



## CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: CREATIVITY AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES ACROSS CULTURES. A COMPARISON OF LITHUANIAN AND AMERICAN CULTURES

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study was to identify creative reactions and politeness schemes in two languages in cross-cultural communication – American English and Lithuanian – and then compare the means of expressing politeness strategies and creative reactions in the two mentioned languages. The method used in the study is a survey, evaluated by both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research illustrated that the two mentioned cultures do indeed express creative reactions as well as use the speech acts of gratitude and apology. It also showed that American female and American male groups tend to choose more polite and creative reactions, while Lithuanian female and Lithuanian male groups tend to use less polite and creative reactions more often. Americans (both genders) do not *imply* the feeling of gratitude or apology, they say it *directly*. The Lithuanians (both genders) expressed gratitude or apology in everyday situations not as often and not as directly. In other words, the Lithuanian culture tends to use positive politeness; and *vice versa*, the American culture tends to use negative politeness. Besides that, the research revealed that gender plays a significant role in the answers of the survey respondents. The female Americans and female Lithuanians seem to be more polite and express more creative reactions than their male counterparts. It was also revealed that the respondents of American nationality express gratitude or apology in a more polite and creative way and use more speech acts of gratitude or apology in both private and public spheres than the group of Lithuanian respondents.

**Keywords:** American and Lithuanian people, creative reactions, cross-cultural communication, cultures, differences, politeness, politeness strategies.

### Introduction

Communication in our society is understood as means of exchanging information among individuals. In the process of communication politeness and creativity play very important roles, as Inga Hilbig states that “politeness is one of the most important components in communication, without which the communication among people would be impossible” (2008, p. 1).

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So

“politeness can be understood as a social phenomenon, a means to achieve good interpersonal relationships, and a norm imposed by social conventions. So it is phenomenal, instrumental and normative by nature. **In many ways, politeness is universal.** It can be observed as a phenomenon in all cultures; it is resorted to by speakers of different languages as a means to an end and it is recognized as a norm in all societies. Despite its universality the actual manifestations of politeness, the ways to realize politeness, and the standards of judgment differ in different cultures” (Huang, 2008, p. 97).

This study focuses on the politeness and creative reactions across two different cultures – American and Lithuanian – to discover whether Yongliang Huang’s conclusion, “politeness is universal” is true. A survey was designed to represent real-life scenarios and complex situations where apologies and words of gratitude were not the only language devices, but politeness strategies and aspects of creative reactions as a whole would be used. With the help of the survey, comparison between the two mentioned cultures was analyzed. This study is an attempt to observe Lithuanian and American politeness as well as creative reactions which are used in everyday life scenarios to discover the most often used and acceptable (and yet polite) reactions in various situations. According to Jenny Thomas, “We can have no access to speakers’ real motivation for speaking as they do. As linguists we have access only to what speakers say and to how their hearers react” (1995, p. 55). Using Thomas’ ideas as a guide, a comparison was made of these two cultures.

*The research question:* What are the creative reactions and politeness schemes in two languages in cross-cultural communication – American English and Lithuanian – and what are the means of expressing politeness schemes and creative reactions in the two mentioned languages?

*The purpose of the research is:*

- To discover creative reactions and politeness schemes in two languages – American English and Lithuanian;
- Compare the means of expressing politeness strategies and creative reactions in the two above mentioned languages.

*The objectives of the paper are:*

- To explore the theoretical aspects of politeness strategies as they relate to creative reactions and culture;
- To investigate creative reactions, culture aspects and the means of expressing politeness in the Lithuanian and American English languages;
- To discover and then compare the similarities and differences in the way politeness strategies, creative reactions and culture aspects are expressed in the two above mentioned languages.

The survey used in the paper is evaluated by both qualitative and quantitative methods. The survey was carried out with the help of *Survey Monkey* (1999–2019), which is one of the most popular online survey tools in the world designed and administered through Harvard University, United States. The survey included 19 questions. The first seven questions were introduced in order to gather some information about the respondents. The next two questions of the survey asked the participants to count approximately how many times per day they usually say “sorry” and “thank you/thanks” and to say under what circumstances or in what situations they usually do that. The survey also included two open-ended items. One

was to define politeness and creative reactions by the participant and the other was to express any thoughts concerning the topic of cross-cultural communication, politeness, creativity and the survey overall. The action in the eight scenarios was described in various situations (at work, on a bus, in the street) and among people having different (or no) relationships (among friends, colleagues in the office, and strangers on a bus).

*The scope* of the paper is: There were 154 participants who took part in the survey: 75 Americans (50 women and 25 men) and 79 Lithuanians (48 women and 31 men) participated and voluntarily answered the survey questions.

*The aim* of this survey was to look deeper into the use of creative reactions and politeness principles used in everyday situations in two different cultures – American and Lithuanian – paying attention to many different factors: age, education, marital status, gender and, of course, nationality. The survey revealed some commonalities in American and Lithuanian cultures, as well as some differences.

## 1. Theoretical framework

### 1.1. Pragmatics

“Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 1985, p. 240).

According to George Yule (1996), pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener or reader.

Pragmatics was first discussed by the father of linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). As a result of that, “linguists came to understand that language cannot only be studied as a closed system: time came to look at language from the outside, i.e. to see what the speaker does with language” (Valeika & Verikaitė, 2010, p. 7).

Politeness, as a part of pragmatics, is one of the most important components in culture, creativity and communication. The politeness phenomenon can be understood as any action which helps to maintain or strengthen the interrelationships of the interlocutors (Čepaitienė, 2007, p. 11).

Although Jiang Zhu and Yuxiao Bao state that

“politeness is a kind of social phenomenon, an approach used in order to maintain the harmonious interpersonal relationship, and a kind of conventional behavior that everyone must follow no matter what his culture is” (2010, p. 2),

they also say that “there are different standards of politeness in different cultural backgrounds of society” (2010, p. 2). So cultures differ in how they define politeness and in how important politeness is for them. According to Huang, “politeness can be understood as a social phenomenon, a means to achieve good interpersonal relationships and a norm imposed by social conventions” (2008, p. 97). A person should know how to behave in a polite way, what to wear, how to speak in different situations. S/he should be aware of how to ask, thank, talk on the phone, answer, argue, praise or comfort. In other words, when

politeness is mentioned, creative reactions and communication on cultural background become inseparable parts also.

In the *Dictionary of the Current Lithuanian Language (DCLL)* the term “politeness” is presented as a synonym to the term “etiquette” (Keinys, 2012, p. 46). According to Giedrė Čepaitienė, “the language etiquette is the totality of communication norms accepted by the society, language formulas, which show polite or impolite relationships between the speakers” (2007, p. 68). So to be *polite* means to face certain standards and meet specific societal expectations. As it is stated that “the language etiquette is often named as language politeness, it can be considered that the phenomenon of politeness fits into the frames of the requirements of etiquette” (Čepaitienė, 2007, p. 20).

Politeness is one of the important societal, cultural and psychological guidelines of a human’s behavior. Polite behavior is considered to be policy of a human being. Nevertheless, “politeness is not the reminiscence of any action – it appears only when people communicate and it refers to the identifiable, applicable and deciduous standard of societal group members” (House, 2005, p. 13).

So, even if polite actions are performed by individual performers, the phenomenon of politeness is social and effected by societal actions within a community (Hilbig, 2009).

Usual ways to be polite are referred to the collective values of a culture or society; these are instilled into the individual in early childhood. Politeness is learnt in the process of collaborative and linguistic socialization, while the process itself is affected by culture. Culture is understood as a profound complexity of attitudes, beliefs and deep underlying values, which influences behavior of separate individual; it is like some collective program, which unites one group members with the other (Lubecka, 2000, p. 12).

Culture determines all the human communication processes, including politeness. Speaking generally, politeness is a universal phenomenon, as it answers common human requirements and it exists in all cultures in one or another semblance. Nevertheless, politeness norms and conceptions vary among the cultures because of different hierarchy of values and worldviews. In different cultures the culture representatives choose and entrench different verbal and non-verbal ways to express politeness (Čepaitienė, 2007, p. 22; Sifianou, 2000).

As already stated, politeness is understood as socially acceptable verbal and non-verbal behavior. On the other hand, what is acceptable depends not only on relationships between societal communicators, but also on the concrete situation of interaction. If a person is asked what politeness is for him/her and what the qualities are of a polite man, different answers would be presented. According to Peter Grundy, “politeness is not scientific, but everyday conception, which could be interpreted in many ways, related to ethics, morality or the sphere of human inward culture” (2000, p. 164). So the phenomenon of politeness is vividly discussed by separate individuals in everyday situations and it influences, impacts and guides the life of society (Hilbig, 2009, p. 13).

Thomas distinguishes two traditions in a language of understanding politeness (1995, p. 150):

1. The first pragmatic tradition – politeness is understood as nice, proper linguistic behavior, etiquette;
2. The second pragmatic tradition – politeness is understood as theoretic construct, which is created by scholars and which is demarcated from any estimation.

Thomas states that only linguistic expressions and the reactions of the addressee are approachable to the researcher, but not the real motivation of people to talk in that way. "A linguist cannot know for sure whether real, honest aspiration, attention or kindness is shown or just a polite phrase is used" (Thomas, 1995, p. 150).

The first pragmatic tradition, or the first point of view, which is very popular, is also known as *social norm*, as the terms *polite* or *politeness* in everyday usage of language are connected with the accepted behavior, well-established norm or tactful attention to other people (Kasper, 1990, p. 207). The same meaning of the conceptions *polite* or *politeness* is presented in the English and Lithuanian dictionaries. As an example we may take *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* (Sinclair, 1987), in which a polite person is described as having good manners, behaving in appropriate ways and the one who is considerate of others; while in the *DCLL* a polite person is described as the one who behaves well and has good manners (Keinys, 2012, p. 86).

As it has already been mentioned, such definitions of *politeness* infer that politeness is accompanied by creative reactions, which says that the behavior rules, forms or norms in a society are influenced by creative reactions also.

If scholars consider politeness as linguistic etiquette, trying to glance at it from other linguistic spheres (e.g., semantics, sociolinguistics, ethno linguistics, etc.), that scholars are interested in how the politeness phenomenon reveals itself in the system of language, they also gather and examine the means of linguistic expression, try to find out how the usage of language varies considering such elements as sex, age, social status. In those cases the scholars concentrate on the politeness meanings that can be seen in the utterance, polite expressions are examined separately or in the most general social and cultural context (Čepaitienė, 2007; Hilbig, 2009).

From the point of view of pragmatics, politeness can be expressed not only by autonomous politeness acts, the aim of which is to demonstrate the politeness convention, but also by such acts the usage of which gives them a politeness indication only in some particular situations; and when they are disembodied from the concrete situation, they do not have any degree of politeness or meaning (Čepaitienė, 2007, p. 36).

Scholars of pragmatics are interested in politeness when this phenomenon is a peculiarity of concrete language usage, i.e. how the user of language uses the means of sociolinguistic politeness in order to achieve his/her goal (Thomas, 1995, p. 185).

The cross-cultural communicative intention of the addresser is supposed to be important and is put in the first place. At the same time not only usual etiquette formula is analyzed, but actually any utterance, by which respect or friendliness to the addressee are shown. So politeness also includes jokes, even teasing or insults that have the function of demonstration and strengthening of inter solidarity of some social group members. So the social norm is considered to be flexible, dependent on the situation (Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

Scholars look at the usage of language not by applying standards, which are based on language norms, language of dominant social group, the researcher's feeling of culture or intuition, but by describing the norms of language users, which arise from systematically gathered and analyzed empirical language data or from special researches of politeness perception. Čepaitienė states that language etiquette is not only norms and formulas, but also the strategy

of language activities. She also emphasizes that pragmatics is concerned about the social and personal relationships of the speakers, the interpretation of the utterance and the selection of language expression in a concrete context of conversation (Čepaitienė, 2007, p. 20).

## 1.2. English and Lithuanian politeness: cultural impact

According to Hilbig (2008), the majority of Lithuanian works about etiquette described only how politeness can be expressed in the Lithuanian language, e.g., how people could address, thank or wish something each other. Only the monograph of Čepaitienė (2007) is more exhaustive, in which she states that pragmatics is also interested in the interpretation of what has been said in a concrete context of utterance. Although Hilbig states that “politeness is one of the most important components in communication, without which the communication among people would be impossible” (2008, p. 1), she also states that not only foreign people, but also Lithuanians themselves think that people in Lithuania are impolite (2008, p. 8). The biggest number of dissatisfactions is heard when Lithuanian people socialize in unacquainted public places. Such opinions made the scholars pay much attention to the socializing of Lithuanian people in public places (Hilbig, 2008).

Zhu and Bao (2010) state that politeness is the universal phenomenon in all social groups, but every ethnic group has its particular principles or standards. So people from different cultural backgrounds will express politeness and culture in different ways. For example, for the American English people “the function of apology is to restore and maintain harmony between a speaker and hearer” (Sangpil Byon, 2005, p. 141). Siriruck Thijittang (2010) and Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, state that “like other speech acts such as requests and refusals, apology is face-threatening and thus demands a full understanding of its usage in order to avoid miscommunication” (1987, p. 3).

American people like paying compliments. Their compliments “have a [...] function of enhancing rapport between the interlocutors; they also have multiple discourse functions such as greeting or expression of gratitude”, states Sanae Tsuda (1992, p. 144). On the other hand, as Zhu and Bao state, it is also important for an American person to accept a compliment – “the acceptance of compliment is a kind of respect to the counterpart” (2010, p. 850).

American people like having guests in their homes and they also like being invited. Nevertheless, if a person invites his friend to come to him/her and s/he refuses, the speaker will not insist, “in order to make sure that s/he is polite to the hearer” (Zhu & Bao, 2010, p. 851). What is more, Americans

“like to praise the hostess or the host on their first visit, they consider it to be polite and natural. [...] In most cases, Americans prefer to be praised over their house, garden, car, wife, decorations and room arrangements, etc., especially something made on their own hands [...]” (Huang, 2008, p. 99).

As American people like visiting their friends, they also feel grateful for being invited. When they are leaving, that would usually say: e.g. “Thank you so much for a wonderful evening” (Huang, 2008, 99).

According to Huang, Americans “prefer to convey their thanks directly” (2008, p. 99). In other words, they do not try to imply the feeling of gratitude, they say it directly. What

is more, when Americans feel thankful for something, for example, for help, they could say: e.g. “You are really a great help to me”, “I can’t imagine how I can manage it without you!”, “Thank you for enduring so much trouble I brought to you!”, “I really appreciate your help!” (Huang, 2008, p. 99).

These examples illustrate that Americans try to “maximize the communicator’s help to be polite” (Huang, 2008, p. 99) and they do not stop themselves from showing gratitude.

To conclude, Thomas says that

“Politeness as a real-world goal (i.e. politeness interpreted as a genuine desire to be pleasant to others, or as the underlying motivation for an individual’s linguistic behavior) has no place within pragmatics. We can have no access to speakers’ real motivation for speaking as they do, and discussions as to whether one group of people is “politer” than another (in the sense of genuinely behaving better to other people than to other groups) are ultimately futile. As linguists we have access only to what speakers say and to how their hearers react” (1995, p. 150).

This study is an attempt to identify the most common, accepted models of gratitude and apology in American English and Lithuanian in various social situations; match them together according to the material collected in similar situations; discuss the most important socio cultural elements that determine the understanding of politeness and its expressiveness; also understanding that the world is a cosmopolitan place filled with different cultures and traditions, this study is an attempt to identify creativity aspects, as parts of politeness sphere, as well.

## **2. The results of the research**

### **2.1. Methods**

The survey was designed to represent real-life scenarios and complex situations where apologies and words of gratitude were not the only language devices, but politeness strategies as a whole would be utilized. Creative reactions as well as comparison between two cultures were analyzed: between American culture and Lithuanian culture.

The survey included 19 questions. The first seven questions were introduced in order to gather some information about the respondents, which could play an important role while analyzing creative reactions and politeness strategies used in both cultures. The participants had to answer the questions about their age (they were categorized into seven age groups: from 18 to 24; from 25 to 34; from 35 to 44; from 45 to 54; from 55 to 64; from 65 to 74; 75 or older), gender, religious/non-religious, nationality, marital status and education. The next two questions of the survey asked the participants to count approximately how many times per day they usually say “sorry” and “thank you/ thanks” and to say under what circumstances or in what situations they usually do that. The survey also included two open-ended items. One was to define politeness and creative reactions by the participant and the other was to express any thoughts concerning the topic of politeness, cross-cultural communication, creative reactions and the survey overall.

There were only eight scenarios presented in the questionnaire. The examples were chosen to be small to help the respondents concentrate more on each of the questions: to think



carefully which reaction best represented theirs in the given situation and so they would not get bored and indifferent while answering. The eight scenarios that were presented for the respondents were real-life. The action in the scenarios was described in various situations (at work, on a bus, in the street) and among people having different (or no) relationships (among friends, colleagues in the office, and strangers on a bus). All the situations in the survey were presented in a way that the respondent had to think creatively and reflect on feelings of gratefulness or apology about something. The scenarios included four answers/reactions each, so the participants had to choose the answer/reaction which, according to him/her, best suited in a particular situation.

The scenarios were created based on everyday situations. For example, situation No. 14 presented a conversation among two friends, while situation No. 16 gives a scenario of conversation between two colleagues. In both scenarios one of the speakers should feel sorry and the survey reveals this information, whether the words of apology differ while talking to a colleague or talking to a friend. Another pair of situations describes the feeling of gratitude among close friends (situation No. 17) and colleagues (situation No. 19). The survey reveals whether the degree of gratitude differs when a person thanks a friend and a colleague and whether different reactions are chosen to express gratitude. This way, the speakers of the scenarios behave creatively and communicate differently. All the participants answered the questions willingly and honestly. Nevertheless, just like Thomas states,

“We can have no access to speakers’ real motivation for speaking as they do, and discussions as to whether one group of people is politer than another (in the sense of genuinely behaving better to other people than to other groups) are ultimately futile. As linguists we have access only to what speakers say and to how their hearers react” (1995, p. 150).

In other words, we could never know if the answers reflect true responses, if the speaker is really honest or polite or reacts creatively, we can only accept the information given and react to his/her words.

There were 154 participants who took part in the survey: 75 Americans (50 women and 25 men) and 79 Lithuanians (48 women and 31 men) participated and voluntarily answered the survey questions. The survey was carried out with the help of *Survey Monkey* (1999–2019), which is one of the most popular online survey tools in the world. It allows the researcher to get information via survey from participants around the world and then tabulates the results.

According to research done back in 2001, Narcyz Roztocki states,

“Modern Internet-Based Surveys are not traditional paper-and-pencil surveys simply mapped into HTML format and posted on the Web, however. They are intelligent user interfaces supported by efficient database systems to retrieve, process and analyze data. As Internet-Based Surveys became more intelligent, and therefore better able to deal with problems, while optimizing advantages, it could be assumed that the importance of the Web for academic data collection will increase” (2001, p. 5).

Since 2001, the web-based survey has picked up momentum. I decided to use the *Survey Monkey*, as it provides a simple, cost-effective, self-serve web base that ensures privacy and security through Secure Sockets Layer encryption and multi-machine backup to keep data secure. *Survey Monkey* is a part of the *Fortune 100* companies as is used by businesses, academic institutions, and organizations around the world.



As it was stated before, the aim of this survey was to investigate the use of creative reactions and politeness principles used in everyday situations in cross-cultural communication in two different cultures – American and Lithuanian – paying attention to many different factors: age, education, marital status, gender and, of course, nationality. The survey revealed some commonalities in American and Lithuanian cultures, as well as some differences.

## 2.2. Survey instruments

All the respondents who participated in the survey (154) answered the question (which consisted of three parts): *What does such a phenomenon as politeness mean to you? What does such a phenomenon as creativity mean to you? What do they have in common?* Surprisingly, there were analogical answers including idioms used to describe politeness and creative reactions. The respondents describe them in different ways, but there were some common themes:

- “It is a manner of *behavior*, parts of *behavior*, they are necessary in a society”; “The actions of *behavior* towards other people”;
- “They are the degree of inner *education* of a person”; “The degrees of a person’s *education*”; “Some things that show person’s *education*, respect for other people”; “Human ability to show your *intelligence* level”;
- “The *respect* for others”; “*Respectfulness* for people”; “It is when you *respect* people”;
- “A way to show your *good intentions* towards the others”; “Being *attentive* to other people’s needs”; “*Caring* about other people’s comfort levels”; “*Consideration* of another persons feelings”; “*Treating* others with courtesy and respect”; “To *consider* others before yourself”;
- “Cultural phenomena of expressing some kind of *etiquette*”;
- “The keys to open the door”; “The mirrors of your soul”; “Family’s heritage”; “Good manners in words and deeds”; “Abiding cultural expectations for courtesy”;
- “Inseparable parts of my work and life”; “Important components in human relationships”; “Necessities I use every day in my life”; “All life included”; “Natural reactions to everyday situations”; “Requirements for good interpersonal relations”.

All these responses to the given question illustrate, whether American or Lithuanian, that there were common themes held. The first question was to discover whether respondents had different points of view of what politeness and creativity are for them and how important, if at all, they are for them. The differences in attitudes even enhance and strengthen the meanings of politeness and creativity.

## 2.3. Findings

After analyzing all the unveiled data, the research findings could be presented:

1. The respondents describe politeness and creativity in different ways, but there are some common themes. A part of the respondents describe the terms as necessary parts of their lives. For a few, the terms are synonymous with the term “education”. There are respondents for whom the terms coincide with the term “respect”.
2. The answers state, that the majority of the respondents of the American nationality are religious (even 97.3%), while Lithuanians are much less religious (66.67%).

3. The level of education is significant while analyzing creative reactions and politeness in both nations, because the level of education can signify and influence the usage of politeness expressions as well as creative reactions in everyday situations.
4. When asked to count how many times approximately per typical day American and Lithuanian respondents use the speech act “thank you/thanks” and to say under what circumstances or in what situations they usually do that, a tendency was noticed that the American males’ answers are similar to the American females’ answers. Nevertheless, American women respondents are more polite and use more creative reactions than Lithuanian women respondents. In addition, American males appear to be more polite and use more creative reactions than their Lithuanian counterparts.
5. When asked to count how many times approximately per typical day American and Lithuanian respondents use the speech act “I am sorry/sorry” and to say under what circumstances or in what situations they usually do that, a tendency was noticed that males’ answer is close to the American females’ answer, although American men tend to be more polite and use more creative reactions. Nevertheless, American women respondents are a little more polite and use more creative reactions than Lithuanian women respondents. Anyway, it has to be mentioned that Lithuanian males in this case are the most impolite and use less creative reactions while answering the same question.
6. It should be taken into consideration that if comparing the two answers to the questions on the whole (“How many times a day and in what situations do you think you say ‘thank you/thanks’?” and “How many times a day and in what situations do you think you say ‘I am sorry/sorry?’”), it should be mentioned that a tendency was noticed that American males’ answer is close to the American females’ answer, although American men tend to be more polite and use more creative reactions. Nevertheless, American women respondents are a little more polite and use more creative reactions than Lithuanian women respondents. Anyway, it has to be mentioned that Lithuanian males in this case are the most impolite and use the least creative reactions.
7. A clear tendency can be seen here that the respondents tend to choose the speech act *thank you/thanks* much more often on a typical day than the speech act “I am sorry/sorry”. This surprising discovery states that in both nations the respondents are more polite and use more creative reactions when they appear in situations where they have to thank.
8. Analyzing the data of the 1st life – real situation, a tendency is seen that the majority in Lithuanian male group chooses polite reactions and react creatively, but the other two reactions (No. 2 and No. 1) are also chosen by the Lithuanians males. This makes the conclusion that the last – mentioned gender group is the least polite and use the least creative reactions of all the four answering this question.
9. Analyzing the data of the 2nd life – real situation, a conclusion can be made that among the Lithuanian Female respondents there are two who would choose reaction No. 1. What is more, one female respondent would choose reaction No. 4, which is the least polite and creative of all the four presented reactions. A tendency could be

seen here that American respondents are more polite and use more creative reactions answering this particular survey question while Lithuanians appeared to be less polite and use less creative reactions; to be even more precise, Lithuanian Female respondents are the least polite and use the least creative reactions of all the four groups answering this question.

10. Analyzing the data of the 3rd life – real situation, a conclusion can be made that there is a difference among the responses in the last mentioned situation among two strangers on a public transport and in this situation among two friends. A tendency could be seen here that American respondents and Lithuanian female respondents are tend to react in a polite way and use creative reactions while answering this particular survey question; while Lithuanian male respondents appeared to be less polite and use less creative reactions; to be even more precise, Lithuanian male respondents appeared to be the least polite and use the least creative reactions of all the four groups answering this question.
11. Analyzing the data of the 4th life – real situation, the speech act of gratitude is analyzed, that is how the respondents would react in the situation, where they should feel grateful for something. A tendency could be seen here that the majority of American female and Lithuanian female respondents chose the same answers, so they are tend to react in a polite way and use creative reactions while answering this particular survey question; while American male and Lithuanian male respondents appear to choose different responses. American male respondents tend to be more polite and use more creative reactions than the Lithuanian male respondents, who appeared to be the least polite and use the least creative reactions of all the four groups answering this question.
12. Analyzing the data of the 5th life – real situation, the data shows that the respondents tend to choose reactions No. 3 and No. 4 as the best variants to react to the situation. Nevertheless, there are respondents who would choose reaction No. 1 too, which would signal that some of the participants tend not to apologize and not to react creatively. American male and American female respondents chose similar reactions, but to be more precise, American males tend to be more polite and use more creative reactions answering this particular survey question. The same situation is with Lithuanian male and female respondents: they tend to choose similar answers, but Lithuanian males tend to be more polite and use more creative reactions in this particular situation.
13. Analyzing the data of the 6th life – real situation, a tendency could be seen here that American female and male respondents choose very similar answers. The respondents of Lithuanian nationality also choose alike responses. Nevertheless, American participants choose answers that are more polite and creative than those which are chosen by the Lithuanian participants. To be even more precise, Lithuanian male participants choose the least polite and least creative reactions of all the four groups.
14. Analyzing the data of the 7th life – real situation, the revealed data illustrates that American female and male respondents choose very similar answers. The respondents of Lithuanian nationality also choose alike responses. Nevertheless, American participants choose answers that are more polite and creative than those which are chosen by the Lithuanian participants. To be even more precise, Lithuanian male participants choose the least polite and least creative reactions of all the four groups.

15. Analyzing the data of the 8th life – real situation, the unveiled data showed that American female and male participants choose different variants answering the same question. A tendency could be seen here that American male respondents are tend to react in a more polite and creative way while answering this particular survey question than American female ones; Lithuanian female and male respondents appear to be less polite and creative. Anyway, the least polite and creative reaction in this particular question is chosen by equal number of female and male participants of Lithuanian nationality. Nevertheless, to be even more precise, Lithuanian male respondents appear to be the least polite and express the least creative reactions of all the four groups answering this question.
16. All the respondents who participated in the survey were asked to add any thoughts or reflections about this survey. A conclusion out of this data was made that the participants were thankful for the survey itself and the participants evaluated the survey positively.

## Conclusions

This study focuses on creative reactions and politeness across two different cultures in cross-cultural communication – American and Lithuanian. To be more precise, the speech acts of apology and gratitude in everyday situations, the possible creative usage of these were analyzed and the results were compared.

To start, the fact was established that the two mentioned cultures do indeed use the speech acts of gratitude and apology. The multiplicity appears only when the respondents of the two cultures have to choose one of the reactions presented and when they have to answer how frequently and in what situations they use these speech acts. As the respondents of the survey were divided into the groups of American female, American male, Lithuanian female and Lithuanian male in order to look at the survey answers from the gender perspective, the conclusion could be made, that American female and American male groups tend to choose more polite and creative reactions, while Lithuanian female and Lithuanian male groups tend to use less polite and creative reactions more often. Americans (both genders) do not *imply* the feeling of gratitude or apology, they say it *directly*. The Lithuanians (both genders) expressed gratitude or apology in everyday situations not as often and not as directly. In other words, the Lithuanian culture tends to use less polite and creative reactions; and vice versa, the American culture tends to use more polite and creative reactions. Besides that, a conclusion can be made that gender also plays a significant role in the answers of the survey respondents. The Female Americans and Female Lithuanians seem to be more polite and creative than their male counterparts.

In addition, it should also be mentioned that the situations set in the survey presented the action among people having different relationships (friends, colleagues) or no relationships (strangers on a bus). So the American and Lithuanian respondents, realizing some (or no) social distance between himself/herself and the addressee, tend to choose different reactions. The conclusion could be drawn that the respondents of American nationality express gratitude or apology in a more polite and creative way and use more speech acts of gratitude or apology in both private and public spheres than the group of Lithuanian respondents.

To sum up, language learners should understand that language learning is not just about vocabulary or grammar or sentence structure. A person can speak a foreign language quite well and still fail miserably because s/he does not know cultural norms, peculiarities of cross-cultural communication or creative reactions that are being expressed. As “pragmatic failure may often result in more serious communicative misunderstandings than grammatical errors” (Thomas, 1983). The study hopefully contributes to an understanding of how Lithuanians and Americans differ in their ideas of “normal” politeness and creative reactions in cross-cultural communication. The research is significant and relevant because it explores creative reactions, politeness strategies in cross-cultural communication of two very different language groups and evaluates their common features as well as their differences. In today’s world this is important.

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## TARPKULTŪRINĖ KOMUNIKACIJA: KŪRYBIŠKUMAS IR MANDAGUMO STRATEGIJOS KULTŪRŲ KONTEKSTE. LIETUVOS IR AMERIKOS KULTŪRŲ Palyginimas

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Santrauka

Šio tyrimo tikslas buvo išsiaiškinti kūrybiškų reakcijų ir mandagumo schemas dviejose skirtingose – amerikiečių ir lietuvių – kalbose tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos kontekste, ir palyginti mandagumo strategijų ir kūrybiškų reakcijų raiškos priemonės abiejose paminėtose kalbose.

Šiame darbe pirmiausia buvo gilinamasi į teorinius aspektus, kurie susiję su mandagumo strategijomis pragmatikoje, vėliau buvo tyrinėtos mandagumo raiškos priemonės bei kūrybiškų reakcijų reiškinys lietuvių ir amerikiečių kalbose tarpkultūrinėje komunikacijoje, galiausiai buvo lyginama kūrybiškų reakcijų bei mandagumo strategijų raiškos panašumai ir skirtumai pagal tai, kaip jie yra išreikšti šiame tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos kontekste – abiejose minėtose kalbose.

Tyrimo naudojamas metodas yra apklausa, įvertinta tiek kokybiniais, tiek kiekybiniais metodais. Tyrimas parodė, kad abi minėtos kultūros iš tikrųjų išreiškia kūrybiškas reakcijas, taip pat naudoja mandagumo raiškos priemones – dėkingumo ir atsiprašymo aktus. Tai taip pat parodė, kad Amerikos moterų ir Amerikos vyrų grupės linkusios rinktis mandagesnes ir kūrybingesnes reakcijas, o Lietuvos moterų ir Lietuvos vyrų grupės linkusios dažniau naudoti mažiau mandagias ir kūrybingesnes reakcijas. Amerikiečiai (abi lytys) išreiškia dėkingumo ar atsiprašymo jausmą tiesiogiai. Lietuviai (abiejų lyčių atstovai) dėkingumą ar atsiprašymą kasdienėse situacijose reiškia ne taip dažnai ir ne taip tiesiogiai. Be to, tyrimas atskleidė, kad lytis vaidina svarbų vaidmenį apklausos respondentų atsakymuose. Moterys amerikietės ir lietuviškos moterys pasirodė esant mandagesnės ir kūrybingesnės nei šių tautų vyrai. Taip pat buvo atskleista, kad amerikiečių tautybės respondentai dėkingumą ar atsiprašymą išreiškia mandagiau ir kūrybiškiau ir naudoja daugiau dėkingumo ar atsiprašymo aktų tiek privačioje, tiek viešojoje erdvėje nei Lietuvos respondentų grupė.

Kalbos besimokantieji turėtų suprasti, kad kalbos mokymasis nėra tik žodynas, gramatika ar sakinio struktūra, jie turi žinoti tiek kultūros normas, tiek tarpkultūrinės

komunikacijos aspektus, tiek kūrybiškumo raiškos aspektus, tiek mandagumo raišką, tiek ir pačią pragmatiką. Šis tyrimas yra svarbus ir reikšmingas, nes jis tyrinėja kūrybines reakcijas bei mandagumo strategijas tarpkultūrinėje komunikacijoje dviejose labai skirtingose kalbose bei kultūrose, atskleidžia jų panašumus bei skirtumus. O šiandieniniame pasaulyje tai svarbu.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** Amerikos ir Lietuvos žmonės, kūrybiškos reakcijos, tarpkultūrinė komunikacija, kultūros, skirtumai, mandagumas, mandagumo strategijos.