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ADDRESS FORMS AS POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FICTION: A LINGUOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract This article examines how forms of address contribute to politeness in selected passages from Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice and Abdulla Qodiriy’s O‘tkan kunlar. It adopts a qualitative linguocultural approach that connects the wording of an address with the relationship enacted between fictional speakers. English examples combine titles, surnames and affectionate expressions; Uzbek examples combine kinship vocabulary, honorific naming and socially meaningful grammatical choices. Close reading suggests that deference and intimacy can coexist within the same interaction. An apparently respectful form can accompany disagreement, while an affectionate expression can introduce pressure or irony. The article therefore treats address as a contextual resource rather than a fixed indicator of polite intention. Its contribution is an interpretive framework for comparing literary address without reducing English and Uzbek to opposing cultural stereotypes. The findings have practical implications for literary translation and the teaching of English pragmatics to Uzbek-speaking learners.

Keywords: forms of address, politeness, linguoculture, literary dialogue, English fiction, Uzbek fiction, kinship terms, contextual interpretation.

Introduction

Addressing another person is an act of social positioning. A speaker who selects a surname, a title, a familiar name or a kinship expression indicates how a relationship should be understood at that moment. The choice can acknowledge authority, invite cooperation, claim closeness or establish distance. Literary dialogue makes these functions especially visible because a narrator can place an address beside a description of silence, irritation or affection.

A comparative study must distinguish the social world represented in a novel from present-day national behaviour. Austen and Qodiriy portray historically situated communities, and neither novel provides a representative sample of all speakers. Nevertheless, their dialogue offers a useful basis for examining how respect is represented through language. The central question is how nominal address interacts with the surrounding utterance to produce a culturally

interpretable relationship. The argument developed here is that politeness emerges from this interaction, not from the address expression alone.

Literature Review

Brown and Levinson’s model connects politeness with the management of face and with the risks that particular acts may create for a speaker or addressee. Their distinction between positive and negative face provides a starting point for separating affiliation from attention to another person’s freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In address research, this distinction encourages questions about whether a form invites solidarity or acknowledges distance. It does not justify assigning one function permanently to a word.

Leech (2014) distinguishes the linguistic resources available for politeness from the social evaluations governing their use. This separation is valuable for a comparison in which superficially similar choices may carry different expectations. A title can be linguistically deferential while its use in a particular conversation remains routine. Conversely, an apparently ordinary expression can become significant when a speaker unexpectedly changes the way an interlocutor is addressed. The difference between available form and contextual value guides the analysis below.

Watts (2003) challenges approaches that identify politeness only through an analyst’s predetermined categories. Locher and Watts (2005) develop relational work as a way of examining the broader negotiation of interpersonal relationships. Their approach allows an important distinction between behaviour that is merely expected and behaviour that participants positively evaluate as polite. It also leaves room for disagreement, mock politeness and contested interpretations. For fictional conversations, this means attending to characters’ responses and narrative framing rather than treating formal vocabulary as decisive evidence.

These perspectives serve different analytical purposes. Face-oriented analysis identifies the interpersonal pressures surrounding requests and disagreement. A relational approach asks whether an expression maintains, challenges or redefines an expected relationship. A linguocultural reading then considers why a particular social identity is made relevant: spouse, elder, guest, servant, relative or social superior. The present article combines these questions without assuming that any single theory fully explains both literary settings.

An additional distinction concerns address and reference. A character’s name in narration identifies that person for the reader, whereas a vocative identifies the person to whom a character is speaking. Confusing the two can exaggerate the prevalence of honorific address. A narrator’s repeated use of a title does not establish that every interlocutor uses that title. The analysis therefore prioritises direct conversational turns with identifiable speakers and addressees.

The working contribution of this article is a small-scale comparison organised around relational functions rather than a list of national traits. It examines how affiliation and hierarchy can appear together, how disagreement affects the interpretation of a respectful form, and how a translator might preserve that combination. The resulting claims concern the selected passages. Broader historical and sociolinguistic conclusions would require additional novels, fuller sampling and evidence outside fiction.

Methodology

The study uses qualitative comparative close reading. Its English source is Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, consulted in the Project Gutenberg electronic edition. Its Uzbek source is Qodiriy’s O‘tkan kunlar, consulted through the opening material reproduced by Ziyouz. The comparison is deliberately restricted to accessible passages whose immediate conversational setting can be checked. It is not a balanced corpus investigation and does not report frequencies, percentages or statistically representative differences.

The principal English material consists of the Bennets’ opening conversation in Chapter 1 and Mr Bennet’s address to Elizabeth in Chapter 24. The principal Uzbek material consists of the opening encounters involving Otabek, Hasanali and their visitors, together with Otabek and Hasanali’s subsequent private exchange in the same online extract. These passages were selected because they provide clear relationships, recognisable address expressions and contextual evidence relevant to politeness. The selection is purposive: it supports detailed interpretation rather than claims about the distribution of forms across either novel.

The unit of analysis is an address expression within a conversational episode. Each example is examined through five questions. Who speaks to whom? What relationship is made relevant? What action is being performed, such as requesting, responding or disagreeing? What other linguistic resources occur nearby? How does the narrator or interlocutor help the reader interpret the exchange? These questions prevent an isolated honorific from being treated as proof of respectful conduct.

For comparative purposes, expressions are classified by their observable construction: title with surname, affectionate expression, familiar name, kinship term or honorific form. The proposed interpersonal reading is then recorded separately. A form may support deference, solidarity, persuasion or the maintenance of a relationship during disagreement. Multiple readings are possible, and classifications of function remain interpretive. No independent coding agreement or participant evaluation is claimed.

Short examples retain the spelling of the consulted texts, including historically marked Uzbek forms. English explanations of Uzbek kinship terms are functional glosses, not quotations from a published translation. The discussion distinguishes a literal genealogical meaning from the social relationship enacted in context. It also avoids equating an Uzbek honorific directly with an English title merely because both can express respect.

The comparison has three limitations. Fictional speech is authored and selected for narrative purposes. The English and Uzbek passages represent different historical settings rather than matched institutions. Finally, the analysis was conducted as an interpretive reading without a frequency-based inventory of the complete novels. These limitations constrain generalisation but do not remove the value of close reading: the selected interactions make the coexistence of affection, authority and disagreement unusually explicit. The findings are consequently presented as explanations of textual evidence and as proposals for further comparative research.

Results and Analysis of English Fiction

The opening address “My dear Mr. Bennet” combines affection with a conventional title and surname (Austen, 1813, ch. 1). Its construction makes two relationships available simultaneously. The affectionate modifier presents the interlocutor as personally close, while

the title preserves a recognisable social identity. In this exchange, the title cannot simply be equated with emotional distance: the speakers are married, and the same conversation displays longstanding familiarity. The expression is evidence that intimacy and formal naming can coexist.

The surrounding dialogue also complicates an exclusively positive reading of affection. Mrs Bennet repeatedly seeks her husband’s attention and tries to influence his conduct concerning a new neighbour. Her affectionate wording belongs to an interaction in which persuasion and impatience are both relevant. The address softens the approach to an interlocutor whose cooperation she wants, but it does not eliminate pressure. Its politeness value therefore depends partly on the request it introduces and on Mr Bennet’s resistance.

The shorter form “my dear” recurs within the same episode. Without the surname and title, it places greater emphasis on an established personal relationship. Yet it remains capable of introducing insistence. A pedagogical account that equates affectionate vocabulary with kindness would miss this distinction. The expression can acknowledge intimacy while simultaneously making a demand harder to refuse because the request is framed within that intimacy.

A later paternal address, “Lizzy,” illustrates a different resource (Austen, 1813, ch. 24). Familiar naming identifies a family relationship and gives Mr Bennet conversational access to Elizabeth’s personal concerns. The form itself need not be deferential. Its importance lies in how familiarity permits a speaker to offer comments that might be intrusive from an outsider. Address thus helps establish who is entitled to ask a question, make a joke or comment on another person’s emotional life.

Taken together, these examples support an analytical distinction between recognising a relationship and acting considerately within it. A speaker may accurately recognise intimacy yet use that intimacy to press a request. A title may acknowledge social convention without expressing submission. A familiar name may communicate affection while reinforcing an older speaker’s conversational authority. The literary effect is produced by these combinations, not by a simple opposition between formal and informal forms.

The findings do not establish that English fictional dialogue is uniformly individualistic or that surnames always express distance. Instead, they reveal a flexible coordination of naming, affect and the action underway. For translation, the relevant question is which component carries the greatest weight in a particular turn. Preserving the title while losing the affection would alter the balance; preserving affection while deleting every trace of social convention could also change the characterisation. A functionally sensitive translation should consider the combination before selecting an equivalent.

Results and Analysis of Uzbek Fiction

In the opening encounter between Otabek and Hasanali, the address “ota” recognises an elder through a kinship expression (Qodiriy, n.d., opening section). The surrounding narrative identifies Hasanali as an enslaved member of Otabek’s household rather than Otabek’s biological father. The address therefore cannot be explained only by genealogy. Its relational

force lies in the public acknowledgement of age, longstanding care and personal attachment within a materially unequal household.

Hasanali’s corresponding “o‘g‘lim” invokes the relationship from the other direction. The expression can be glossed as “my son,” but its interpretation requires the preceding conversational setting. It gives linguistic form to care and familiarity without proving that social inequality has disappeared. The pair is especially useful for a linguocultural account because it shows that an intimate relational vocabulary can operate across an unequal social relationship.

The nearby response “begim” makes a different aspect of that relationship relevant. Rather than resolving the exchange into either affection or hierarchy, the close reading suggests that speakers can activate both. A respectful kinship expression and an honorific response need not cancel each other. Their coexistence allows the dialogue to represent attachment while retaining the asymmetry of household status. This is an interpretation of this episode, not a claim that every use of these expressions has the same meaning.

Another visitor’s “bek aka” combines a status-related element with an elder-brother expression. A literal English rendering would risk suggesting an actual sibling relationship where the conversational function is broader. In the selected encounter, the combination is better understood as a way of approaching the addressee through recognisable respect. The address does not merely identify Otabek; it proposes a socially acceptable footing from which the visitor can continue the exchange.

The private exchange between Otabek and Hasanali provides a useful counterexample to the assumption that respectful address excludes conflict. Otabek retains “ota” while challenging Hasanali’s interpretation of his behaviour. The address helps maintain the valued relationship during disagreement, but it does not remove the disagreement. The relational function is therefore compatible with contesting the other person’s proposition. An analysis based only on courteous vocabulary would overlook the argumentative work taking place.

The Uzbek material also encourages caution about grammatical evidence. Respect can be distributed across address words, pronouns, possessive forms and verbal morphology. The present close reading does not measure those resources systematically; it notes their relevance where they occur alongside a vocative. A comprehensive account would need to analyse the whole utterance and the sequence of responses.

These examples suggest that kinship vocabulary is an important resource for representing social recognition in the chosen passages. They do not establish that Uzbek speakers always prioritise hierarchy, nor that English lacks kinship-based address. The more precise finding is that Qodiriy’s selected dialogue makes age, personal attachment and status simultaneously available to the reader. The analytical task is to explain their interaction within the represented scene.

Discussion and Translation Implications

The central comparative result is functional convergence with different combinations of linguistic resources. In the English examples, affectionate modification and familiar naming coexist with titles and surnames. In the Uzbek examples, kinship expressions coexist with honorific status marking. Both sets allow a character to acknowledge a relationship while

pursuing an immediate conversational objective. The evidence therefore favours a model of address as relational negotiation over a rigid division between an informal English system and a hierarchical Uzbek system.

This comparison also separates politeness from agreement. A respectful vocative may accompany a challenge, and an affectionate expression may introduce pressure. Neither observation makes the expression meaningless. Instead, the address can preserve the relationship in which disagreement becomes possible. The speaker may contest a proposition while continuing to acknowledge the addressee’s age, closeness or recognised identity. This distinction offers a practical way to connect face-oriented analysis with the broader concept of relational work.

Translation involves at least three decisions. The translator must identify the relationship being invoked, assess how marked the expression is in its original setting, and decide how the target language can reproduce the relevant balance. Word-for-word substitution is only one option. Retention, a brief contextual explanation or compensation elsewhere in the utterance may better preserve the relationship when direct lexical equivalence would mislead. The preferred solution depends on genre, readership and the surrounding dialogue.

For instance, translating ota as “father” may suggest biological paternity unless the context corrects that inference. Retaining the Uzbek form can preserve local texture, but it requires sufficient narrative support. Rendering it with an English title might preserve a degree of respect while losing the suggestion of familial care. These alternatives represent different compromises; no single equivalent can be prescribed for every occurrence. The translator should first establish which interpersonal feature is indispensable in the particular scene.

A similar problem appears when translating affectionate English address into Uzbek. A surname-based rendering may reproduce public respect yet weaken marital familiarity. A purely affectionate rendering may erase a historically meaningful convention. Where both aspects matter, a translator can preserve one in the address and communicate the other through the surrounding turn. Such compensation should remain consistent with the character’s established voice rather than introducing an unexplained change in intimacy.

For language teaching, the passages support tasks that ask learners to explain choices instead of memorising lists of polite expressions. Learners can compare an address with the request, response or disagreement that follows it, then predict how a changed form would alter the relationship. A useful assessment asks students to distinguish linguistic form, probable intention and available contextual evidence. This approach teaches pragmatic reasoning while avoiding claims that one national community is inherently more polite than another.

Further research could extend the comparison to additional authors, genres and periods, record address shifts across complete relationships, and invite independent readers to evaluate alternative translations. Such work would test whether the interpretive patterns identified here recur beyond the selected episodes. Until then, the proposed framework should be treated as a grounded reading procedure rather than a predictive model of national behaviour.

Conclusion

The selected English and Uzbek passages show that address forms are resources for managing relationships, not self-sufficient measurements of politeness. A title can coexist with affection, a kinship expression can coexist with status inequality, and a respectful address can be retained during disagreement. The most useful unit of interpretation is therefore the address within its conversational and narrative setting.

The article contributes a comparative procedure that separates construction, social relationship and contextual function. Applied cautiously, this procedure explains how fictional characters acknowledge others while persuading, questioning or challenging them. It also supports translation decisions that preserve relational meaning rather than relying exclusively on dictionary equivalence. The conclusions remain limited to purposively selected passages; their wider applicability requires a larger and more systematically sampled body of evidence.

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