



PARALINGUISTIC MEANS OF EXPRESSING RESPECT IN ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND UZBEK COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Respect is one of the key values that regulates interpersonal, academic and intercultural communication. In real interaction, respect is expressed not only through words, address forms and polite formulas, but also through paralinguistic means such as intonation, speech tempo, pause, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and interpersonal distance. The present article examines the functional-pragmatic role of paralinguistic means in expressing respect in English, Russian and Uzbek communicative behaviour. The study is based on comparative, pragmatic and discourse-oriented analysis of typical communicative situations, including polite request, clarification, disagreement, teacher-student interaction and communication with elders or higher-status interlocutors. The analysis shows that English communication tends to express respect through indirectness, mitigation and protection of personal autonomy. Russian communication relies more on formal address, controlled intonation and status balance. Uzbek communication gives special importance to age, hierarchy, restrained tone, modest behaviour and culturally appropriate distance. The findings prove that the same polite utterance may be interpreted differently if its paralinguistic form does not correspond to cultural expectations. The article argues that paralinguistic competence should be considered an important part of intercultural and pedagogical communication.



Keywords: Paralinguistics; respect; intercultural communication; pragmatics; English communication; Russian communication; Uzbek communication; nonverbal behaviour; pedagogical communication.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, communication is becoming more multilingual, multicultural and pragmatically complex. In educational, academic and professional settings, people often interact not only through different languages, but also through different cultural expectations of politeness, distance, voice, gesture and respect. Therefore, successful communication cannot be explained only by grammar and vocabulary. It also depends on how a speaker uses intonation, pauses, speech tempo, facial expression, eye contact, gesture and interpersonal distance. These paralinguistic means help the listener understand whether an utterance is polite, formal, distant, friendly, respectful or, in some cases, inappropriate. The importance of this issue is supported by international educational data. UNESCO reports that 40% of people globally do not have access to education in a language they speak and understand fluently; in some low- and middle-income countries this indicator reaches 90%, and more than 250 million learners are affected by this problem [1]. This fact shows that modern education is not only a matter of transmitting knowledge, but also a matter of understanding language, culture and communicative behaviour. In addition, PISA 2022 results show that, on average across OECD countries, 13% of 15-year-old students have an immigrant background; in 21 participating countries and economies this share is higher than 15%, and in 11 of them it is higher than 25% [2]. These figures confirm that classrooms and academic spaces are increasingly intercultural. In such environments, misunderstanding may arise not because the words are wrong, but because tone, silence, distance or eye contact are interpreted differently. Respect is one of the most important values in such communication. It regulates relations between teacher and student, elder and younger, speaker and listener, superior and subordinate, as well as members of different cultural communities. However, respect is not expressed in the same way in all languages and cultures. In English communication, respectful behaviour is often connected with indirectness, softening strategies, moderate tone and protection of the



addressee's personal autonomy. In Russian communication, respect is more closely associated with formal address, controlled intonation, social distance and normative politeness. In Uzbek communication, respect is strongly linked with age, social hierarchy, status, modest behaviour, restrained intonation and culturally accepted forms of address. Thus, the same communicative act may be understood differently depending on the paralinguistic form in which it is expressed.

The scientific basis of this problem is connected with several important theories in linguistics and communication studies. Jakobson's functional model of language showed that communication performs not only informative, but also expressive and interpersonal functions [3]. Hall's theory of proxemics proved that interpersonal distance is culturally regulated and directly influences the interpretation of social relations [4]. Birdwhistell considered gesture and body movement as a structured system of signs, not as random movements [5]. Mehrabian emphasized the role of voice and non-verbal behaviour in the perception of interpersonal attitudes [6]. Brown and Levinson later explained politeness and respect as pragmatic strategies used to reduce pressure on the interlocutor and preserve social harmony [7]. These approaches make it possible to study respect not only as a moral or social concept, but also as a functional-pragmatic category of communication.

At the same time, existing studies often focus mainly on verbal politeness formulas, such as address forms, modal verbs, honorific expressions or etiquette phrases. Less attention is paid to the integrated role of paralinguistic means: intonation, pause, tempo, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and spatial distance. This gap is especially noticeable in comparative studies involving English, Russian and Uzbek communicative behaviour. In real communication, however, these means work together. A polite phrase may lose its respectful meaning if it is pronounced with a sharp tone, excessive speed, inappropriate gesture or intrusive distance. Conversely, even a simple utterance may sound respectful when it is supported by calm intonation, tactful pause, moderate visual contact and culturally appropriate behaviour. For this reason, the present article examines the functional-pragmatic features of paralinguistic means expressing respect in English, Russian and Uzbek communication. The study focuses on how



respect is created, strengthened or weakened through prosodic, kinesic, proxemic and extra-linguistic signals. Special attention is given to educational and intercultural contexts, because these are the areas where communicative misunderstanding may directly affect learning, professional interaction and social adaptation. The article is based on the idea that respect is not expressed by words alone; it is formed through the interaction of verbal content and culturally meaningful paralinguistic behaviour.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the idea that communication is not limited to verbal language. In real speech interaction, meaning is produced through the joint functioning of words, voice, gesture, facial expression, pause, body position and interpersonal distance. This approach is directly connected with the main idea of the dissertation, where respect is interpreted as a communicative category realized through intonation, tempo, pause, visual contact, kinesic behaviour and proxemic organization of interaction. The dissertation emphasizes that one and the same utterance may receive different pragmatic interpretations depending on its paralinguistic form and cultural context. One of the important approaches to this problem belongs to Adam Kendon, who studied gesture as a meaningful part of speech communication. In his view, gesture is not a random physical movement accompanying speech, but a visible form of utterance that helps organize and clarify meaning [8]. This idea is significant for analysing respect because respectful behaviour is often supported by controlled gestures, calm facial expression and restrained body movement. For example, when a teacher says, "Please, explain your answer," the phrase itself may be polite; however, if it is accompanied by a sharp hand movement or dismissive facial expression, the student may perceive it as criticism rather than respectful guidance. Thus, Kendon's approach allows us to understand gesture as a functional component of respect expression.

Another important theoretical basis is connected with Erving Goffman's concept of "face" and interaction order. Goffman explained that every person in communication tries to maintain a socially acceptable image of the self, and interaction becomes successful when participants help each other preserve this



image [9]. This approach is closely related to respect because respectful communication protects the interlocutor from humiliation, pressure or loss of status. For instance, in academic communication, disagreement is often expressed indirectly: "I see your point, but perhaps we can look at it from another perspective." Such a phrase protects the listener's face not only through words, but also through soft tone, pause and moderate eye contact. Brown and Levinson developed this idea further in their politeness theory. They argued that politeness strategies are used to reduce threats to the interlocutor's face and to regulate social distance [10]. Their theory is useful for comparing English, Russian and Uzbek communication. In English, respect is often expressed through indirect modal constructions such as "Could you...?", "Would you mind...?" or "May I ask...?". In Russian, respectful interaction is strongly connected with formal address, the pronoun "Вы," name-patronymic forms and controlled intonation. In Uzbek, respect is frequently expressed through status-based address forms such as ustoz, aka, opa, domla, as well as through restrained tone and culturally appropriate distance. Therefore, politeness is not only verbal; it is strengthened or weakened by paralinguistic behaviour.

Edward Hall's theory of proxemics is also essential for this research. Hall proved that interpersonal distance is culturally regulated and that people from different cultures interpret physical space differently [11]. This is very important in the expression of respect. In English-speaking contexts, respect is often connected with protecting personal space and avoiding physical or psychological pressure. In Russian formal communication, distance may mark official status and seriousness. In Uzbek communication, distance is also linked with age, hierarchy and social role. For example, when speaking to an elder or teacher, a younger person may keep a more careful physical distance and avoid overly relaxed body posture. In this case, proxemics becomes a visible sign of respect. Ray Birdwhistell's kinesic theory provides another important scientific basis. He considered body movement, posture, facial expression and gesture as a structured system of signs [12]. From this perspective, respectful behaviour can be analysed as a set of culturally organized bodily signals. A calm posture, attentive facial expression and moderate nodding may show respect and interest. In contrast, crossed arms, excessive movement, turning away or avoiding the listener



completely may be interpreted as indifference or disrespect depending on the context. This is especially important in intercultural communication, where the same gesture may not have the same meaning in different cultures. In cross-cultural pragmatics, Anna Wierzbicka argued that communicative behaviour reflects cultural scripts and that speech patterns cannot be correctly understood without considering cultural norms [13]. This approach is very relevant to the English-Russian-Uzbek comparison. For example, direct eye contact may be interpreted in English communication as attention and confidence. In Russian communication, it may also be connected with sincerity and seriousness, but the degree of directness depends on the situation. In Uzbek culture, especially in communication with elders or teachers, excessive directness of gaze may be perceived as inappropriate, while a more restrained visual contact may express politeness and modesty. This shows that respect is culturally coded not only in words but also in visual behaviour.

From the point of view of discourse analysis, Teun van Dijk emphasized that communication is always interpreted within a social and cognitive context [14]. This means that paralinguistic signs cannot be analysed separately from the situation in which they occur. A pause in a classroom, a business meeting or a family conversation may have different meanings. In pedagogical communication, a pause after a student's answer may show that the teacher is giving time for reflection. In another context, the same pause may be perceived as dissatisfaction or criticism. Therefore, the analysis of respect requires attention to discourse type, participant roles and communicative goals. Prosodic means include intonation, tempo, rhythm, loudness and pause. Kinesic means include gesture, facial expression, posture and eye contact. Proxemic means include interpersonal distance and spatial positioning. These components do not work separately; they form one communicative system. For example, the English phrase "Could you please clarify this point?" expresses respect through modal politeness, but its respectful effect becomes stronger when it is pronounced with a calm tone, moderate tempo and non-aggressive eye contact. The Russian phrase "Не могли бы Вы уточнить?" expresses respect through formal grammar and address, but its pragmatic effect depends on intonation and pause. The Uzbek phrase "Iltimos, tushuntirib bersangiz" expresses respect through politeness



formula and conditional form, while restrained tone and appropriate distance strengthen the respectful meaning. Thus, the reviewed theories show that paralinguistic means are not secondary elements of communication. They are functional components that regulate social distance, express attitude, protect the interlocutor's status and help avoid pragmatic conflict. For this reason, the present study considers respect as an integrated functional-pragmatic category formed through the interaction of verbal and paralinguistic means in English, Russian and Uzbek communicative behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a comparative functional-pragmatic method to analyse how respect is expressed through paralinguistic means in English, Russian and Uzbek communication. The research is based on the idea that respect is not created by verbal formulas alone, but by the interaction of words, voice, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and interpersonal distance.

The material of the study consists of typical communicative situations in which respect is socially expected: teacher–student interaction, communication with elders, formal academic discussion, polite request, disagreement, clarification and professional conversation. These situations were selected because they clearly show how status, distance and cultural norms influence communicative behaviour.

The analysis focuses on four groups of paralinguistic means:

- 1) **Prosodic means**-intonation, speech tempo, loudness, rhythm and pause.
- 2) For example, the Russian phrase “Не могли бы Вы уточнить?” becomes respectful when it is pronounced with a calm tone, moderate tempo and a short pause before the request.
- 3) **Kinesic means**-gesture, facial expression, posture and eye contact. For example, in English academic communication, moderate eye contact and open posture usually support attention and respect, while aggressive staring or dismissive facial expression may change the pragmatic meaning of the utterance.
- 4) **Proxemic means**-interpersonal distance and spatial positioning. For example, in Uzbek communication with elders or teachers, appropriate



distance and restrained body movement may function as signs of respect and social tact.

5) **Extra-linguistic means**-sighs, laughter, hesitation pauses and other non-verbal vocal reactions.

For example, a demonstrative sigh during a formal conversation may reduce the respectful meaning of even a polite verbal expression.

The research compares English, Russian and Uzbek examples according to the same analytical parameters: communicative situation, social status of participants, verbal formula, paralinguistic marker, pragmatic function and possible intercultural risk. This makes it possible to identify not only similarities, but also culturally specific differences. The main analytical procedure consists of three stages. First, respectful communicative situations are identified and grouped according to their pragmatic function: request, clarification, disagreement, address and response. Second, the paralinguistic markers used in each situation are described. Third, the English, Russian and Uzbek patterns are compared to determine how each culture interprets tone, pause, gesture, eye contact and distance. The methodological basis of the study relies on functional pragmatics, discourse analysis and intercultural communication theory. Functional pragmatics helps explain what role paralinguistic means perform in the expression of respect. Discourse analysis makes it possible to consider the situation, status and social roles of speakers. Intercultural analysis helps reveal why the same paralinguistic signal may be interpreted differently in different cultures [15].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis demonstrates that respect in English, Russian and Uzbek communicative behaviour is not a single linguistic formula, but a complex pragmatic effect produced by the coordination of verbal and paralinguistic means. In all three cultures, respect is expressed through polite lexical forms and address strategies; however, its real communicative force depends on intonation, pause, speech tempo, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and interpersonal distance. Therefore, a respectful utterance may lose its pragmatic value if its paralinguistic form contradicts the verbal content.



In English communication, respect is primarily realized through mitigation and non-imposition. The speaker usually avoids direct pressure and protects the interlocutor's personal autonomy. This can be seen in forms such as Could you please clarify this point?, Would you mind explaining it again?, or May I ask a question? These structures reduce categorical force, but their respectful meaning becomes complete only when they are supported by calm intonation, moderate tempo and non-aggressive eye contact. If the phrase Could you please clarify this point? is pronounced sharply, with increased loudness or visible impatience, the modal construction remains grammatically polite, but pragmatically it may be perceived as irritation or hidden criticism. Thus, in English interaction, paralinguistic means function as regulators of autonomy, emotional neutrality and interpersonal balance.

In Russian communication, respect is more closely connected with formality, status balance and normative address. The form Вы, name-patronymic address and indirect request constructions create a formal frame of respect: Не могли бы Вы уточнить этот вопрос?, Ирина Сергеевна, позвольте уточнить, Будьте добры, объясните, пожалуйста. However, this verbal politeness is strongly dependent on prosodic organization. A short pause before the request, moderate tempo and soft falling intonation make the utterance tactful and socially acceptable. If the same phrase is pronounced without pause, in a cold or commanding tone, it may sound official but not respectful. This shows that in Russian communication intonation and pause are not secondary signs; they are functional markers of status distance and communicative tact.

In Uzbek communication, respect is especially related to age, hierarchy, social role and moral norms of behaviour. Address forms such as ustoz, domla, aka, opa, muhtaram, hurmatli and polite constructions such as iltimos, marhamat, tushuntirib bersangiz, aytib yuborsangiz carry a strong respectful meaning. Yet these forms require appropriate paralinguistic support. For example, the phrase Ustoz, iltimos, shu masalani tushuntirib bersangiz expresses respect not only through the word ustoz and the conditional polite form bersangiz, but also through restrained tone, controlled tempo, moderate loudness and careful body behaviour. In communication with elders or teachers, excessive direct eye contact, overly relaxed posture or loud speech may

weaken the respectful effect even when the verbal formula is correct. Therefore, in Uzbek communicative culture, paralinguistic restraint works as a visible sign of moral and social respect.

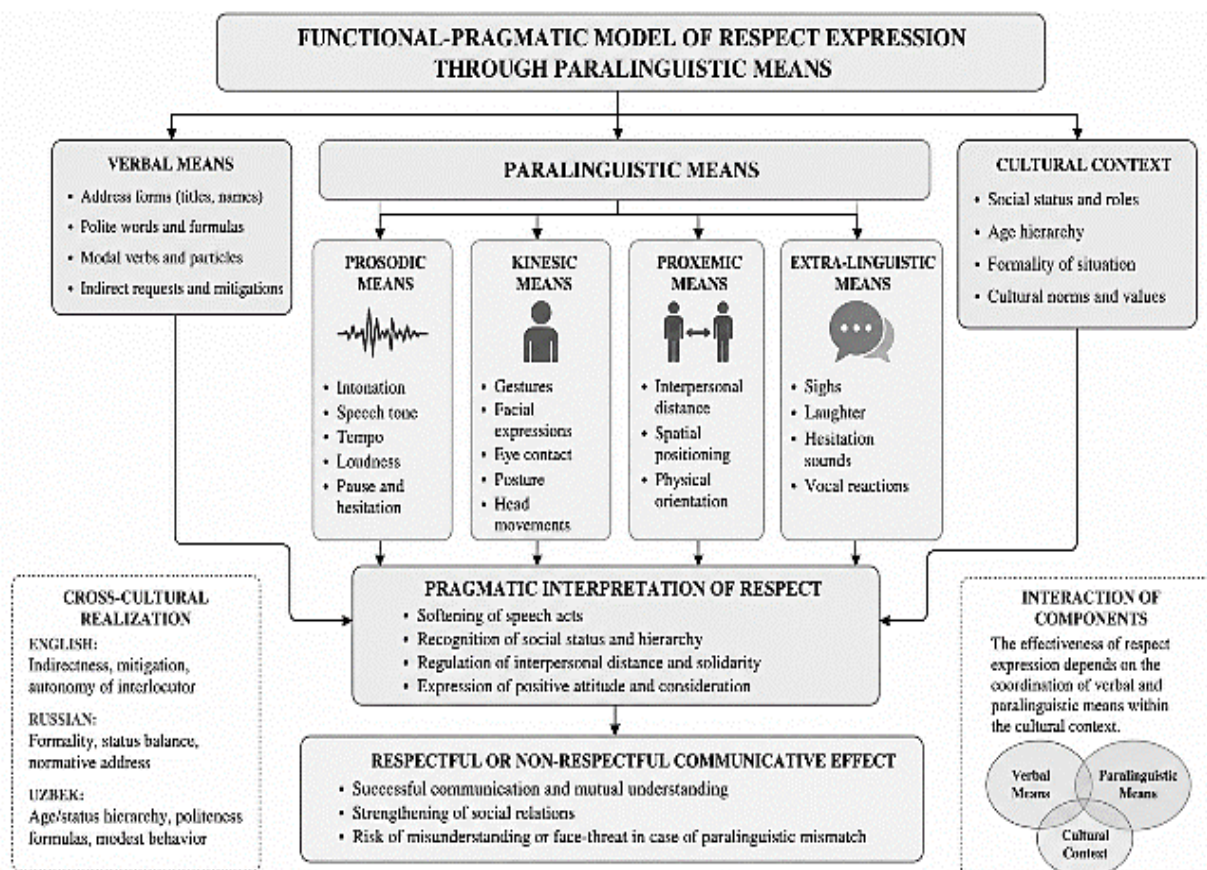


Fig. 1. Functional-pragmatic model of respect expression through paralinguistic means in English, Russian and Uzbek communication.
Source: Compiled by the author.

Fig. 1. Functional-Pragmatic Model of Respect Expression through Paralinguistic Means in English, Russian and Uzbek Communication

Fig. 1 demonstrates that respectful communication is formed through the interaction of verbal forms, paralinguistic behaviour and cultural context. The model shows that prosody, gesture, eye contact and interpersonal distance function together in shaping the pragmatic interpretation of respect in English, Russian and Uzbek communication. The first major finding concerns prosodic means. Intonation, tempo, loudness and pause perform a softening and status-regulating function. In English, prosody helps avoid pressure; in Russian, it supports formality and tact; in Uzbek, it marks modesty and recognition of



hierarchy. For example, a request in the three languages may have similar pragmatic purpose but different cultural realization:

English: Could you please explain this again?

Respect is created through modal politeness and calm, non-pressuring tone.

Russian: Не могли бы Вы объяснить это ещё раз?

Respect is created through formal address, indirect construction, pause and soft intonation.

Uzbek: Iltimos, buni yana bir bor tushuntirib bersangiz.

Respect is created through polite request form, conditional construction and restrained tone.

This comparison shows that prosody does not merely decorate speech; it determines whether the listener interprets the utterance as polite, neutral, impatient or dominant. The second finding concerns kinesic means. Gesture, facial expression, posture and eye contact either confirm or destroy verbal respect. In English academic communication, moderate eye contact usually signals attention and involvement. In Russian formal communication, restrained gesture and serious facial expression help maintain official distance. In Uzbek communication, especially in hierarchical situations, careful gaze, modest posture and limited gestural activity may be interpreted as respect toward elders, teachers or socially higher-status interlocutors. For example, the phrase I understand your opinion may express agreement if accompanied by attentive posture and calm facial expression. The same phrase may sound ironic if accompanied by a dismissive smile, raised eyebrows or turned-away body position. Hence, kinesic means function as pragmatic evidence of the speaker's real attitude. The third finding relates to proxemic behaviour. Interpersonal distance is a culturally regulated marker of respect. In English communication, maintaining distance often means protecting the interlocutor's personal space. In Russian communication, distance supports formality and role boundaries. In Uzbek communication, distance reflects age, hierarchy and social etiquette. A student standing too close to a teacher, interrupting the teacher's speech or using an overly relaxed body position may be perceived as insufficiently respectful. Conversely, appropriate distance, controlled posture and attentive listening reinforce the respectful meaning of verbal forms. Thus, proxemics transforms



social hierarchy into visible communicative behaviour. The fourth finding concerns extra-linguistic signals such as sighs, laughter, hesitation sounds and demonstrative pauses. These elements are small in form but strong in pragmatic effect. In official or pedagogical communication, a sigh after a teacher's instruction, ironic laughter during explanation or a long dismissive pause may change the meaning of a formally polite response. For instance, the answer Yes, I understand may sound respectful when pronounced calmly; however, with a sigh or ironic facial expression it may be interpreted as resistance or dissatisfaction. This is particularly important in intercultural contexts because speakers may unintentionally transfer habitual non-verbal behaviour from one culture into another.

The comparative analysis allows the following generalization:

Table 1: Paralinguistic Means of Expressing Respect in English, Russian and Uzbek Communication

Communicative culture	Main verbal basis of respect	Dominant paralinguistic support	Possible pragmatic risk
English	Modal politeness, indirect request, mitigation	Soft tone, moderate eye contact, protection of personal space	Direct tone may sound imposing or rude
Russian	Formal address, "Вы", name-patronymic forms, etiquette formulas	Controlled intonation, pause, restrained gesture	Cold or sharp tone may reduce respect
Uzbek	Status-based address, polite formulas, conditional request forms	Restrained voice, careful gaze, appropriate distance	Excessive directness may be perceived as tactless

These results show that respect has both universal and culture-specific features. The universal aspect is that all three cultures use paralinguistic means to soften communication, regulate distance and prevent conflict. The culture-specific aspect lies in the preferred mechanism: English communication prioritizes autonomy, Russian communication emphasizes formality and status balance, while Uzbek communication gives special importance to hierarchy, age and behavioural modesty. Thus, respect should be understood as an integrated



functional-pragmatic category. It is not enough to know polite words or grammatical formulas; speakers must also understand how these formulas are supported by voice, gesture, gaze, pause and distance. This conclusion is especially important for language teaching and intercultural education. Learners should be taught not only what expression is grammatically correct, but also how it should be pronounced, accompanied and interpreted in a particular cultural situation.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that respect in English, Russian and Uzbek communication is not expressed by verbal formulas alone. It is formed through the interaction of linguistic and paralinguistic means, including intonation, speech tempo, pause, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and interpersonal distance. These elements function together and determine how the listener interprets the speaker's real attitude. The analysis shows that English communication tends to express respect through indirectness, mitigation and protection of personal autonomy. Russian communication relies more on formal address, normative intonation and status balance. Uzbek communication gives special importance to age, hierarchy, social role, restrained tone and culturally appropriate behaviour. Therefore, the same polite utterance may be interpreted differently in different cultures if its paralinguistic form does not correspond to the expected communicative norm. The main scientific result of the article is that paralinguistic means should be considered functional-pragmatic markers of respect. Prosody softens speech and regulates pressure; kinesic behaviour confirms or weakens verbal politeness; proxemics reflects social distance and hierarchy; extra-linguistic signals may either support or destroy the respectful meaning of an utterance. This proves that respect is a dynamic communicative category shaped by language, culture and behaviour. The practical value of the study lies in its relevance for language teaching, intercultural communication and pedagogical interaction. In multilingual classrooms, students and teachers need to understand not only correct grammar and vocabulary, but also culturally appropriate tone, gesture, pause and distance. For this reason, paralinguistic competence should be included in the development of communicative and intercultural competence.



Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations can be proposed:

First, foreign language teaching should include not only verbal politeness formulas, but also paralinguistic patterns of respectful communication. Learners should practise how to use tone, pause, eye contact and distance in culturally appropriate ways.

Second, intercultural communication courses should compare English, Russian and Uzbek norms of respect through real communicative scenarios. For example, polite request, disagreement, clarification and teacher-student interaction may be analysed as practical cases.

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