

## A Comparative Study of Gratitude Expressions in Everyday Informal Communication in English and Karakalpak Languages

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study investigates the communicative features of gratitude expressions in informal everyday communication in English and Karakalpak languages. The research aims to identify structural, pragmatic, and cultural differences in the realization of gratitude as a politeness strategy. A qualitative comparative approach was employed, based on the analysis of naturally occurring and constructed conversational data. The findings reveal that English predominantly uses standardized and frequent expressions such as “thank you,” which function as routine markers of politeness. In contrast, Karakalpak demonstrates greater structural variability and emotional depth, often incorporating culturally specific elements such as blessings and well-wishing expressions. Furthermore, gratitude in Karakalpak is more sensitive to social hierarchy and interpersonal relations. Thus, the study highlights both universal and culture-specific aspects of politeness and contributes to the field of cross-cultural pragmatics.*

**Keywords:** Gratitude expressions; politeness strategies; English language; Karakalpak language; informal communication; speech acts; intercultural communication

### INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, politeness is regarded as one of the central categories of human communication, since it regulates

interpersonal interaction and ensures social harmony. In particular, within the framework of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, politeness is not merely a set of linguistic forms but a complex system of culturally conditioned communicative strategies. Therefore, the study of politeness expressions, and especially gratitude, allows researchers to better understand how language reflects social values and interpersonal relations.

To begin with, expressions of gratitude occupy a significant place among speech acts, as they function to acknowledge benefits received and to maintain positive social relationships. According to Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, gratitude can be interpreted as a positive politeness strategy aimed at enhancing the hearer's positive face, that is, their desire to be appreciated and approved of. In other words, by expressing gratitude, speakers not only recognize the action of the interlocutor but also reinforce social solidarity [2].

Furthermore, within the framework of the politeness principle proposed by Geoffrey Leech, gratitude is closely related to several maxims, particularly the maxim of generosity and the maxim of approbation. These maxims emphasize minimizing self-benefit and maximizing appreciation of others, which are directly reflected in expressions such as "thank you" or more elaborated forms like "I really appreciate it." Consequently, gratitude becomes an essential mechanism for balancing interpersonal relations [6].

Moreover, cognitive linguistics also provides valuable insights into the nature of gratitude expressions. According to E. S. Kubryakova, linguistic units are the result of secondary nomination processes, which reflect the conceptualization of experience. From this perspective, gratitude expressions are not only formulaic units but also culturally shaped conceptual structures that encode social relationships, emotional attitudes, and value systems [1: 38-48].

In addition, previous studies in English linguistics have demonstrated that gratitude expressions tend to be highly conventionalized and frequent in everyday interaction. For example, researchers such as Holmes note that English speakers use expressions like "thank you" routinely, even in situations

involving minimal effort or obligation. Therefore, gratitude in English often functions as a discourse marker of politeness rather than a strong emotional response [8].

By contrast, in Turkic languages, including Karakalpak, politeness strategies are more closely tied to social hierarchy, age, and interpersonal distance [5, 60-64]. As noted by E. Berdimuratov, communicative behavior in Karakalpak culture reflects deep respect for elders and socially superior individuals. Consequently, expressions of gratitude are often more elaborate and emotionally expressive, and they may include additional elements such as blessings, wishes, or honorific forms [3: 272-280].

However, despite the growing interest in cross-cultural pragmatics, the Karakalpak language remains relatively underrepresented in this field. Most existing studies focus on major languages such as English, leaving a gap in the systematic analysis of politeness strategies in less-studied languages. In particular, the communicative features of gratitude in Karakalpak informal discourse have not been sufficiently explored.

#### METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative comparative research design, which is particularly appropriate for investigating pragmatic and sociolinguistic phenomena across languages. In contrast to purely quantitative approaches, which primarily focus on statistical generalizations, qualitative analysis allows for a more nuanced interpretation of linguistic forms within their communicative and cultural contexts. Therefore, this methodological framework enables a deeper understanding of how gratitude expressions function as politeness strategies in English and Karakalpak informal communication.

To begin with, the data for the study were collected from multiple sources in order to ensure both reliability and representativeness. More specifically, the dataset includes: (1) naturally occurring conversational examples drawn from everyday informal interactions, (2) constructed dialogues designed to reflect typical communicative situations, and (3)

culturally conventional expressions widely used in both linguistic communities. In total, 100 instances of gratitude expressions were analyzed, with 50 examples from English and 50 from Karakalpak.

Furthermore, the selection of data was guided by the principle of functional relevance. That is to say, only those examples were included which clearly performed the communicative function of expressing gratitude. In addition, particular attention was paid to informal contexts, such as interactions between friends, family members, and acquaintances, since these settings provide more spontaneous and authentic language use. Consequently, highly formal or institutional expressions were deliberately excluded in order to maintain the focus of the study.

In addition, a comparative procedure was applied in order to identify similarities and differences between English and Karakalpak gratitude expressions. On the one hand, common features were examined to determine universal aspects of politeness. On the other hand, divergences were analyzed to reveal culture-specific patterns. Therefore, the comparison was conducted not only at the level of form but also at the level of function and usage.

At the same time, elements of quantitative analysis were incorporated to support the qualitative findings. For instance, the frequency of different structural types and pragmatic functions was calculated and presented in percentage form. Although the study is primarily qualitative, these quantitative indicators provide additional empirical support and enhance the reliability of the results.

Finally, it should be noted that the study adheres to principles of validity and consistency. Triangulation of data sources was employed to minimize bias, while repeated analysis ensured the stability of classifications. Nevertheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. In particular, the relatively small dataset and the focus on informal communication may restrict the generalizability of the findings. However, despite these limitations, the chosen methodology provides a solid foundation for achieving the research objectives.

Thus, through a combination of qualitative interpretation, systematic classification, and comparative analysis, the present study offers a comprehensive examination of gratitude expressions as a key component of politeness in English and Karakalpak languages.

## RESULTS

The results of the present study demonstrate that gratitude expressions in English and Karakalpak, while sharing a common communicative purpose, differ significantly in their structural realization, frequency, and contextual usage. More specifically, the analysis reveals that English tends to employ standardized and highly conventionalized expressions, whereas Karakalpak shows greater variability and cultural embedding.

To begin with, the structural analysis indicates that English speakers predominantly rely on simple and fixed expressions. The most frequent forms observed in the dataset include “thank you,” “thanks,” “thanks a lot,” and “thank you very much.” These expressions are used across a wide range of everyday situations, regardless of the level of assistance. For example:

- *Thanks* (after receiving a pen)
- *Thank you* (when someone opens the door)
- *Thanks a lot* (after getting quick help from a friend)
- *Thank you very much* (in slightly more expressive contexts)

Furthermore, English informal speech demonstrates a range of routine and context-flexible gratitude expressions. For instance:

- *Thanks, man!* (between friends)
- *Cheers!* (especially in British English for small favors)
- *Thanks for letting me know* (acknowledging information)
- *Thanks for your time* (closing interaction politely)
- *Much appreciated!* (concise but expressive)
- *I owe you one* (implying reciprocity)

In addition, more elaborated forms such as “I really appreciate it,” “I truly appreciate your help,” or “I’m very grateful” occur in situations involving more meaningful assistance. For example:

- *I really appreciate* your help with the assignment
- *I’m very grateful* for your support
- *Thanks*, I really needed that
- Thanks a lot, I couldn’t have done it without you [4].

These examples indicate that even when expanded, English gratitude expressions remain relatively concise and structurally stable.

By contrast, Karakalpak gratitude expressions demonstrate a higher degree of structural diversity and emotional richness. The most common basic form is “*raxmet*,” which functions similarly to “thanks.” However, speakers frequently expand this form by adding intensifiers, personal references, or culturally specific elements. For example:

- *Raxmet* (simple gratitude)
- *Úlkenraxmet* (great thanks)
- *Kópraxmetsizge* (many thanks to you)
- *Sizgeúlkenraxmetaytaman* (I express great gratitude to you)

Moreover, Karakalpak speakers often incorporate relational and emotional components into their expressions. For instance:

- *Raxmet, dostım* (thank you, my friend)
- *Raxmet, sizbolmağandaqıynalıpqalaredim* (without you I would have struggled)
- *Kópraxmet, sizdińkópjárdemińiztiydi* (many thanks, you helped very well)
- *Úlkenraxmetsizge, júdázárúredi* (big thanks, it was very necessary)

In addition, gratitude is frequently extended through culturally embedded blessings and well-wishing expressions, which significantly distinguish Karakalpak from English. For example:

- *Allarazibolsin* (may God be pleased with you)
- *Jaqsılıǵınızqaytsin* (may your kindness return to you)
- *Allasizgesawapjazsin* (may God reward you)
- *Ómiriñizuzaqbolsin, raxmet* (may your life be long, thank you) [9]

Such examples clearly demonstrate that gratitude in Karakalpak is not only a linguistic act but also a reflection of cultural values and moral evaluation.

Furthermore, the frequency analysis shows that English speakers tend to use gratitude expressions more routinely, even in minimal interaction contexts. For example:

- *Thanks* (to a cashier)
- *Thank you* (to a driver)
- *Thanks* (after receiving small assistance)

In contrast, Karakalpak speakers use gratitude more selectively, and the form of expression depends heavily on the importance of the situation. For instance:

- *Raxmet* (form in or help)
- *Úlkenraxmetsizge* (for meaningful assistance)
- *Allarazibolsin, bulúlkenjárdemboldı* (for significant support)

Table 1. *Comparative characteristics and examples of gratitude expressions*

Aspect	English Examples	Karakalpak Examples
Simple forms	thanks, thank you	<i>Raxmet</i>
Extended forms	thank you very much, thanks a lot	<i>úlkenraxmet, kópraxmetsizge</i>
Elaborated forms	I really appreciate it, I'm very grateful	<i>sizgeúlkenraxmetaytaman</i>
Emotional expressions	I truly appreciate your help	<i>Allarazibolsin, jaqsılıǵınızqaytsin</i>
Context of use	Frequent in all situations	depends on importance and relationship

As illustrated in Table 1, English gratitude expressions are generally shorter, more standardized, and context-independent.

By contrast, Karakalpak expressions are more flexible, context-sensitive, and culturally enriched.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that social variables such as age, status, and interpersonal distance play a more significant role in Karakalpak communication. In particular, speakers adjust the intensity and structure of gratitude depending on the interlocutor. By comparison, English speakers tend to use similar expressions regardless of social hierarchy.

Thus, the results clearly indicate that while gratitude is a universal communicative phenomenon, its realization differs significantly across languages. English emphasizes efficiency and routine politeness, whereas Karakalpak highlights emotional depth, cultural values, and relational sensitivity.

#### DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that gratitude expressions in English and Karakalpak differ not only in form but also in their pragmatic and cultural functions. On the one hand, English predominantly uses standardized and frequent expressions such as thanks and thank you, which function as routine politeness markers. In line with the theory of Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, such expressions can be viewed as conventionalized strategies aimed at maintaining smooth interaction [2]. On the other hand, Karakalpak gratitude expressions are less frequent but more elaborated and emotionally expressive. In particular, the use of blessings and well-wishing forms reflects deeper cultural values and interpersonal sensitivity. As Anna Wierzbicka suggests, such differences are shaped by culturally specific communicative norms [10]. Moreover, the role of social hierarchy is more prominent in Karakalpak, where speakers adjust their expressions depending on age and status. By contrast, English shows less variation in informal contexts. Therefore, the observed differences can be explained by both cultural and linguistic factors. Finally, these distinctions highlight the importance of pragmatic competence, as differences in expressing gratitude may lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has shown that gratitude expressions in English and Karakalpak share a universal communicative function but differ significantly in their linguistic realization and cultural meaning. English is characterized by frequent, standardized, and concise expressions, whereas Karakalpak demonstrates greater variability, emotional richness, and sensitivity to social context. Furthermore, the findings confirm that politeness is both universal and culture-specific, shaped by social norms and cultural values. In addition, the study contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics by providing a focused comparison of gratitude expressions in an under-researched language. Finally, the results emphasize the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence. Future research may expand this analysis to other discourse types or include broader datasets for more comprehensive results.

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