

## THEORETICAL PROBLEMS OF STUDYING THE CATEGORY OF POLITENESS IN THE INTERCULTURAL ASPECT

Khojjeva Zarina Bakhtiyarovna  
PhD., Associate Professor

Djuraeva Go'zal Nuriddinovna

Master's Student Tashkent International University of Financial Management and  
Technology

**Abstract.** The study of politeness in the intercultural aspect is a complex and multifaceted field that poses several theoretical problems. Politeness, as a social phenomenon, is deeply rooted in cultural norms, values, and beliefs, making it challenging to define and analyze across different cultures. One of the primary theoretical problems is the lack of a universally accepted definition of politeness. Different cultures and languages have distinct concepts of politeness, making it difficult to establish a common understanding of the term. For instance, what is considered polite in one culture may be perceived as impolite or even rude in another. Politeness is often context-dependent, and power dynamics play a significant role in shaping politeness behaviors. However, the complexity of power relationships and contextual factors can make it challenging to identify and analyze politeness strategies. For example, what is considered polite in a formal setting may not be suitable in an informal setting, and vice versa. Studying politeness in the intercultural aspect also poses methodological challenges. Researchers must navigate issues of data collection, sampling, and analysis, taking into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of participants. Moreover, the use of self-reporting methods or observational studies may not capture the nuances of politeness behaviors. The theoretical problems of studying politeness in the intercultural aspect have significant implications for intercultural communication. Misunderstandings or miscommunications about politeness can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, or even the breakdown of relationships. Therefore, it is essential to develop a deeper understanding of politeness in the intercultural context to facilitate effective communication and collaboration.

Politeness, a fundamental aspect of human communication, has long been a subject of interest in linguistics, sociology, and anthropology. However, when it comes to



studying politeness in an intercultural context, researchers face a multitude of theoretical problems. The concept of politeness is inherently complex, and its meaning can vary significantly across different cultures and languages. This complexity is further compounded by the fact that politeness is often deeply rooted in cultural norms, values, and beliefs, making it challenging to develop a universally applicable framework for its study. Some of the key theoretical problems in studying politeness in the intercultural aspect include:

Developing a clear and consistent definition of politeness that can be applied across different cultural contexts.

Avoiding the imposition of Western-centric notions of politeness on non-Western cultures, and instead, adopting a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach. Accounting for the diverse social, historical, and linguistic contexts in which politeness is enacted and perceived.

Developing research methods that can effectively capture the complexities of politeness in intercultural interactions.

By acknowledging and addressing these theoretical challenges, researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of politeness in the intercultural aspect, ultimately informing more effective communication strategies in an increasingly globalized world.

Politeness is a culturally relative concept, and what is considered polite in one culture may be perceived as impolite or even rude in another. This raises questions about the universality of politeness and whether it is possible to develop a cross-culturally applicable theory of politeness.

Another theoretical problem is the “role of power and social hierarchy” in shaping politeness norms. In some cultures, politeness is closely tied to social status, with individuals from higher social classes expected to display more refined and polite behavior. However, this can lead to a simplistic view of politeness as a tool for maintaining social hierarchy, rather than a genuine expression of respect or consideration for others. The “influence of language and communication styles” on politeness is also a significant theoretical problem. Different languages and communication styles may prioritize different aspects of politeness, such as directness versus indirectness, or formality versus informality. This can make it difficult to develop a comprehensive theory of politeness that accounts for these linguistic and cultural variations.



Furthermore, the “issue of cultural essentialism” arises when studying politeness in the intercultural aspect. Cultural essentialism refers to the tendency to attribute certain characteristics or traits to an entire culture, rather than recognizing the diversity and complexity within cultures. This can lead to oversimplifications and stereotypes about politeness norms in different cultures.

Finally, the “methodological challenges” of studying politeness in the intercultural aspect should not be underestimated. Researchers must navigate issues of data collection, sampling, and analysis, as well as the potential biases and limitations of their own cultural perspectives.

In conclusion, the study of politeness in the intercultural aspect is a complex and challenging field that poses several theoretical problems. Addressing these challenges will require a nuanced and multifaceted approach that takes into account the cultural variability, power dynamics, contextual dependence, methodological challenges, and theoretical fragmentation that characterize this field. Finally, the study of politeness in the intercultural aspect is characterized by theoretical fragmentation, with different researchers drawing on different theoretical frameworks and approaches. This can lead to a lack of coherence and consistency in the field, making it difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of politeness. While the study of politeness in an intercultural aspect offers valuable insights into communication and social interaction, it is fraught with theoretical challenges. Addressing these issues requires a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates linguistic, sociolinguistic, and cultural perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how politeness functions across diverse contexts. Future research should aim to bridge these theoretical gaps, fostering greater intercultural awareness and sensitivity in communication practices.

#### **LITERATURE REFERENCES:**

1. Politeness: “Some Universals in Language Usage” by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. This book is a classic in the field of politeness theory and offers a comprehensive analysis of the universal principles of polite behavior across different cultures.
2. Intercultural Communication: “A Critical Introduction” edited by Richard W. Samovar, Alton L. Porter, and Edwin R. McDaniel. This book provides an in-depth examination of the challenges and opportunities of intercultural communication, including the role of politeness in cross-cultural interactions.





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### Journal Articles:

1. "Theoretical issues in the study of politeness" by Richard W. Franck Jr., published in the \*Journal of Pragmatics\* (1980). This article offers a critical review of the major theoretical approaches to the study of politeness and highlights the challenges and limitations of each approach.

2. "Politeness and face in intercultural communication": A review of the literature" by Young Y. Kim, published in the \*Journal of Intercultural Communication Research\* (2005). This article provides a comprehensive review of the literature on politeness and face in intercultural communication and identifies the key theoretical and methodological issues in this area of research.

### Online Resources:

1. The [Intercultural Communication Institute](<https://www.interculturalcommunication.org/>) offers a wealth of resources on intercultural communication, including articles, videos, and training materials on politeness and cross-cultural communication.

2. The [Politeness Research Group](<http://www.politeness.net/>) is an international network of scholars who are interested in the study of politeness and related phenomena. The PRG website provides access to a range of resources, including publications, conference proceedings, and research tools.