

Forms of Politeness in The Official-Business Style of The Korean Language

Nasullaeva Dilnoza Bakhodirovna

Department of Oriental Languages, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the forms and functions of politeness in the official-business style of the Korean language, with particular emphasis on the addressive category (상대경어법). Politeness is analyzed as both a linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon that regulates communication and reflects hierarchical relationships in Korean society. The study explores grammatical and lexical means of expressing politeness, focusing on the highest formal speech level (하십시오체) and its usage in official discourse. Through the analysis of speeches delivered by Presidents Moon Jae-in and Yoon Suk-yeol, the research highlights the role of sentence-ending forms, honorific suffixes such as -님, and forms of address in constructing respectful communication. The findings demonstrate that politeness in Korean official-business communication is deeply rooted in Confucian values and continues to evolve alongside social changes. The article concludes that politeness strategies in Korean are not only grammatical tools but also essential mechanisms for maintaining social harmony, regulating interpersonal relations, and shaping professional discourse.

Keywords: - Korean language; politeness; official-business style; honorifics; addressive category; 하십시오체; speech etiquette; forms of address; socio-cultural factors; Korean grammar.

INTRODUCTION

Politeness is a crucial component of any communication, organizing and regulating the communicative process. It is well known that the more formal the communication environment, the stricter the requirements for the choice of linguistic means and adherence to established rules of speech behavior. Therefore, it seems relevant to analyze the specific features of politeness in formal business style in Korean in light of modern trends in its development. .

The use of polite speech as a means of communication simultaneously serves as a means of conveying information and as a form of communication with the interlocutor.

As history shows, since ancient times, traditional Korean society has maintained a strict disparity in attitudes toward different social classes. Society clung to Confucian ideologies, which included a preference for men over women and the

FRONTLINE JOURNALS

dominance of the older generation over the younger. Thus, depending on who is the object of politeness and the grammatical and lexical methods used to express it, Korean researchers distinguish three important categories in the politeness system: the category of the addressed, the category of the subjective, and the category of the objective. We will consider only the first of these—the category of the addressed.

The first group of the politeness system is considered to be the “Addressive Category” 상대경어법 or “personal attitude category”, which expresses politeness towards the opponent. This category is the largest group and, in turn, is manifested due to certain elements that have coinciding grammatical and lexical features.

The highest degree of politeness in formal business style is the 하십시오체 degree, which is used in formal business settings, when addressing superiors. Grammatical endings related to this degree are: -십시오, -습니다, -십시오, -습니까. As an example, let us consider the following excerpt from the speech of the President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in (presidency 2017-2022) at the official meeting of the heads of the two countries of the Republic of Korea and Uzbekistan «한 우즈벡 정상회담 언론발표문»:

앗쌀롬 알레이쿰 (안녕하십니까)!

나와 우리 대표단을 따뜻하게 맞아 주신 미르지요예프 대통령님과 우즈베키스탄 국민께 진심으로 감사드립니다.

형제와 다름없는 미르지요예프 대통령님을 다시 만나게 되어 기쁩니다.

대통령님은 정치·경제·사회 전 분야에서 개혁 정책으로 우즈베키스탄의 새로운 발전을 이끌고 있습니다. 전세계의 주목을 받는 대통령님께 경의를 표합니다.

미르지요예프 대통령님과 나는 양국 관계를 '특별 전략적 동반자 관계'로 격상하기로 하고, 구체적인 실천 방안들을 논의했습니다.

Translation:

Assalom alaykum (hello)!

I thank President Mirziyoyev and the people of Uzbekistan for the warm welcome our entire delegation received.

I am very pleased to meet with President Mirziyoyev, who is like a brother to me. The President is spearheading Uzbekistan's new development, pursuing a policy of reform in all spheres of politics, the economy, and society. I express my respect to the President, who has attracted the attention of the entire world.

President Mirziyoyev and I decided to raise the level of bilateral relations to a “special strategic partnership” and discussed specific action plans.

In the above excerpt from the speech of the President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in (presidency 2017-2022), we note the welcoming speech, where the greeting in the Uzbek language is used with the phrase *앗쌀롬 알레이쿰*, in accordance with the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the opposing country, i.e. the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev Sh.M. It is necessary to highlight the highest degree of politeness in the official business style *하십시오체*, used in this excerpt. The main difference is the grammatical endings - *습니다/습니까*:

감사드립니다 - thank you;

기쁩니다 - glad, happy;

경의를 표합니다 - I express my respects;

논의했습니다 - discussed.

It's worth emphasizing the importance of translating polite forms of address in a formal business style. A form of address is an essential component of a communicative statement, establishing and maintaining contact between the addressee and the speaker. It is "a word or group of words that designates the person or object addressed." In the Korean business community, the addressee is addressed with respect to their social status, thereby emphasizing their special position. Compared to forms of address in other languages, Korean forms of address are more complex and often "mixed." For example: a proper name + a job title or profession:

미르지요예프 대통령님 - President Mirziyoev;

페드로 산체스 스페인 총리 - Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez;

처버 커러쉬 총회 의장님의 - General Assembly President Chubb Kerrash.

Thus, unlike Russian, in Korean, social status distinctions are a more decisive parameter. And the means of expressing politeness in address not only mark the relative status of the addresser and addressee but also constantly remind them of the extent to which they differ.

Consequently, forms of address and greeting are directly linked to speech etiquette, which means «socially developed rules of speech behavior, binding on members of society, nationally specific, stably enshrined in speech formulas, and at the same time subject to historical change».

According to Rhee Seongha, in Korean, the speaker's attitude toward the interlocutor is most clearly expressed by: 1) the choice of a sentence-ending particle signaling the degree of politeness and 2) the choice of nomination, such as suffixes, pronouns, and forms of address. As an example, consider the following keynote speech by current President of the Republic of Korea Yun Seok-yeol at the 77th UN General Assembly. («제77차 유엔 총회 기조연설», 2022년 09월 21일):

의장님, 사무총장님, 각국 대표 여러분

처버 커러쉬 총회 의장님의 취임을 축하합니다.

의장님의 리더십 하에 이번 제77차 유엔총회가 더 나은 세계를 향해 회원국들의 지혜를 모으는 계기가 되길 바랍니다.

특히 올해 두 번째 임기를 시작한 안토니우 구테레쉬 사무총장님의 헌신과 노력에 경의를 표합니다.

유엔 헌장은 더 많은 자유 속에서 사회적 진보와 생활 수준의 향상을 촉진할 것을 천명하고 있습니다.

또한, 국제평화와 안전을 유지하기 위한 인류의 연대를 촉구하고 있습니다.

한 국가 내에서 어느 개인의 자유가 위협받을 때

공동체 구성원들이 연대해서 그 위협을 제거하고 자유를 지켜야 하듯이 국제사회에서도 어느 세계 시민이나 국가의 자유가 위협받을 때 국제사회가 연대하여 그 자유를 지켜야 합니다.

우리들의 현대사는 이렇게 연대하고 힘을 합쳐 자유를 지키고 문명적 진보를 이룩해온 과정을 보여주고 있습니다.

Translation:

President, Secretary-General, distinguished representatives

Congratulations to President Chubb Kerrache on your inauguration.

I hope that the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, under your leadership, will serve as an opportunity to gather the wisdom of Member States to build a better world.

In particular, I would like to pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres, who began his second term in office this year, for his dedication and efforts.

The Charter of the United Nations calls for the promotion of social progress and higher standards of living in larger freedom.

Furthermore, we call for human solidarity to maintain international peace and security.

Just as members of a community must unite to address threats and defend freedom when individual freedom is threatened domestically, the international community must demonstrate solidarity when the freedom of any individual or nation is threatened internationally.

Our modern history demonstrates the process of defending freedom and achieving civilizational progress through solidarity and strength.

Thus, the highest degree of formality is marked by the suffix -님, which appears not only in the official business sphere, but also in the sphere of professions and services. From the above excerpt of the speech of the President of the Republic of Korea, we have identified several examples with the addition of the suffix -님: 의장님 "chairman", 사무총장님 "secretary general", 각국 대표 여러분 "representatives of countries", 처버 커러쉬 총회

FRONTLINE JOURNALS

의장님 "chairman of the general assembly Chubba Kerrash". It should be noted that in modern Korean, the suffix -님 is added not only to high-ranking officials, but is also added accordingly to many forms of address that do not depend on position or social status.

According to N.A. Karaban, in the official business style, the category of politeness also performs the following functions: 1) influencing (often carried out in communicative intentions); 2) regulatory (creation, support and preservation of social balance); 3) harmonizing (giving the necessary tonality, reducing the degree of categoricalness of the statement); 4) presentational (creation of an image, self-presentation of the addresser as a well-mannered person).

The rules of respectful speech in Korean also contain normative and social meanings. It can be said that in Korean, polite forms of address and their correct use are an important element, exerting a significant influence on Korean society and culture.

According to Ko Yeon-chul and Joo Sun-myung, there are two types of classification of Korean grammar: formal and informal, which is the main aspect influencing respectful relationships. If we consider the culture of respectful communication in Korean grammar and in the language itself, we can say that respectful expressions are based on status relations, and formal and informal expressions are used in public places and in public relations.

Thus, changes in society are directly expressed by various changes and transformations in the grammar of the Korean language, which allows us to define the polite style not only as a grammatical phenomenon of the language, but also as a socially conditioned.

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