and subjective factors behind these communicative tendencies and their reflection in everyday linguistic behavior.

Keywords: phatic communication, linguoculturological analysis, communication, politeness and courtesy, women’s politeness, men’s politeness, politeness toward children.

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the role of speech is recognized not only as a means of conveying meaning but also as a significant factor in shaping social and cultural relations. Human communication is not limited to the mere exchange of information; it also fulfills numerous social functions, such as maintaining interpersonal closeness, sustaining dialogue, and regulating the interlocutor’s attention. One of the types of speech activity that deserves special study in this regard is phatic communication. In contemporary linguistic research, human interaction is examined not merely as a tool for transmitting information but as a socio-cultural process that reflects a nation’s cultural values and collective mentality. Among the various forms of communication, phatic communication occupies a distinct place, as it strengthens emotional and cultural bonds between people through language and speech behavior.

The concept of phatic communication was first introduced by B. Malinowski (1923), who described it as a type of communication that serves to establish and maintain social bonds rather than convey information. According to Malinowski, such communication fulfills the function of “communion” — preserving social harmony and emotional connection between interlocutors.

Later, scholars such as R. Jakobson, G. Leech, and P. Brown & S. Levinson expanded Malinowski's ideas by analyzing phatic expressions through the lenses of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication. Their research emphasized that phatic communication is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a reflection of cultural values and social norms embedded in speech behavior.

In the Uzbek language, phatic communication is closely connected with national customs, etiquette, religious values, and the cultural mentality of the people. Therefore, studying phatic communication from a linguoculturological perspective plays a crucial role in revealing the cultural semantics of the Uzbek language.

Although the term “phatic” was initially introduced by the English anthropologist B. Malinowski to denote the contact-maintaining function of speech, in subsequent decades it has been widely explored across various branches of linguistics — including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, communicative linguistics, and particularly linguoculturology. This is because phatic expressions often convey cultural attitudes, social values, politeness norms, or markers of emotional warmth rather than factual information. Thus, they represent an essential intersection between language and culture, reflecting the national mentality and cultural identity of the speakers.

Before examining the specific linguoculturological features of phatic communication, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by phatic communication itself and what this term denotes in linguistic and cultural studies.

It is well known that the primary purpose of communication is to exchange information between interlocutors. However, linguists emphasize that communication also performs a number of additional functions beyond information transfer. One of its most significant functions is the expression of politeness and courtesy — a phenomenon that manifests itself through culturally conditioned speech behavior.

From a psychological point of view, phatic communication is characterized by its conditional or situational nature, which makes it a form of quasi-activity (квазидеятельность). In this sense, it can be regarded as a type of verbal play — a means of preventing pauses or breakdowns in conversation, ensuring the continuity and fluency of speech, and maintaining a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere between interlocutors. The use of phatic expressions often aims to appease or emotionally support the addressee rather than to convey concrete meaning.

Therefore, in phatic communication, form often prevails over content; the linguistic structure and tone serve as the main carriers of social and emotional value. Through this mechanism, phatic expressions fulfill an essential communicative role — maintaining contact, empathy, and social rapport within the framework of a culturally specific communicative tradition.

The words “mulozamat” and “manzirat”, which originate from Arabic, are used in the Uzbek language to denote expressions of courtesy, respect, politeness, and attention aimed at pleasing the interlocutor. However, they differ in their semantic connotations: while mulozamat carries a positive and respectful meaning, manzirat often implies a negative or exaggerated politeness, sometimes perceived as artificial or insincere. This distinction reflects the subtle cultural nuances of interpersonal communication in Uzbek society, where the balance between sincerity and formality plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony.

Research Methodology And Analysis

Linguist A. Jo'rayeva divides Uzbek dialects into eleven areal zones and, while acknowledging the contributions of about forty dialectologists who conducted research across these regions, she respectfully notes certain deficiencies and shortcomings in Uzbek dialectology. In particular, she observes that excessive focus on the collection of linguistic data led to a lack of theoretical depth, which persisted for a long time.

This study is based on linguoculturological, pragmalinguistic, and sociolinguistic approaches. The sources of data include:

- Uzbek folk proverbs, greetings, and farewells,
- samples of spoken discourse,
- phatic expressions found in literary texts.

Methods: discourse analysis, cultural-semantic analysis, and comparative method.

Results and Analysis

1. The Cultural Essence of Phatic Communication

Phatic communication is deeply rooted in the ancient communicative traditions of the Uzbek people. For instance, the greeting “Assalomu alaykum” serves not only as a means of saying hello but also as an expression of prayer, goodwill, and peace. In this way, a single phatic unit harmoniously combines linguistic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions.

2. National and Cultural Stereotypes

In Uzbek society, communication is based on warmth, respect, and sincerity. Therefore, phatic genres reflect the following cultural stereotypes:

- Sincerity → “Qandaysiz?” (“How are you?”), “Ishlar joyidami?” (“Is everything fine at work?”)
- Respect → “Marhamat” (“Please”), “Rahmat sizga” (“Thank you”)
- Affection → “Omon bo‘ling” (“Take care”), “Xudo sizni asrasin” (“May God protect you”)

These expressions embody the national communicative values of the Uzbek people, emphasizing kindness, sincerity, and mutual respect in speech behavior.

3. Linguoculturological Connotations

Phatic expressions often contain hidden cultural codes. For example, the word “Rahmat” (“Thank you”) expresses not only gratitude but also a blessing and a wish for goodness. Similarly, expressions such as “Salomat bo‘ling” (“Stay healthy”) and “Yaxshi boring” (“Go safely”) reflect the Uzbek people’s values of prosperity, peace, and goodwill.

Through these expressions, language becomes a medium that conveys the people’s worldview and cultural identity.

4. Phatic Communication and National Etiquette

The most important aspect of phatic communication is its role in defining the etiquette of interaction. In the Uzbek language:

- When addressing elders or respected individuals, polite and honorific forms are used — “Siz” (“You” – polite form), “Marhamat” (“Please”), “Iltimos” (“Kindly”).
- Among close friends or peers, shorter and more emotional forms are used — “Salom” (“Hi”), “Xo‘p” (“Okay”), “Zo‘r!” (“Great!”).

These differences illustrate the linguoculturological nature of the Uzbek language, where linguistic forms express both social hierarchy and emotional closeness.

Discussion

Phatic communication in the Uzbek language differs from that of Western languages by emphasizing spiritual, moral, and communal values.

For example, while English expressions like “Hi!” or “How are you?” are primarily used to maintain social contact, the Uzbek greeting “Assalomu alaykum” (“Peace be upon you”) carries a religious and cultural connotation, expressing peace, respect, and benevolence.

Thus, Uzbek phatic communication serves as a linguistic phenomenon that preserves national identity, reflecting the moral, cultural, and spiritual essence of the Uzbek worldview.

Regional and Environmental Influences on Phatic Communication.

The ways and degrees of mulozamat (courtesy) and manzirat (excessive politeness) among people vary across different regions of Uzbekistan. These differences are also related to the variety of languages and dialects used in interethnic communication. Popular expressions among people such as “Qo‘qon manzirat” (“Kokand politeness”) and “Samarqand manzirat” (“Samarkand politeness”) did not emerge by chance. In regions such as Bukhara, Surkhandarya, and especially Khorezm, even showing excessive politeness to guests is not a widespread custom. Of course, there are both objective and subjective reasons behind these differences. The following section discusses some of these reasons in detail.

First of all, let us consider the influence of nature on phatic communication. The term “ecology”, derived from the Greek word “oikos” meaning “home” or “dwelling,” was first used as a scientific term by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel in his 1868 work “Natural History of Creation.”

However, long before that, the idea that humans are an integral part of nature had already been acknowledged, and numerous profound reflections on this relationship had been expressed throughout history.

For instance, the role of the geographical environment in social life was particularly emphasized by ancient Greek scholars such as Democritus, Hippocrates, Herodotus, Polybius, and Strabo, as well as by medieval Eastern philosophers including Ibn Sino (Avicenna), Alisher Navoiy, Zahiriddin Muhammad Bobur, and many other great thinkers.

Historical Perspectives on Environmental Influence.

By the mid-19th century, the doctrine proposed earlier by the French philosopher Sh. Monteske (Charles Montesquieu) in the 18th century — which stated that “the geographical environment of each country determines its morals and laws” — was revived and began to find its expression in social and political thought.

In the early 20th century, one of the prominent directions of the geographical school that emerged in the United States was environmentalism (from the English word “environment”). One of its most well-known representatives, E. Huntington, emphasized that climate has a significant impact on people’s health, their physical and moral activity, and even their labor productivity.

Discussion and Results.

However, a human being is not only a child of nature, but also a child of society. As Danilo J. Markovich rightly stated: “Yoki boshqacha qilib aytganda, inson muhiti bir-biri bilan uzviy bog‘liq bo‘lgan ikki qismdan – tabiiy va ijtimoiy muhitdan iboratdir” (“In other words, the human environment consists of two interrelated parts — the natural and the social environment”).

A person is born, grows, and matures within the interaction of these two environments. Yet it should be remembered that the social environment — that is, “kishining shakllanishi va faoliyatidagi uni o‘rab olgan ijtimoiy, moddiy va ma’naviy shart-sharoitlar” (“the social, material, and spiritual conditions surrounding an individual’s development and activity”) — largely depends on ecological factors.

The social environment shaped under the direct influence of ecology plays a decisive role in the formation and development of an individual’s personality. At the same time, through their creative activity and social engagement, people continuously transform the social environment itself — and, in turn, are transformed by it.

Phatic Communication in Uzbek Folk Tales

In Uzbek folk tales, particularly in the well-known story “Uch og‘a-ini botirlar” (“Three Brave Brothers”), the narrative traditionally begins with a phatic formula such as:

“Bir bor ekan, bir yo‘q ekan, qadim zamonda bir kishi bo‘lgan ekan, uning uchta o‘g‘li bor ekan...” (“Once there was, once there wasn’t, in ancient times there lived a man who had three sons...”).

Similarly, the tale “Ayoqzql” opens with the words:

“Bor ekan-da, yo‘q ekan, och ekan-da, to‘q ekan, burun o‘tgan zamonda bir podshoh bo‘lib, uning Ayoqzql degan bir xizmatkor mahromi bor ekan...”

(“There was and there wasn’t, there were the hungry and the full; once upon a time there was a king who had a servant named Ayoqzql...”).

This stylistic feature is also observed in verse-form tales, as in the following poetic example:

Borekan-u yo‘q ekan,
Och ekan-u to‘q ekan...
Ko‘p qadim zamonlarda,
Samarqand tomonlarda,
Bo‘lgan Luqmoni hakim,
Dard bilan kelib harkim,
Davo topibdi undan...

(Mirmuhsin, “Luqmoni hakim va O‘roqboy” — “The Sage Luqmon and O‘roqboy”)

Thus, in Uzbek folk tales, phatic communication is realized through introductory formulas such as “Bor ekan-u yo‘q ekan, och ekan-u to‘q ekan...” (“There was and there wasn’t, there were the hungry and the full...”) or “Bir bor ekan, bir yo‘q ekan, bo‘ri baqovul ekan, tulki yasovul ekan, qarg‘a qaqimchi ekan, chumchuq chaqimchi ekan...”

(“Once there was, once there wasn’t — the wolf was a guard, the fox was a steward, the crow was a crier, and the sparrow was a chatterer...”).

These phatic openings serve a specific communicative and cultural function — they prepare the listener for the story, creating a bridge between the narrator and the audience. In this way, the audience is symbolically invited into the world of the tale through a ritualized introductory phase (kirish bosqichi — “introductory stage”).

Phatic Closure and Address Forms in Uzbek Speech and Literature

The closing stage (xotima bosqichi) of Uzbek folk tales also has its own distinctive features. Unlike Kyrgyz, Tajik, or Serbian folk tales, Uzbek tales most often end with a fixed formula such as “Shunday qilib ular murod-u maqsadlariga yetishibdi” (“Thus they achieved their goals and desires”). In contrast, the endings of other nations’ tales vary depending on the development of the plot and do not employ a single, repeated phrase like in Uzbek folklore.

In the speech of middle-aged communicants, forms of address such as “do‘stim” (“my friend”), “o‘rtoq” (“comrade”), “jonim” (“dear” — used by women when addressing other women), “og‘ayni” (“mate”), and “qarindosh” (“relative”) are characteristic of phatic interaction. It is also typical for speakers of this age group to address the interlocutor directly by name, which reflects both familiarity and respect. Their speech tends to avoid unnecessary elaboration, maintaining brevity and clarity, moving directly to the point in a balanced and socially appropriate manner.

This stylistic tendency is well illustrated in a passage from A. Qahhor’s novella “Sinchalak”:

“Qalandarov ishni shovqin solmasdan, qizishmasdan yaxshilikcha bitirmoqchi edi, shuning uchun Saida kirganda:

– Keling, o‘tiring, – deb joy ko‘rsatdi. Saida hayron edi. Qalandarov iloji boricha osoyishta gapirishga harakat qildi.

– Gap bunday, Saidaxon... ikkovimiz bir qozonda qaynamayapmiz. Men qiziqqonroq, buning ustiga qo‘polroq odamman. Siz yoshsiz, buning ustiga ayol kishisiz, o‘qigan qizsiz... harqaysi miz o‘z izzatimizda qolsak... Men jon deb ketar edim, lekin kolxozga ko‘p mehnatim singgan, bundan tashqari ketgani qo‘yishmasa kerak deb o‘ylayman...

Saida labini kulgidan arang yig‘ishtirib:

– Ketgin demaqchimisiz? – dedi.

– Tushunadigan odamning sadaqasi ketsang... Ariza bering! Men o‘rtoq Nosirov bilan gaplashaman.”

This excerpt demonstrates how phatic politeness and address strategies serve not only as markers of respect but also as tools for maintaining emotional balance and social harmony in dialogue.

Excellent — here’s your passage translated into academic English, with Uzbek examples preserved and their English translations in parentheses, and the Conclusion carefully rendered in formal scholarly style suitable for publication:

Sociolinguistic Aspects and Conclusion.

From this example, we can see that the socio-linguistic aspects of speech clearly express the national characteristics of Uzbek communicative behavior, as well as the age-related features typical of the phatic speech of certain sociolects. In the introductory stage (kirish bosqichi), instead of addressing the listener by name, speakers often use kinship-oriented forms of address such as “bolam” (“my child”), “bolaginam” (“my dear child”), “o‘g‘lim” (“my son”), and “qizim” (“my daughter”), which are used through the familiar form “sen” (“you”).

For example:

“Poshsha xolla boshini ko‘tardi. Oyoqlari uvishib qolgan ekan, yurishdan yuz o‘girib tizzalarini uqaladi.

– Ko‘nglim g‘ash, bolam, – dedi to‘satdan. Xurshida tushunmadi...”

(O‘tkir Hoshimov)

(“Poshsha xolla lifted her head. Her legs had gone numb; she stopped walking and rubbed her knees.

– I feel uneasy, my child, – she said suddenly. Xurshida did not understand...”)

This example demonstrates how age, emotion, and social role influence phatic communication in Uzbek discourse.

Conclusion

Although the Uzbek communicative process and linguistic material have not yet been comprehensively studied within the anthropocentric paradigm in Uzbek linguistics, a number of

important studies have been conducted in cognitive, psycholinguistic, and linguoculturological directions. These works mainly address theoretical issues of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, the conceptual expression of certain notions in the Uzbek language, semantic perception, psycholinguistic features of children's speech, and problems of intertextuality.

However, the cognitive-semantic, psycholinguistic, and linguoculturological characteristics of the text—especially those related to its creation and perception—have not yet been investigated in a monographic way in Uzbek linguistics.

Studying phatic communication from a linguoculturological perspective provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural values, national communicative style, and speech etiquette of the Uzbek people. It is significant not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but also as an expression of national spirit and culture.

In conclusion, phatic communication can be regarded as a social phenomenon that preserves culture through language. Its study contributes to identifying the role of the Uzbek language within the global communicative system, highlighting how national identity is maintained and transmitted through everyday speech.

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