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### HONORIFICS IN CHINESE, UZBEK, AND RUSSIAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Аннотация

This paper presents a comparative study of honorifics in Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian. From lexical, syntactic, and grammatical perspectives, it analyzes similarities and differences in expressing respect and politeness. The study provides a valuable reference for comparative linguistics and cross-cultural communication.

**Keywords:** Honorifics, Chinese, Uzbek, Russian, Politeness theory, Cross-cultural communication, Pragmatics.

### ФОРМА ВЕЖЛИВОСТИ В КИТАЙСКОМ, УЗБЕКСКОМ И РУССКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ

Аннотация

В данной статье проводится сравнительное исследование форм вежливости в китайском, узбекском и русском языках. С лексической, синтаксической и грамматической точек зрения анализируются сходства и различия в выражении уважения и вежливости. Результаты исследования представляют ценную информацию для сравнительной лингвистики и межкультурной коммуникации.

**Ключевые слова:** Формы вежливости, китайский язык, узбекский язык, русский язык, теория вежливости, межкультурная коммуникация, прагматика.

### XITOI, O‘ZBEK VA RUS TILLARIDAGI HURMAT IFODALARI: TAQQOSLASH TADQIQOTI

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada xitoy, o‘zbek va rus tillaridagi hurmat ifodalari taqqoslanadi. Leksik, sintaktik va grammatik jihatdan tahlil qilinib, hurmat va odobni ifodalashdagi o‘xshashliklar va farqlar ko‘rsatildi. Tadqiqot natijalari solishtirma tilshunoslik va madaniyatlararo muloqot uchun muhim manba hisoblanadi.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** Hurmat ifodalari, xitoy tili, o‘zbek tili, rus tili, odob nazariyasi, madaniyatlararo muloqot, pragmatika.

**Introduction.** China, Uzbekistan, and Russia, with long histories and rich cultural traditions, use language not only as a communication tool but also as a carrier of national culture. Expressions of respect and politeness reflect social structures and national values. Comparative study of honorifics facilitates mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and informs language teaching.

**Literature review.** British scholars Brown and Levinson’s “face” theory and other politeness theories provide the primary framework for honorific research. Chinese scholars insist that honorifics include respect-expressing and self-deprecating forms, further categorized as addressive or descriptive. In Uzbek scholars’ opinion, honorifics are expressed through *hurmat birliklari* (units of respect) and *xushmuomalalik vositalari* (means of politeness), spanning pronouns, syntax, and morphology. In Russian academic circles, *rechevoy etiket* (speech etiquette) embodies politeness, reflecting respect and moral character, realized through lexical, syntactic, and morphological means.

**Research Methodology.** This study primarily employs the literature review method, empirical research method, and observational analysis method. By collecting and analyzing Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian literature and corpora, it conducts a multi-perspective comparative analysis of the semantic types and modes of expression of honorifics in the three languages. Additionally, through observation in daily life, it gathers examples related to polite language.

**Analysis and results.** At the lexical, syntactic, and grammatical levels, honorifics in Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian exhibit both similarities and language-specific characteristics.

Honorific vocabulary constitutes the core component of honorific systems, holding significant importance in Chinese, Uzbek and Russian. Among these, address-based honorifics, verb-based honorifics, and other honorific units formed through word formation are particularly representative.

Addressive honorifics refer to linguistic forms used to directly address interlocutors or third parties in order to signal respect for their social status or role identity, primarily including honorific personal pronouns and nominal forms of address. Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian all distinguish between informal and formal second-person pronouns. In Chinese, although forms such as “您老” and “您几位” exist in specific contexts, “您” remains the most standard and fundamental respectful form of “你,” as illustrated by “您好, 请问您需要什么帮助?” Uzbek similarly contrasts “sen,” used among peers or in intimate relations, with “siz,” which conveys politeness and respect in formal settings (e.g., “Sizga yordam kerak bo‘lsa, ayting”). Russian follows the same binary distinction, using “ты” for close or equal relations and “вы” for strangers, elders, superiors, or institutional contexts, as in “Здравствуйте, вы не подскажете, как пройти к деканату?”

Nominal honorifics further reflect cross-linguistic differences. Chinese possesses a highly developed system combining humble self-reference (e.g., “家父,” “小女”) with other-elevating forms and professional or kinship titles such as

“令尊,” “老师,” and “先生/女士.” Uzbek also displays a rich system of nominal address, including kinship and professional terms (“ota,” “ona,” “ustoz”), with kinship terms like “aka” and “opa” widely extended to non-relatives, and religious titles such as “domla” and “imom” reflecting Islamic influence. By contrast, Russian nominal honorifics are less elaborate and rely primarily on institutionalized forms, most notably “given name + patronymic,” sometimes combined with a title (e.g., “Директор Евгений Иванович”), while occupational nouns alone cannot function as forms of address.

Verbal honorifics exhibit notable typological differences among the three languages. Chinese lacks morphologically distinct honorific verbs; instead, politeness is achieved through honorific particles prefixed to common verbs. Particles such as “惠、莅、垂” mark actions performed by higher-status individuals (e.g., “惠顾”), whereas “恭、荣、拜、劳” signal self-lowering actions or requests (e.g., “恭迎”). Chinese also features systematic honorific-humble verb correspondences, such as “来—光临—拜谒” and “看—垂览—拜读.” Uzbek, in contrast, possesses lexicalized polite verb equivalents, including “yemoq → taomlanmoq,” “o‘lmoq → vafot etmoq,” and “kelmoq → tashrif buyurmoq,” reflecting a

clearer lexical distinction in verbal politeness. Russian does not form honorific verbs through derivation but relies on conventionalized polite expressions and periphrastic constructions, especially in contexts of gratitude, apology, and good wishes, such as “благодарю,” “прошу прощения,” and “примите мои пожелания.”

Derivational strategies also play an important role in honorific expression across the three languages. In Chinese, prefixes such as “老” and “小” before surnames are used to politely address elders or juniors, while modifiers like “令、尊、贵、贤” enhance respect in nominal expressions. Uzbek makes extensive use of both prefixes and suffixes: “Hurmatli + name/title” is standard in formal discourse, while suffixes such as “-jon” and “-xon/-xonim” convey affection and respect. Particularly noteworthy is the plural suffix “-lar,” which in expressions like “dadaqlar” or “oyimlar” functions as a marker of respect rather than plurality. In Russian, respect is commonly expressed by adding “уважаемый/ая” before a name or title; however, unlike in Chinese, evaluative modifiers such as “старый/ая” are pragmatically inappropriate and generally perceived as impolite. The information has been organized into a more intuitive format, as shown in the table below.

Comparative Table of Honorific Lexics in Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian

Category	Chinese	Uzbek	Russian	Notes/Remarks
<b>Addressive / Pronoun Honorifics</b>	Second-person pronouns: 您, 您老, 您几位 Nominal forms: 家父, 小女, 令尊, 令郎, 老师, 先生/女士, 老板, 经理, 阿姨/叔叔	Second-person pronouns: sen (informal), siz (formal/polite) Nominal forms: ota (father), ona (mother), bobo (grandfather), ustoz (tutor), professor, aka (elder brother), opa (elder sister), domla, imom	Second-person pronouns: ты (informal), вы (formal/polite) Nominal forms: full name + patronymic; title + surname / title + full name + patronymic; For strangers: молодой человек, девушка	Chinese and Uzbek have rich kinship and professional address systems; Russian typically uses full name + patronymic in formal contexts; occupational nouns cannot serve directly as honorifics
<b>Verbal Honorifics</b>	Achieved via honorific prefixes or lexical alternatives: 光临 (come), 垂览 (see), 拜谒 (come, humble), 拜读 (read, humble) Honorific prefixes: 惠, 莅, 垂, 恭, 荣, 拜, 劳	Honorific verb substitutions: yemoq → taomlanmoq o‘lmoq → vafot etmoq kelmoq → tashrif buyurmoq	Polite verbal expressions: благодарю, разрешите выразить благодарность (gratitude); прошу прощение, простите (apologies); хотелось бы пожелать, разрешите пожелать, примите мои пожелания (good wishes)	Chinese uses prefixes or lexical alternatives; Uzbek uses verb substitutions; Russian uses fixed polite expressions
<b>Derivational Honorifics (Prefixes/Suffixes)</b>	Prefixes: 老, 小 (before surname) Honorific prefixes: 令, 尊, 贤, 贵, 高, 大, 芳	Prefix: Hurmatli + name/title Suffixes: -jon, -xon/-xonim (e.g., onajon, qaynonaxon) Religious honorifics: hazratlari Plural suffix -lar may convey respect	Preposed adjective: уважаемый/ая + name or title	Chinese and Uzbek use prefixes/suffixes to convey respect; Russian mainly uses preposed «уважаемый/ая» and does not use 老/小

Syntactically, all three languages utilize sentence structures to mitigate directness, including modal phrases, conditional clauses, negative structures, or indirect expressions to soften requests, suggestions, and recommendations. In requests, Chinese commonly uses modal and interrogative structures such as “请.../能不能请您.../是否可以...,” for example, “您好, 能不能请您开一下门?” Uzbek similarly relies on polite markers like “Marhamat” or “Iltimos” and interrogative forms (e.g., “Marhamat, o‘tiring”), while Russian combines “Пожалуйста” with imperative forms or polite plural verb agreement, as in “Пожалуйста, откройте окно.” In suggestions, conditional clauses and indirect constructions are widely used across the three languages: Chinese employs structures such as “如果...就...” (e.g., “如果您有时间就帮我看一下吧”), Uzbek uses “Agar...” (e.g., “Agar xohlasangiz, men yordam bera olaman”), and Russian favors conditional or modal expressions like “Если у вас будет время...” or “Возможно, вам лучше обсудить это позже.”

Grammatically, politeness is further achieved through passives, impersonal constructions, and subjunctive or conditional moods. Chinese frequently uses passive constructions to avoid direct blame, for instance, “发现了一些问题,” and employs hypothetical expressions to soften

requests, such as “明天早上能去听课就好了.” Uzbek passives formed with suffixes like “-il/-in/-n/-l” similarly mitigate responsibility (e.g., “Xat hali jo‘natilmagan ekan”), while conditional and wish markers (“-sa/-se/-sin”) are central to polite expression, as in “Omad sizga yor bo‘lsin.” Uzbek honorific agreement further requires consistent verbal and possessive marking when using “siz,” as in “Siz keldingiz” and “oilangiz.” Russian combines passive and impersonal constructions (e.g., “Здесь допущена ошибка”) with a well-developed subjunctive mood formed by “бы” + past tense, which is essential for polite requests and suggestions, such as “Вы не могли бы помочь мне?” and “Было бы лучше обсудить это позже.”

Honorific systems in Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian are deeply embedded in their respective cultural value frameworks, and the similarities and differences among them reflect distinct cultural orientations shaped by history, religion, and social organization. Chinese honorifics originate largely from Confucian notions of “礼” (ritual propriety) and “敬” (respect), emphasizing hierarchical order, interpersonal harmony, and collective values; accordingly, honorific usage is sensitive to social distance and relative status, as seen in expressions distinguishing “上级/下级” (superior/subordinate), the use of polite forms such as “劳驾” toward strangers, and the

prevalence of self-deprecating and other-elevating expressions like “鄙人” and “贵体,” all of which serve to maintain “face” and social harmony. Uzbek honorifics are grounded in the concept of “hurmat” (respect), which integrates Turkic traditions with Islamic ethics and functions as a moral principle rather than a mere linguistic strategy; respect is closely tied to age, family hierarchy, and religious norms, with particular emphasis on reverence for parents, elders, and guests, while social status plays a comparatively less central role than in Chinese culture. Russian honorifics, by contrast, are shaped by Slavic traditions, Eastern Orthodox ethics, and a strong institutional heritage, with respect expressed primarily through normative and professional roles; influenced by Orthodox humanism and Western egalitarian ideas, Russian culture exhibits a relatively individualist orientation, manifested linguistically in the avoidance of intrusive personal inquiries

and a greater acceptance of direct compliments in everyday interaction.

Conclusion. The honorific systems of Chinese, Uzbek, and Russian exhibit both commonalities and significant differences. Chinese honorifics, as an analytic system, rely primarily on lexical and syntactic strategies. Uzbek honorifics, as a synthetic system, encode respect through morphological modifications. Russian honorifics combine morphological variation with the subjunctive and impersonal constructions to convey politeness. Effective use of honorifics is essential for maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships and facilitating cross-cultural communication, emphasizing the importance of understanding cultural and linguistic norms underlying polite expression.

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