COGNITIVE APPROACH TO NON-VERBAL POLITENESS MEANS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK CULTURES

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ANNOTATION. This article examines nonverbal politeness indicators in Uzbek and English conversation from a cognitive standpoint. It examines how the employment of gestures, proxemics, and eye contact as instruments for upholding social peace and demonstrating respect are influenced by cultural schemata and cognitive models.

KEYWORDS: *body language, intercultural communication, nonverbal communication, politeness techniques, cultural schema, and cognitive linguistics.*

A cognitive approach to politeness in contemporary linguistics enables us to comprehend it as a sophisticated mental process based on deeply ingrained cultural knowledge rather than merely as a collection of prescriptive rules. It is believed that politeness is a cognitive category that controls social interaction through "mental scripts" or "schemata," which are internalized information structures that instruct people on appropriate behavior in particular social situations [1; 12]. These cognitive representations are dynamic frameworks that assist communicators in processing social information, assessing the other person's standing, and selecting the best course of action. While verbal politeness is well-documented, non-verbal means such as kinesics (gestures), oculesics (eye contact), and proxemics (spatial behavior) carry significant cognitive weight. They act as "shortcuts" in communication, allowing for the rapid processing of social intent and the conveyance of respect or social distance without the need for explicit linguistic coding.

The English Nonverbal Politeness Cognitive Model

The cognitive models of "individualism" and "personal autonomy" in English-speaking societies mandate a very particular set of nonverbal behaviors. According to this concept, being courteous is cognitively mapped as refraining from entering another person's physical and mental space. Proxemics is the most obvious way that the "negative politeness" technique, which tries to minimize imposition and maintain the interlocutor's "negative face," is communicated. Keeping a significant "buffer zone" or physical distance is a cognitive expression of respect for the privacy and autonomy of the other person, not only a social habit [2; 88]. In English conversation, the cognitive processing of "closeness" is frequently linked to over-familiarity or possible threat, which causes unease. As a result, a quick, light handshake and deliberate, short eye contact are seen as courteous and professional. The "cognitive dissonance" that results from a perceived invasion of one's personal space is avoided by these actions [3; 45]. The foundation of Western communicative ethics is the cognitive necessity of upholding communal harmony while rigidly respecting individual limits, which speakers do by using these nuanced non-verbal cues.

The Uzbek cognitive model of politeness, on the other hand, is based on the twin schemata of "social hierarchy" and "collectivism." Nonverbal cues, which serve as overt and emotionally expressive markers of one's internal moral state, are frequently main rather than merely supplemental in this cultural framework. The physical act of placing a hand on the chest *(qo'lni ko'ksiga qo'yish*) functions as a profound cognitive signal of deep regard (*ehtirom*) within this cognitive landscape. In the Uzbek mind, this gesture serves as a highly effective "mental shortcut,"

despite being mostly lacking from Western non-verbal repertoires. It concurrently conveys several levels of significance, including acknowledging the interlocutor's social standing, displaying the speaker's humility, and extending a heartfelt welcome [1; 140]. This action reduces the cognitive load required to negotiate complex social standings, providing an immediate visual confirmation of adherence to cultural norms. Additionally, kinesics and oculesics are essential to upholding the delicate balance of “positive face” in Uzbek society. From a cognitive standpoint, modesty and andisha (thoughtful consideration/reserve) are filters through which eye contact is perceived. According to the English cognitive framework, maintaining and maintaining intense eye contact is frequently seen as an indication of sincerity and active participation, while its absence could be seen as evasiveness. On the other hand, gazing down or purposefully avoiding direct eye contact with elders or people of higher status is considered a sophisticated cognitive show of respect in the Uzbek worldview [4; 52]. Internal cognitive maps, which are deeply embedded mental representations that specify the “ideal” bodily position for displaying politeness, control this behaviour. These maps make sure that the person’s actual presence corresponds with the general expectation of *tavoze*, or humility. For example, the slight tilt of the head or the softening of facial features are not accidental motions; rather, they are deliberate results of a cultural script that places a higher value on hierarchical stability and communal peace than on individual aggressiveness [5; 210]. Because they frequently convey a degree of sincerity and cultural knowledge that words alone cannot, learning these non-verbal “codes” is crucial for navigating the uzbek social landscape.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a cognitive perspective shows that nonverbal politeness is more than just manners; it is a physical expression of ingrained cultural stereotypes and mental scripts. These mental frameworks serve as an unseen guide for social interaction, dictating how we interpret authority, respect, and personal space. Deciphering these nonverbal codes, which frequently carry more weight than spoken language in keeping “face,” is essential for effective cross-cultural communication. A clash of scripts, which results in social conflict and psychological dissonance, is caused by misinterpreting a lowered gaze in Uzbek culture or a remote stance in English society. Transitioning from a passive observer to a cognitively aware participant is ultimately necessary for achieving full intercultural proficiency. Interlocutors can cross cultural divides with empathy if they recognize that every gesture is a message based on a particular mental image. This cognitive awareness efficiently bridges the gap between disparate worldviews by ensuring that respect for one another is not only desired but also properly experienced.

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