

Speech etiquette as a linguocultural marker in Kazuo Ishiguro's prose

Karolina Lototska

Ivan Franko Lviv National University, Lviv, Ukraine

lorkoula@yahoo.com

Key words: speech etiquette, direct address, apology, request, gratitude, compliment, cultural marker, national-cultural context

Ключевые слова: речевой этикет, обращение, извинение, просьба, благодарность, комплимент, культурный маркер, национально-культурный контекст

The constantly growing multiculturalism of modern British society manifests itself not only in social, national and religious realities, but also in the fact that quite a number of famous British writers of our times are, in M. Bradbury's words, "bicultural" as regards their origin and artistic-aesthetic outlook (Bradbury, 1994, p. 413). Kazuo Ishiguro is one of them. Born in Japan in 1954, he has been living in Britain since the age of 6. His novels have won readers' hearts and received great critical acclaim. Ishiguro writes for a multicultural audience, aiming, in his own words, to contribute to the making of the "international novel" written in English (quoted in Bradbury, 1994, p. 452).

As is known, modern text linguistics often considers the text within its so-called national-cultural context, thus connecting such notions as artistic text, cultural context, intertext, dialogue, cultural memory. This approach originated in the works of R. Barthes, M. Bakhtin, J. Kristeva, Yu. Lotman, V. Toporov and other scholars (Эсалнек, 2013; see also Маслова, 2001, 2004; Карасёва, 2012; Межова, 2014). The original national-cultural component seems to be quite conspicuous in some of K. Ishiguro's novels: it is reflected in both the choice of themes and the specific style of his novels – reticent and gracefully economical (as critics often observe), characterized by his preferences for implicit assumptions, tentativeness and restraint typical of traditional Japanese aesthetics.

The story in Ishiguro's second novel "An Artist of the Floating World" (1986) is told from the viewpoint of an ageing Japanese painter who is reflecting on his past and present. Post-war Japan is shown to an English-speaking reader through the author's eyes, the eyes of a writer with a tangible Japanese cultural memory and British linguistic education. However paradoxical it may sound, the perfect English language of the novel creates an absolute illusion of immersion into Japanese speech culture, noticeably traced in all the personages' speech-planes. In order to understand how it works, we need, first of all, to analyze some English-Japanese language parallels viewed culturologically.

The stylistic features of the novel dictate several possible approaches to its analysis and interpretation, among which we can single out at least two with a definite linguocultural bias. The first one is based on the postulate that the content and perception of any fictional text suggest various inter-textual and extra-textual connections (Бабенко, 2004), which are represented in the author's specific world view. Ishiguro's writing manner seems to imitate the style of Japanese traditional painting ("soft edges, weak or no perspective, details charged with implications") (Turton, 2005). The second possible approach focuses attention on the narrator's and other characters' stylized discourse, i.e. on the language and speech distinctive features underlying the novel's stylistics with its conspicuous national-cultural markedness. In this case the English text proves to be alien/ foreign to an English reader in some aspects, and as any foreign text, will not be fully understood and/or appreciated without the corresponding

social-cultural background, extra-textual knowledge (Белянин, 1988). Modern studies accept as axiomatic the ontological interconnection between language and culture, the latter being viewed as the structure integral in its linguistic and extralinguistic content (Привалова, 2004). That is why the second approach to the analysis of the personages' speech characteristics makes it so important for a researcher to take into account some general ideas about the Japanese speech practices as constituents of the nation's culture as a whole and as important components of their social interaction and behavior in particular (Кожина, 2003, p. 357; Маслова, 2001; Маслова, 2004).

The ethno-cultural stereotypes of an average English reader (of any nationality) represent the Japanese as a nation with a very complex system of etiquette (including speech etiquette), based, primarily, on the principles of politeness, self-effacement, obedience, and respect for those higher in rank or importance. This principle, in its turn, is connected with a specific national-aesthetic philosophy and social-historical mode of life of Japanese society, where everyone is a member of some social group, i.e. always perceives himself/ herself as belonging to some larger social formation. One of the signs of such a complex stratification of Japanese etiquette is the language itself, whose structure has a number of different levels of politeness. At least four such levels are usually singled out: condescending/rude, plain colloquial, ordinary polite and very polite, or honorific (called "keigo") (Hon. Sp. In Jap., 2017). The last one, keigo, also has several variants. For a representative of most western-European language cultures, including English, such a concept/principle of language organization and speech practice proves to be "almost untranslatable" due to the absence of a similar system of "languages within a language". True, there exist communicative styles, registers, functional varieties, as well as different linguo-ethological norms of language use in English, as in any other language, which are socially conditioned and situationally determined. Yet in Japanese the degree of variability is such that, for example, all the verbs have polite and colloquial forms to express one and the same meaning, and some verbs also possess so-called humble or honorific forms. Depending upon the level of politeness and the interlocutors' social status, verb endings change, or alternative words and phrases are used so that one and the same idea can be expressed in twenty various ways (see also Miyagawa, 1999). These and other striking differences between English and Japanese are grounded on different national-cultural philosophies. Japan's long history is a history of its people's absolute loyalty, their devoted service to their state. Nonconformism has always been discouraged. This type of historical and cultural development is naturally reflected in the language and speech behavior of the Japanese who heavily rely on the role of implication: they are "careful" talkers and say what they think the listener wants to hear, and the listener understands the hidden meaning and acts on it.

How does Kazuo Ishiguro manage to create an illusion of immersion into the Japanese speech culture in a novel written in English, a language that does not have such an intricate and complicated system of functional-communicative variants? The **aim** of the suggested analysis is to study the main methods and linguistic instruments with the help of which the author is able to convey in English and by means of English the multilevel Japanese linguistic peculiarities as well as creating the novel's specific national-cultural atmosphere.

Apart from the traditional explicit markers of a foreign cultural coloring of the text (such as barbarisms, exotic lexis and a few Japanese words and proper names), Ishiguro is most skillful at using the English language resources of various levels to convey the peculiarities of Japanese speech behavior. As is known, the ethnography of communication admits the existence of a close connection between the peculiar features of speech practices of language communities, their ethnopsychology, and the way of sense verbalization typical of their language (Базылев, 2000). The speech personality level reveals not only the specific national-cultural characteristics of the language personality, but also the national-cultural

peculiarities of communication in general (Прохоров, 1999, p. 61). Ch. Bally was among the first stylisticians who wrote about that. His vision of the problem is that speech phenomena take in, absorb, as it were, the smell of the environment and the communicative situations in which they are usually employed, and that they, thus, manage to symbolize, evoke the idea of that ethnocultural community with their mode of life, behavioral strategies, and forms of activity (quoted in Кожина, 2003, pp. 354-355).

K. Ishiguro brilliantly conveys the realia of the Japanese communicative culture and social behavioral norms. For the purposes of the investigation of his method five major positions of speech etiquette in the personages' discourse (namely, **direct address, apology, request, gratitude, and compliment**) have been singled out and analyzed in terms of the use of the English linguistic means of various levels.

1. Direct address. The Japanese generally address each other by their last names (with the exception of friends and children). The last name (or sometimes the first name) is commonly accompanied by a title. Ishiguro employs both English and Japanese titles. *Mr Mori, Mrs Kawakami, Dr Saito, Miss Noriko* – these and other English word-titles are used by the narrator Masuji Ono mainly in the descriptions of these personages and their actions. When addressing them directly in dialogues, the main words used here are two Japanese titles: *San* (the most neutral, popular and well known to Western readers) and *Sensei* (often without the name), used to address teachers, mentors, doctors. Ishiguro avoids using other popular Japanese titles (such as *Sama, Kun, Chan*) since they are less familiar or unknown to the international reader. The use of the titles in the novel clearly reveals how skillfully the author exposes the hierarchy of inter-personal relations in various social groups of Japanese society (students-teachers; the young – the elderly; subjects/those of lower ranks – bosses/those of higher ranks). The hierarchic norms of speech behavior are also supported by other means of expression. For example, Ono's daughters always address their father by using the word *Father*; we will not find in the whole novel the words *Dad/Daddy* even in the most "frivolous" fragments of their conversation. Moreover, they often address Ono in the third person: "*Father must have worked very hard*" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 13), irrespective of the overall tonality (ironic or respectful). The use of the pronoun "you" is a rare case ("*Isn't that so, Father? You're making a lot of progress*" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 14)). The specific character of teacher-student relations is revealed in numerous dialogues and Ono's discursive passages, which is accounted for by the very theme of the novel: Masuji Ono's reminiscences of his life in which he played both the above social roles. Apart from these etiquette contact-establishing formulae, to convey the so-called Japanese "humble" and "honorific" forms of address the author resorts to the corresponding associative thematic layers of the English word-stock, also having recourse to intensifying adverbs and complicated, often archaically-flavored syntax. For example, this is how Ono characterizes his conversation with his former student Shintaro: "*He will greet me very politely, as though he were still my pupil /.../ he will continue to address me as "Sensei" and maintain his most respectful manner towards me.*" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 21).

The similar strict hierarchy of relations among colleagues (e.g. art school students) is revealed on the communicative-verbal level in the use of the title when some experienced students (or more talented, or teachers' favorites) are addressed (*Ono-san*). By contrast, this category of students can address less privileged or just younger colleagues without the use of a title, or even by using disrespectful, contemptuous nicknames: "*Hey, Tortoise, are you still painting that petal you began last week?*" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 68). The rude, insulting tone and offensive attitude to this personage are conveyed by means of using the English lexemes with conspicuous negative connotations in their semantic structure. Yet even in such contexts we do not find any slang or low colloquial/ rude expressions in the narrator's discourse: "... *tormentors persisted with their abuse, accusing him of laziness and of relying on the rest of*

us /.../ ... had begun to **abuse** the Tortoise in **particularly harsh** terms.” (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 68).

To show the highest degree of contempt and still observe the proprieties (so important for the Japanese) the author resorts to the use of the English word-title “Sir”, which acquires in some definite contexts a connotation of utmost formality and thus hostility. At the beginning of the dialogue between M. Ono and Enchi, Kuroda’s disciple, this form of address is used with a positive connotation as a sign of respect for a stranger – an elderly person. However, when he learns the name of the visitor (the very man his teacher Kuroda was betrayed by to the authorities), Enchi keeps on addressing him “Sir”, but his general tone changes radically. Until this moment his speech abounds in various kinds of contact-establishing formulae (*I’m sorry; I’m afraid; I cannot begin to tell you, sir; I assure you, sir; I beg you not to hurry away; Excuse me, sir*). Then all of them disappear. The stylistics of his utterances becomes deliberately formal – both lexically and syntactically: *“I would suggest, sir, you delay yourself no further from your other business. I will inform Mr. Kuroda when he returns.”* (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 113). It is notable that the next phrase – *“Frankly, sir, I am amazed at your nerve. To come here as though you were simply a friendly visitor”* – is characterized by the narrator as a sign of Enchi’s losing control over his emotions: *“Until this point, the young man had managed to maintain a polite tone in his voice, but now he seemed to lose his self-control.”* The implication of his disrespect, his being “so rude” is conveyed here by means of the English emotive lexis “to be amazed”, the infinitive construction, and also by the polysemantic word “nerve” (the first neutral meaning is “courage”, “boldness”; the second, stylistically marked, colloquial and negatively charged meaning – “impudence”), i.e. in this rejoinder of Enchi’s the language means function as linguocultural euphemisms, thus aiming at making his disdainful reply appear less shocking (at least at the surface level) in order to conform to the Japanese speech etiquette conventions.

2. Apology. Request. (These two etiquette situations are analysed together since they are interwoven in the narrative structure of the novel). As is known, any spontaneous conversation presupposes the interlocutors’ “automatic” choice and use of “polite words”. Nevertheless, the trite, almost “dead” meanings of English polite speech formulae *“Excuse me”, “I’m sorry”, “Forgive me”* (which can be traced in numerous dialogues) in the context of the novel seem to preserve or revive their “apologetic” semantics. In the Japanese language, even if the speaker is of a higher rank than his interlocutor, he is to use the “humble” form of the verb “to do” (in “I do”) and the “honorific” form for “You do”. These speech norms are imitated in the novel by some special means (such as bookish, dated lexis and syntactic models) and also by a great number of forms of apology (by means of repetition):

“Grateful as I was – and still remain – for the wealth of things I learnt under your supervision, I did not always, in fact, concur with your view. Indeed, I may not be exaggerating to say that I had strong reservations about the direction our school was taking at that time” (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 103).

It appears that for any of their opinions, not to mention requests or disagreement, the characters tend to apologize, because their opinion, hypothetically, may not coincide with their interlocutor’s judgment (especially if the latter outranks them). It may irritate the interlocutor, or inconvenience him (especially in the case of a request), or fail to conform to social-cultural conventions. Here are some examples chosen to illustrate the point:

a). To convey the “honorific” style of Ono’s daughter Setsuko used in her delicately worded request to visit Kuroda, the author skillfully resorts to the contact-establishing form of apology – the direct address in the 3rd person and indirect, stylistically charged manner of expression marked by complex syntax and complicated by modal phrases: *“Forgive me, but I wonder if it may not be wise if Father were to visit Mr Kuroda soon”*. The request is generalized in the same structural-stylistic emotive key: *“Forgive me, I simply meant to*

suggest that Father may wish to speak to certain acquaintances from his past" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 85).

b). Ono's other daughter, Noriko, is more "courageous" and "audacious" in her conversation with father (Ono characterizes her manner as "*her customary **flippancy***" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 124): "flippancy" = '**not showing sufficient respect or seriousness**'; "*Noriko is in the habit of adopting her somewhat **flippant** manner of address*"). But even Noriko, when she disagrees, expresses her opinion indirectly, by using hints (always formally appropriate, if ironic): "*Is Father such an authority on how to cut shrubs? I didn't realize that. I'm sorry.*" /.../ "*Very well, Father, I'm sure it's all a matter of opinion.*" /.../ "*I'm sure Father knows best about such things. That's beyond dispute, no doubt.*" /.../ "*So Father was always right about his paintings too, I suppose.*" (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 107). Sometimes, as in these examples, Noriko's conversation acquires strikingly formal connotations and a tinge of alienation: her accusation of her father's past life of a war-propaganding painter is never overtly expressed.

3. Gratitude. One of the most typical examples of the specific functioning of this etiquette component is the episode with Shintaro and his brother, whom Ono helped to get a job. The "honorific" style here is conveyed not only explicitly – by means of stylistically marked lexis (bookish/formal and slightly dated), figures of expressive syntax (repetition, anaphoric parallelism), but also with the help of certain lexemes (like "giggle", for example) whose semantics implies humble embarrassment and obsequiousness:

"Please, step up," I said, but they continued simply to bow and giggle. "Shintaro, please. Step up to the tatami." "No, sensei," Shintaro said, all the time smiling and bowing. "It is the height of impertinence for us to come to your house like this. The height of impertinence. /.../ Then he (Shintaro's brother) said: "I will be grateful to you for the remainder of my life. I will exert every particle of my being to be worthy of your recommendation. I assure you, I will not let you down. I will work hard, and strive to satisfy my superiors. And however much I may be promoted in the future, I will never forget the man who enabled me to start on my career." (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 20).

The expression of gratitude is a sort of game with two or three "rounds": a statement – a reaction to it, one more cue and one more response. This type of communicative strategies and the same dialogic structure are also characteristic of the speech situations of praise and paying compliments.

4. Compliment, praise. In Japanese society these etiquette forms have a complex conceptual basis. This is a ritual that postulates the following: praise embarrasses me, and I cannot accept compliments (= I do not have the right), I cannot admit that I deserve them. This may seem paradoxical, but the Japanese (despite this common linguo-ethological conception) turn out to be fond of paying compliments and do this very often. It is part of a subtle "game" of showing respect and giving praise to each other, and even if they are sincere, the rules of the "game" should be strictly followed. In the novel under analysis we find quite a number of examples that illustrate these etiquette conventions. When speaking about his student years, Masuji Ono remembers this ritual of "indirect" praise so characteristic of a mixed social group (for example, that of teachers and students):

"Before long, we would all be seated on the floor around the painting, pointing things out to each other in hushed tones: "And look at the way Sensei has filled in that corner there. Remarkable!" But no one would actually say: "Sensei, what a marvelous painting," for it was somehow the convention of these occasions that we behave as though our teacher were not present." (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 138).

And the next example illustrates the way Ono's students speak about him in his presence pretending they are unaware of his hearing them (for the purposes of our analysis we ignore here the author's ironic implications):

"I have suspected for some time that Sensei was unaware of the high regard in which he is held by people in this city. /.../ His reputation will become all the greater, and in years to come, our proudest honour will be to tell others that we were once the pupils of Masuji Ono." /.../ ...my protégés would take to making speeches of a loyal nature to me." Ono's reaction to this type of praise is quite traditional: *"Of course, I usually ignored them, but on this particular occasion /.../ I experienced a warm glow of satisfaction."* (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 25).

One more typical example of showing respect by means of expressing gratitude or paying a compliment can be traced in the following episode. This is how Ono's colleague, whom he once helped, addresses him: *"Ono-san, let me just thank you from my heart for all you've done for me."* Ono's traditional reaction follows: *"I've not done very much," I said.* And then goes the second "round" in the development of the speech situation whose semantic-stylistic tonality intensifies: *"But truly, Ono-san, men like you are all too rare. It is an honour to be a colleague of such a man."* (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 70). Furthermore, a compliment for the Japanese is a kind of encouragement. They should always remember the person to whom they are indebted for their talents, knowledge, skills, and success, and redirect/readdress the praise to their teacher: *"I believe you have much talent." "You're most kind. No doubt I owe much to the excellence of my teacher's guidance."* (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 89). Another example is: *"Really, that is your work? Well, I must say you have much talent. Much talent indeed." He gave another embarrassed laugh. "I'm very fortunate in having Mr Kuroda for a teacher. But I fear I still have much to learn."* (Ishiguro, 1987, p. 110).

To sum up, it should be noted that to convey various levels of politeness typical of the Japanese speech culture by means of the English language, Kazuo Ishiguro uses various instruments, the key ones of which are lofty, high-flown lexis and complex syntactic structures, such as:

- *...he would have approved of and deemed worthy of it.*
- *...when I surmised that most of her family...*
- *For I was very lax in considering the matter of status, it simply not being my instinct to concern myself with such things.*
- *...it took my eyes a moment to ascertain that Ichiro was not in the room at all.*
- *...when Ichiro suddenly recommenced the drama I had interrupted.*
- *...without having an ear open for another piece of knowledge I might impart.*
- *I gave my consent, albeit without enthusiasm.*
- *... to mention certain eventualities.... I'd be extremely beholden to you ...*

The amount of bookish (and often dated) lexis in the narrator's discourse is quite considerable – its emotive key results in a lofty stylistic intonation of the whole text. This creates a specific tonality of the speech structure of the novel, and apart from its natural-cultural colouring, reveals, in our opinion, one more functional aspect of this stylized 1st-person narration. Masuji Ono is a person of the pre-war generation. His country is entering a new historical era in which the wide-ranging American influence is quite noticeable: its signs are dispersed throughout the novel in numerous details - characteristic, meaningful, and quite significant. But M. Ono keeps on resisting this influence. Ono tries to reflect on his life, evaluate and/or reconsider what he did and what he achieved, to be sincere with himself, at least as best he can. While admitting his mistakes (primarily, for his daughter's sake), he, however, remains loyal to Japanese life philosophy, faithful to its main principle – to save one's face, to guard one's reputation, to keep one's self-respect. It is one of the reasons why the narrative style of Ishiguro's novel, i.e. M. Ono's story about his life, ambitions, feelings, his success and failure, is designed in this particular emotive key – dignified and reserved.

To conclude, this analysis has tried to demonstrate the role of the narrator's stylistically marked speech manner in the perception and interpretation of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel by the

international reader. The writer masterly represents Masuji Ono's main speech peculiarities. This manner of presentation, on the one hand, contributes to the credibility of depiction, and on the other hand, facilitates the understanding of the events from the past of Japan as well as the nation's cultural linguoethological realia. Furthermore, Ishiguro's skillful imitation of the Japanese etiquette conventional practices by means of the English linguistic means of various levels underlies the novel's original national and social-historical colouring.

Literature:

- BRADBURY, M. (1994): *The Modern British Novel*. Penguin books.
- HONORIFIC SPEECH IN JAPANESE. [цитировано: 2017-01-31]. Доступно на: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honorific_speech_in_Japanese
- ISHIGURO, K. (1987): *An Artist of the Floating World*. London. Boston: Faber and Faber.
- MIYAGAWA, Sh. (1999): The Japanese language. [цитировано: 2013-08-25]. Доступно на: <http://web.mit.edu/jpnet/articles/JapaneseLanguage.html>
- TURTON, T. (2005): Review of "An Artist of the Floating World" by Kazuo Ishiguro. [цитировано: 2016-10-15]. Доступно на: <http://www.tonyturton.com/ishiguro-floating-world/>
- БАБЕНКО, Л. Г. (2004): *Филологический анализ текста: основы теории, принципы и аспекты анализа: для студентов филол. специальностей вузов*. Екатеринбург: Деловая книга.
- БАЗЫЛЕВ, В. Н. (2000): Когнитивная структура эмоций: русско-японские параллели. In: *Язык, сознание, коммуникация*: Вып. 11. Москва: Диалог – МГУ, с. 9–19.
- БЕЛЯНИН, В. П. (1988): *Психолингвистические аспекты художественного текста*. Москва: Изд-во Московского ун-та.
- КАРАСЕВА, Ю. А. (2012): *Художественный текст как источник национально-культурной информации и выразитель национальной ментальности: диссертация ... кандидата филологических наук: 10.02.05*. Москва: Рос. ун-т дружбы народов. [цитировано: 2017-04-31]. Доступно на: <http://search.rsl.ru/ru/record/01005453640>
- КОЖИНА, М. Н., ред. (2003): *Стилистический энциклопедический словарь русского языка*. Москва: Флинта: Наука.
- МАСЛОВА, В. А. (2001): *Лингвокультурология*. Москва: Academia.
- МАСЛОВА, В. А. (2004): *Когнитивная лингвистика*. Минск: ТетраСистемс.
- МЕЖОВА, М. В. (2014): Художественный текст как элемент культуры: переводческий аспект. In: *Филологические науки. Вопросы теории и практики*, № 9, Ч.1. Тамбов: Грамота, с. 106–109. [цитировано: 2017-04-31]. Режим доступа: <http://www.gramota.net/materials/2/2014/9-1/29.html>
- ПРИВАЛОВА, И. В. (2004): К определению понятия «языковые маркеры национально-культурного сознания». In: *Язык, сознание, коммуникация*: Вып. 26, Москва: Диалог–МГУ, с. 91–97.
- ПРОХОРОВ, Ю. Е. (1999): Коммуникативное пространство языковой личности в национально-культурном аспекте. In: *Язык, сознание, коммуникация*: Вып. 8, Москва: Диалог–МГУ, с. 52–63.
- ЭСАЛНЕК, А. (2013): Культурная память как компонент художественного текста. In: *Русская словесность*, № 2, с. 11–16.

Summary

Speech etiquette as a linguocultural marker in Kazuo Ishiguro's prose

The article is devoted to the analysis of the linguocultural peculiarities of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel "An Artist of the Floating World". Several major positions of speech etiquette in the characters' discourse have been singled out with a view to further examining them in terms of the use of the English linguistic means of various levels to reflect and convey the realia of the Japanese communicative culture and social behavioral norms. The analysis reveals that the stylistically marked entrusted narrative of the novel is responsible for its original national-cultural and social-historical coloring. It also shows how Kazuo Ishiguro has managed to create an amazing illusion of immersion into the Japanese speech culture by means of the English language.