Use of Cultulings in Business Communication: A Case of Flattery

Saba Hasanzadeh[1]*, Golshan Shakeebaee[2]
[1] *Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran,* [2] *Technical University of Kaiserslautern, Germany*

Abstract Since business without appropriate language use is impossible and language is an inseparable part of a culture, knowing about the cultural patterns of communities can also be valuable. Considering language as an essential component of any given culture, studying linguistic expressions can reveal a society's hidden cultural patterns, a concept known as cultuling analysis. The current study looked at the "flattery" cultuling demonstrated in Persian and English films. To achieve this, excerpts of dialogues from 100 Persian and 100 English films were taken and analyzed by means of cultuling analysis (CLA) methodology from linguistic, cultural, and psychological angles. The result showed that flattery can happen in formal and informal situations among people from both equal and unequal status. Moreover, Iranian people's use of flattery displayed cultural patterns of overstating, high context, power distance, low trust, and collectivism, while English people's use of this cultuling revealed their hidden culture, including low-context, high-trust, understanding, individualism, and power distance.

Keywords: *Language, Culture, Cultural patterns, Flattery, Business communication*

*Corresponding Author:
Saba Hasanzadeh
hasanzade.sabaa@gmail.com

1. Introduction

At different times in human historical, social, and economic development, members of different linguistic communities have been required to communicate. This demand for communication led to interactions between different languages. As a result of altered communication, political, and globalization-related events, language contact procedures still exist today with a concentration on business communication. The primary method and crucial step in figuring out what is real in human communication is language. Language users have access to a large range of lexical and grammatical combinations that can be used to convey countless different meanings or messages (Samarzija, 2021). Since employing language enables man to speak with others and, as a social being, aids his survival and growth, communication is the primary linguistic function of language (Cerepinko, 2012). Language is a product of culture. "All languages are always changing, and the cultural diversity of the world and the linguistic diversity of the world are interrelated" (Samarzija, 2021, p. 3).

The study of cultural differences in different societies has always been interesting for linguists, sociologists, and other disciplines. To this end, the sociology of language research attempts to analyze the social structure by examining individual attitudes, practices, and behaviors in the language (Wardhaugh, 2010). Since there is a bidirectional relationship between culture and language (e.g., Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2001), understanding the intellectual and cultural system of society by exploring its language makes sense (Pishghadam, 2013).

There is no doubt that studying certain types of discourses used by many people in the community can be a good place to explore and analyze the culture of the community, which is referred to as cultulings (culture in language) by Pishghadam (2013); because the study of language is a window to understand the knowledge and beliefs of a specific culture; Therefore, to understand the language of people in a society, the necessary knowledge of oral expression must be mastered under different social conditions. Furthermore, this type of research reveals the positive and negative cultural aspects of the language of a society. Thus, by finding the negative cultural patterns of a society, people would be informed to eliminate harmful or destructive cultural points and move towards a better culture and society (Pishghadam, 2013). This study specifically takes cululing into account to shed more light on business communication and attempts to highlight cululing as one of the major effects on people's success in business.

In this era, one of the important destructive cultural aspects that needs more attention is flattery since it is one of the issues that threaten social health, and if solutions were not taken to correct it, it would cause irreparable harm to society. Many human societies view the idea of flattery and its personal and societal repercussions as moral vices. In fact, the more prevalent this trait is in a community, the more regression and decline can be found in society (Ebrahimi et al., 2019). In fact, moral values have attracted the attention of thinkers and religious leaders for a long time due to their important role in the destiny of man and society. These values protect the morals of the whole society from any harm and show the way to victory and happiness (Dehghan, 2008). In addition, they form the basis of the system of attitudes, cognitions, motivations, and behaviors of a person and lead to the real perfection of a person (Beyrami & Shafiei, 2014) and are the most important ways to survive and improve the health of social life (Esmaeelbeigi et al., 2018). Thus, the growth and excellence of society depend on the reform of its individual and social culture and ethics. According to Siegel et al. (2017), people can grow morally when they differentiate between themselves and the social environment, away from their self-centered thinking, and create moral values by managing social interactions. Nevertheless, sometimes the relationship between people goes out of moderation, and they go to extremes in praising each other to the extent that this act of praise becomes flattery, which is considered a moral vice.

Therefore, flattery seems to be a negative cululing, and people should try to be aware of that and eliminate it from their culture. The present study aims to identify the main factors that lead to flattery and determine their predictability to provide the basis for future revised actions and thus provide awareness for society. Particularly, the current study intends to investigate the use of flattery in Persian and English culture linguistically, culturally, and psychologically through the conceptual model of cululing analysis (CLA, Pishghadam et al., 2020).

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Tektigul et al. (2022), language determines people's thoughts, which in turn are influenced by culture and their beliefs. As a result, studying a particular language can shed light on a society's culture. To achieve this, Pishghadam (2013) developed the word "cululing", which was derived from the concepts of Halliday (1994), Vygotsky (1986), Sapir-Whorf (1956), and Agar (1994). Cululing refers to the culture obtained from the study of language, which is known as culturology of language, under the notion that "language can represent the culture of a society" (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 47).

Several researchers have already conducted in-depth studies of Persian culture because of how crucial it is for illuminating the cultural values that are concealed in the language of the community. Swearing, cursing, praying, religious nicknames (like Haji in Farsi), and fatalism are a few examples (Pishghadam & Attaran, 2014; Pishghadam et al., 2015; Pishghadam & Vahidniya, 2016; Pishghadam & Attaran, 2016).

By examining the language individuals use, the study of Persian cultuling aims to identify the subtle but significant social and cultural values. As an illustration of the collectivist society in Iran, Pishghadam et al. (2018) investigated "coquetry" and noted that it is primarily utilized to uphold polite norms and deny requests. Additionally, Pishghadam and Derakhshan et al. (2020) demonstrated that when looking at "patriarchy and matriarchy," patriarchy in Iranian society has increasingly eroded and given way to maternal dominance in terms of the ability to speak. According to Pishghadam's and Ebrahimi's (2020) study on "uncertainty", Iranians are intolerant of ambiguity. Additionally, Mehrabi and Mahmoodi Bakhtiari (2021) discovered that "insulting" was utilized to convey scorn, sarcasm, and aggressiveness in Persian novels. Pouryazdanpanah Kermani (2021) found that "degree orientation" is frequently used to gain knowledge, have a better future, earn money, show off, have sufficient marriage opportunities, and gain social status.

Pishghadam and Ebrahimi (2020) proposed the CLA conceptual model to explain how language and culture interact. This model effectively explains how language expressions develop as the result of shared social and cultural beliefs and experiences that reflect human traits and culture. CLA is an empirical technique used in particular to comprehend cultural trends concealed in social language expression. Therefore, by studying cultulings in other cultures, one can acquire cultural transcendence and enculturation (Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020).

Three models—cultural models (CM, Hofstede & Bond, 1984), the SPEAKING model (Hymes, 1967), and emotioncy models (Pishghadam, 2019)— based on psychological, social, and cultural patterns are included in the CLA conceptual model (Pishghadam et al., 2020). The study and explanation of cultuling can be conducted methodically based on this recently developed paradigm. To achieve this, it is thought that social and psychological factors, including sensory and emotional factors, tend to complete sociological and cultural models. The CLA model is displayed (Fig. 1), and the following section discusses the models that underlie it.
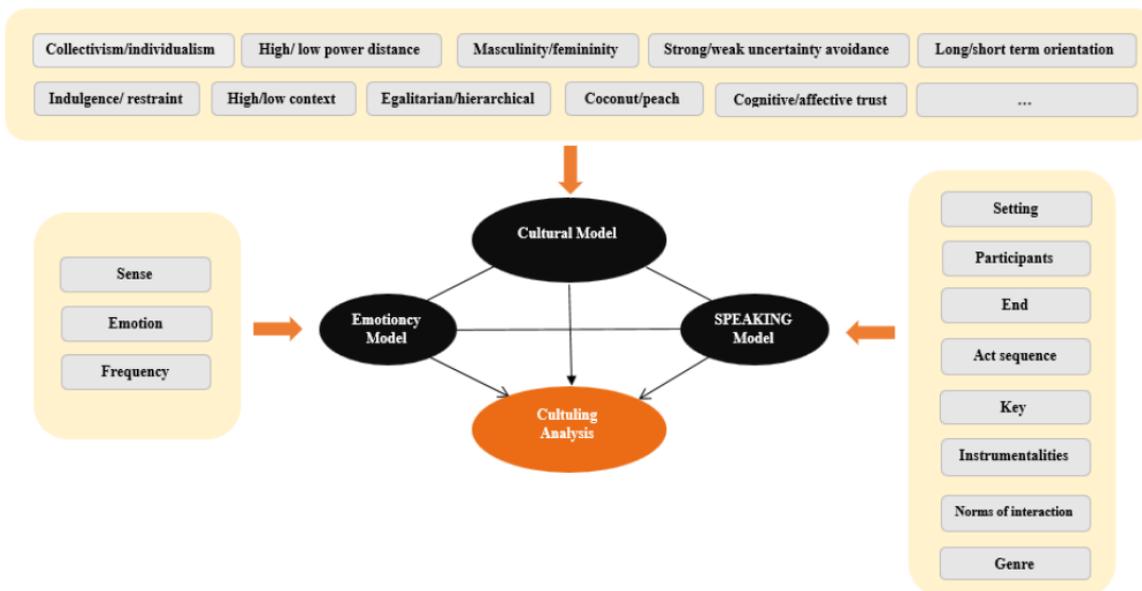

Figure 1
The Conceptual Model of CLA (adapted from "Cultuling analysis: New methodology for discovering cultural memes" by Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, and Derakhshan (2020, p. 30)

2.1. Cultural Models (CMs)

Visible and intangible cultural patterns that are developed at the social level through contact are what characterize the culture of a society (Markus & Hamedani, 2007). The values, behaviors, norms, ideologies, and attitudes of individuals in society are tied to and reflected in these built models (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992). Community members in this situation require a structured collection of

cultures, ideas, attitudes, norms, and social axioms. All of these civilizations, ideas, attitudes, standards, and social tenets are influenced by cultural norms when we are young. So, "presupposed, taken-for-granted knowledge shared throughout a society" can be used to characterize CM (Quinn & Holland, 1987, p. 4).

Numerous CM classifications are highlighted in the literature. One of them is "power distance," which describes the difference between how subordinates in a society perceive power and wealth. According to Minkov and Hofstede (2013), high-power differential societies employ autocratic management techniques and accept a hierarchical structure. On the other hand, cultures with low power distances use democratic management techniques, allowing people to take part in decision-making, voice their displeasure with the government, and work toward achieving an equal distribution of power (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013). Uncertainty avoidance is another CM, which describes how uneasy team members are with risk, ambiguity, and uncertainty, as well as whether they feel threatened in such circumstances. Avoid cultural dissatisfaction with uncertainty when dealing with potential uncertainty; societies with low levels of uncertainty avoidance are more resilient to ambiguities in the future (Ilagan, 2009; Minkov & Hofstede, 2013). The "individualism and collectivism" category is another. Individual choice is important in a culture that values individuality. If they are successful, it will be due to their tenacity. Conversely, collectivists favor group decision-making over individual decision-making (Hofstede & Bond, 1984).

Additionally, Fukuyama (1995) suggested a contrast between high-trust culture and low-trust culture. In a society where people have a high degree of trust in one another, there is considerable investment, stability, and long-term economic growth. On the other hand, in a low-trust society, loyalty is primarily focused on the family rather than on the organization outside of it, cultural values are frequently disregarded, and people find it difficult to trust one another. Hall (1976) also proposed the categories of high-context culture and low-context culture for CM. High-context cultures are more prone to concentrate on collective activities rather than explicitly expressing their aims because the relationships between individuals rely on the individual and the environment. They place a high value on communication and understanding between people. On the other hand, interpersonal relationships in low-context societies are open. Last but not least, Meyer (2014) proposed that society might be classified as overestimating or underestimating a speaker's authenticity. He claimed that using euphemisms to depict a society in a straightforward, non-exaggerated manner is common. On the other hand, society exaggerates if people communicate their opinions on a topic in a skeptical, ambiguous, undecided, or indirect manner.

Clarifying language qualities and looking at cultural models are necessary to discover the cultural patterns of a society. As a result, Hymes' (1967) SPEAKING model is presented in the next section.

2.2. SPEAKING model

Setting, Participant, Ending, action sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genres are the eight primary and systematic components necessary for communicative competence (Hymes, 1967).

- Setting or scene (S): It speaks of the moment and location where the voice is created (Hymes, 2003).
- Participants (P): The participants in the speech event can be identified based on their age, gender, social rank, and personal relationships (Farah, 1998). Based on these traits, the participants in a speech event can be categorized into four different types of relationships: formal and equal (for example, two university professors), informal and equal (for example, two friends), formal and unequal (for example, department heads and students), and informal and unequal (for example, a doctor and his patients) (Pishghadam et al., 2020).
- End (E): It alludes to the explicit or implied cultural purpose of each speech event as well as the objectives of the dialogue's participants. These objectives are flexible and subject to alteration as necessary (Fasold, 1990).
- Act sequence (A): It offers an understanding of the order and flow of interactions involving many types and substances (Sarfo, 2011).

- Key (K): It is employed to identify the tone, style, or spirit of behavior. Words that can be used to characterize this include repressive, serious, diligent, kind, polite, sarcastic, shallow, ironic, friendly, frightening, hostile, aggressive, etc.
- Instrumentalities (I): Channels and codes are mentioned. Any kind of communication, including spoken, written, or telegraphic semaphores, is referred to as a "channel," and judgments taken at various language levels are referred to as "choices of codes" (Hymes, 1967).
- Norm (N): It refers to particular characteristics and behaviors that, depending on speaking behavior, may be supported by a social framework (Hymes1967).
- Genre (G): It consists of a range of spoken activities and occasions, such as lectures, painting, curses, and blessings. (Hymes, 1967).

It is clear that Hyams' model ignores the psychological aspects of linguistic contact and instead stresses social and cultural knowledge. The feelings, frequencies, and sorts of emotions that people experience can all affect how they express themselves. These elements are used in crop analysis and interpretation since they directly and undeniably affect people's consciousness, perception, feelings, and interactions. This is significant and cannot be dismissed (Pishghadam et al., 2020). As a result, the Pishghadam (2015) emotioncy model better explains CLA.

2.3. Emotioncy Model

The claim that sense-induced emotions alter participants' intentions, endings, cues, and genders and are inextricably linked to dictionaries, linguistic expression, and all other elements of Hymes's model was made clear by Pishghadam et al. in 2021. In other words, individuals' attitudes and stances during conversations and encounters can alter depending on the emotions concealed in their words and body language, which also controls how people interact. A similar theory, the emotioncy model (emotion + frequency), was put out by Pishghadam (2015). It contends that emotions brought on by the senses can relativize a person's perspective of their environment (Pishghadam et al., 2016). On the other hand, how frequently a sense is exposed to something affects the feelings that are evoked by that sensation.

Pishghadam (2015) proposed a hierarchical model that takes into account various emotional types, ranging from inner to arch, auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and null. In the null stage, people, in particular, have never heard of, seen, or encountered any entities or ideas. In the auditory emotioncy stage, participants have only heard a single phrase or notion. The person has the experience of hearing and seeing items during the visual emotioncy stage. The fourth dimension of emotioncy is kinesthetic, where humans hear, feel, and touch actual objects. When people experience something directly, they enter the next level, which is inner emotioncy. Finally, Arch emotioncy arises when an individual actively engages in the learning process and conducts extensive research to gain additional knowledge. Also, the three types of emotioncy are avolvement (null emotions), exvolvement (hearing, visual, and kinesthetic emotions), and involvement (internal and arch emotioncies).

Pishghadam et al. (2019) created an expanded model of emotioncy as a result (Fig. 2). To clarify how someone who has attained this peak can fully grasp the subject and teach it to others by producing it, it comprises mastery and metavolvement. As a result, the term "metavolvement" refers to a person's peak level of emotionality as determined by all of their senses and emotions.

CLA's conceptual model, in essence, stresses evaluating an individual's sensory-evoked emotions concerning other cultulings and determining whether a cultuling acquires or loses traction (Pishghadam et al., 2020). Overall, as previously said, the CLA conceptual model is one of the most thorough frameworks for understanding the culture of a society. The main advantage of this model is that it takes into account the sociocultural, linguistic, and psychological factors that influence the interaction of communication in a particular society. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate one of the important verbal expressions used in society, the cultuling of "flattery" in Farsi and English, linguistically, culturally, and psychologically by using CLA conceptual model.
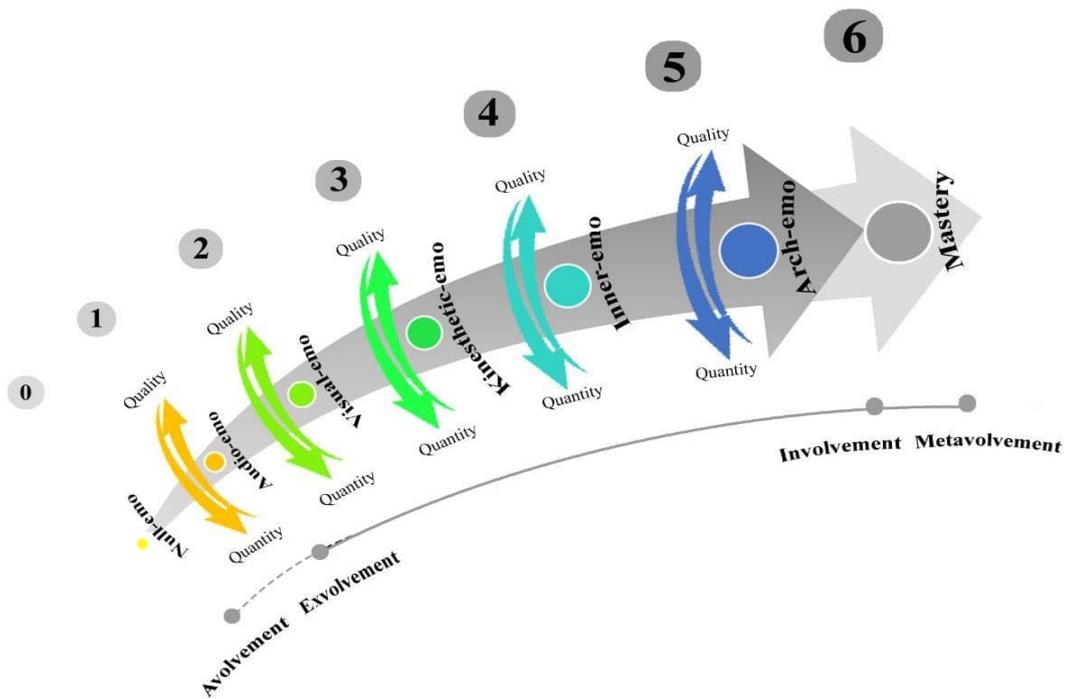
Figure 2
Emotioncy Levels (adapted from "A novel approach to psychology of Language education" by Pishghadam et al. (2019, p. 219)

2.4. Flattery

Flattery (cāpalūsī) is originally an Indian word, meaning that someone says a word just to get someone's attention, receive something from someone, and get on someone's good side. Flattery is the practice of giving lots of compliments to someone to ingratiate oneself with them. Historically, flattery has long been a normal way of communication when people want to speak to a king or queen (Rogier, 2007). In other words, flattery is insincere praise, and too much praise happens when someone is ingratiating (Vonk, 2002). Flattery indicates the unhealthy relationships and norms that govern that society. Such an atmosphere in society is formed when the positions and roles are not distributed, and that is worthy of individuals, and in fact, there is no meritocracy in its true sense. Suppose every person is in a position worthy of his dignity and enjoys a proper social role following his real status. In that case, relations in social relations will also be of sufficient health.

This type of cultuling occurs in different situations and social moments and depends on several factors that are explored in this study. For example, one might be related to a flatterer's personality flaw and wants to make up for their flaws with their flattery. Someone with nice language and flattery may want some kind of ambition. Flattery can have two major reasons, including defensive reasons and business reasons. The former is used to protect oneself from the consequences of poor performance. In this case, the person may behave in this way to arouse the compassion of his / her supervisor. The latter is not a reaction. Instead, it pursues long-term goals and is often used by the individual as a means for promotion or a means to achieve personal goals (Rezazadeh et al., 2013). Based on the study of Aryee et al. (1993), the most important personality factor that has a significant relationship with the occurrence of flattery in an individual is the need for success in the individual. They have more to get involved in the political process of success. The flattering actions, generally, fall into four categories: too much compliment, loving kindness, concept alignment, and pretend. These acts are used by flatterers for their own gain and the satisfaction of superior powers (Ebrahimi et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

Two hundred movies (100 Iranian movies and 100 English movies) were watched to collect data for this study. These films were collected from various genres, including social, drama, comedy, science-fiction, and so on. Most of these films were made in the last ten years.

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Data Collection

The data collection of this study continued from April 2022 to August 2022 until no new information was added (Cohen et al., 2007; Yin, 2010). Movies were selected for this cultuling analysis because the language of art depicts the natural texture and reflects everyday life in a good way. In other words, the language of art reflects the natural behaviors and feelings of the people of that society. Numerous types of research are evidence of the fact that the media and, in particular, movies have a huge impact on the formation of the behaviors, ideologies, and emotions of the people of that society (Oladoja & Tomere, 2022); Therefore, because the movies carry the social and cultural burden of the society and represent the culture of a society (Dahl, 2004; Gunter, 1987; Mininni, 2007) and it was not possible to access the English body in Iran, English movies were the best option for the investigation.

3.2.2. Data Analysis

Analysis was based on the conceptual framework of CLA proposed by Pishghadam et al. (2020), which allows the researcher to explore different types of discourses and examine the factors affecting the interaction between people and investigate discourses linguistically, culturally, and psychologically. Particularly, data were analyzed through CMs, the SPEAKING model, and the emotioncy model accordingly.

4. Results

4.1. CLA of Flattery in Farsi Language

As was mentioned, different discourses related to flattery are analyzed through CMs, the SPEAKING model, and the emotioncy model, respectively. Persian (Farsi) speakers mostly flatter by using the following sentences. The Farsi sentences (F), their literal translation (LT), and their English equivalent (E) are also given.

    A. /tʃa:kerIm/ (F). I'm your valet (LT). You're welcome (E).
    B. /no:kæretæm mæn/ (F). I'm your servant (LT). You're welcome (E).
    C. /ʃoma: jek du:neji:d! ka:sh hær term ba: ʃoma: dærs daʃte ba:ʃIm!/ (F). You are the one. Wish we have a lesson with you each term (LT). You're second to none. I wish you were our professor every semester (E).
    D. /mæge da:rIm behtær æz ʃoma osta:d! ʃoma: behtærIn osta:di: bu:dIn ke ta:ha:la: da: ʃtIm/ (F). Do we have better than you, professor? You are the best professor we had until now (LT). Do we have a better professor than you? You are the best one we have ever had (E).
    E. /a:gha:je doktor ʃoma pændʒe tæla:jIn! i:no hæme mIdu:næn/ (F). You have a golden hand. Everybody knows that (LT). You are skillful. Everyone knows it (E).

The results showed that this cultuling is mostly used in formal situations (e.g., university, bank, office, organization, company) and sometimes in informal situations (e.g., shops, restaurants, parties) as well among people with equal and unequal relationships. Example 1 represents a conversation between two people with unequal status in a formal situation. It is worth mentioning that this cultuling mostly occurs between students and professors at university for different reasons like getting good grades, making themselves the apple of their professors' eyes, getting recommendation letters, etc.

- Example 1: At university (before taking an exam).

A. Student: /sæla:m ærz ʃod osta:d. xa:stæm doba:re tæshækor konæm xa:nu:m doktor æz xedmætetu:n ba:bæte zæhæma:tetu:n dær tu:le term. mæn va:gheæn tæma:me tæla:ʃæmo kærdæm væ omi:dva:ræm nomre xu:bI æz ʃoma: begIræm ke ba:ese eftexare bændæst/ (F). Hello, professor. I wanted to thank you again for your efforts during the semester. I really tried my best and I hope to get a good grade from you, which makes me feel proud (EL). Hello professor, I wanted to appreciate all your efforts during this semester. I tried my best in the exam and it's going to make me proud if I get a good grade (E).

B. Professor: /mersi: æz mohæbæte ʃoma:. besja:r a:li:. omi:dva:ræm mesle hæmi:ʃe movæfægh ba:ʃId/ (F). I thank your kindness, very great. I hope you succeed like always (LT). This is very nice of you. As always, I wish you luck (E).

In this example, the student's words are somehow showing the culture of overstating and power distance. He is trying to convince the teacher about his efforts and indirectly asking for a good grade just before his exam. It should be noted that flattery was seen in informal situations as well. In another example, there is a conversation between two people with unequal status in an informal situation.

- Example 2: At the shop.

A. Customer: /sæla:m xæste næba:ʃI dʒæva:nmærde ru:zega:r!/ (F) Hi, don't be tired gentle man of the days (LR). Hi, gentle man (E).

B. Shopkeeper: /sæla:m tʃetori: æzIz!/ (F). Hi, how are you dear? (LR). Hi, how are you? (E).

A. Customer: /hæmIn ke di:dImet a:lI ʃodIm! mIgæm æz tʃænd kIlu: mIve mIbæræm ghorbu:n dæstet mIzæni: be hesa:b dIge? To ke tu: mærdu:negi: hærf næda:rI mese hæmIshe da:da:ʃ!/ (F). Now that I see you, I'm great! I get some kilos of fruit; you will put it in the account, right? You don't lack chivalry like always, bro (LR). I'm great now. I'll get some fruit and pay for it later, alright? You are as generous as always, bro (E).

B. Shopkeeper: /mægha:ze ma:le xodete da:da:ʃ ra:hæt ba:ʃ mIzænvm be hesa:b/ (F). The shop is yours, bro. Be comfortable. I will put it in the account (LR). Don't worry; you can pay it later (E).

In this example, flattery is crystal clear again because the customer obviously had no money and needed to buy, so he had no other way but flattering. The shopkeeper seems to be pleased with this, which indicates his superior power over the customer that he wants the customer to accept.

4.1.1. CMs

Different CMs emerged from the analysis, including power distance (i.e., people mostly turn to flattery while they're talking to someone who has the superior power); high-context (i.e., people are more emotional and care a lot about the context, and non-verbal expressions like eye contact, body language, and tone. They are more pretentious and fakers, in other words, they can easily get what they want by stimulating someone's emotions); low-trust (i.e., people take advantage of others for their own sake and they easily lie to each other just for their benefit); overstating (i.e., people like to speak in a way that pleases or satisfies the listener and try to act too nicely and hide their real feelings); collectivism (people care a lot about the society and they like to be admired by others and it satisfies them).

4.1.2. Hymes' (1967) SPEAKING Model

S: Informal/ formal (with a higher frequency of formal situations than informal).

P: Equal and informal equal and formal, unequal and informal, and unequal and formal (with a high frequency of unequal formal relationships between youths and elderly).

E: The speaker uses flattery because sometimes he/ she is afraid of someone having more power, wants to achieve his/ her goal no matter what it takes, or has low self-esteem.

A: The speaker flatters to receive what he wants from a person who has more power. As a result, the listener enjoys this feeling and gives him his need.

K: Respectful, polite, cautious, pleading, friendly.

I: Spoken and written (highly frequent in speech).

N: People mostly use this cultuling while they consider the listener superior to themselves and are scared to lose something.

G: Flattery is not limited to conversation and is also used in writing.

4.1.3. Pishghadam's (2015) Emotioncy Model

In the Persian language, people will feel pleased when hearing flattery, and flattery affects them in any manner. Therefore, although listeners know what flattery is, it gives a good feeling to them. Thus, people get involved in using this cultuling. In other words, people's emotioncy toward the cultuling of using flattery reaches involvement.

4.2. CLA of Flattery in the English Language

Different discourses related to flattery in the English language are again examined by CMs, the SPEAKING model, and the emotioncy model, respectively. It is worth mentioning that English people mostly flatter with their actions rather than words. However, some of the sentences are as follow:

- Your mentoring truly had a positive impact on my life, and I can never thank you enough, Mrs. Gray. Yours truly.
- You always rank top on my favorite list because you do more than what is required to be a teacher.
- It was truly an honor to have you with us.
- Always at your service, sir!
- Anything you want! Anytime!

The results showed that this cultuling is usually used in formal situations (e.g., university, bank, office, organization, company) and sometimes in informal situations (e.g., shops, restaurants, parties) as well among people with equal and unequal relationships. Example 3 represents a conversation between two people emailing each other.

- Example 3: Student sends an email to his teacher

A. Student: Dear Ms. Johnson. We hardly ever recognize the influence of those who mold us and aid in our self-discovery. I can't help but bow down to the teacher who helped me become who I am now. I want to express my deep gratitude for everything you have done for me, particularly the recommendation letter. It would be a great honor for me if there was ever anything I could do for you. Sincere appreciation for everything.
B. Teacher: Dear Mr. Wilson. I appreciate your kind words. I wish you more success.

In this example, the student is thanking his teacher for the recommendation letter. He wanted to receive something from his teacher; therefore, he had to say it as nicely as possible, which made his teacher want to. Again, this shows the culture of power distance and overstating. It should be noted that English people seem to have a more direct talk with each other and do not use so many compliments or "*Tarof*" in their language, which shows the culture of directness. In the next example, there is a conversation between two friends that reveals this cultural pattern.

- Example 4: Two friends

Friend A: Melissa, you are my best friend, and I know you'll do anything I ask for!
Friend B: Of course! If I can!
Friend A: I love to wear your red dress to the prom!
Friend B: uh! But you know that I'm going to wear that! So maybe the next time!

4.2.1 CMs

Different CMs were found from the analysis, including power distance (i.e., people often turn to flattery while they're talking to someone who has the superior power); low-context (i.e., people mostly convey messages, their communication is more direct, it is easy to say no for them, emotions do not play a big

role in their relationships.); high-trust (i.e., people usually have a lot of respect for moral values. There is less possibility of abuse in relationships. They increase positive values such as honesty); understating (i.e., people express their intentions without exaggeration); individualism (i.e., people like more to be admired by themselves and they do not care that much about the others' compliments).

4.2.2. Hymes' (1967) SPEAKING Model

S: Informal/ formal (with a higher frequency of formal situations than informal).

P: Equal and informal equal and formal, unequal and informal, and unequal and formal (with a high frequency of unequal formal relationships between youths and elderly).

E: The speaker uses flattery because he thinks that he can get what he wants only if he gets on someone's good side. In addition, he might feel powerless and have low self-esteem.

A: The speaker flatters to receive what he wants from a person who has more power. As a result, the listener either enjoys this feeling and gives him his need or rejects his request directly or indirectly, which happens more often in the English language.

K: Friendly, cautious, respectful, polite, pleading.

I: Spoken and written (highly frequent in speech).

N: People mostly use this cultuling while they consider the listener superior to themselves and are scared to lose something.

G: Flattery is not limited to conversation and is also used in writing.

4.2.3. Pishghadam's (2015) Emotioncy Model

In the English language, people often feel uncomfortable while hearing flattery, and it sometimes may not turn into what the speaker wants. Therefore, although listeners may like to hear such nice words about themselves, they try to be fully aware of this issue and not get carried away. Hence, people try not to get involved so much in using this cultuling. In other words, when hearing flattery causes people to feel somewhat negatively, they would prefer not to use more senses, and so their emotioncy is restricted to the auditory and/or visual levels (exvolvement).

5. Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the film is a full-blown mirror of a society's culture. Examining the different types of movies makes it possible to understand the infrastructures, beliefs, and behavioral and verbal habits of that society as much as possible; therefore, the current study investigated the use of flattery in the Persian and English languages. The result showed that both Persian and English people mostly use flattery in unequal and formal situations because of the matter of power distance. In other words, people feel less power in an unequal situation , so they prefer to flatter to impress the listener and receive what they want. However, the ways Persian and English people tended to flatter were somehow different from each other. Persian people mostly flatter verbally; in contrast, English people usually show it with their actions. For example, in the formal context of high school, a student tries to get on the teacher's good side by showing up promptly in class, always becoming a volunteer, asking questions and participating a lot, and seeking out the teacher during his office hours.

The study also showed that flattery was more frequently used in the Persian language than in English. The main cause of flattery is the basic principle of human behavior (Abbasi et al., 2015). This principle states that people are eager to be appreciated (Prook et al., 2015). The vast majority of people from different cultures tend to be accepted and appreciated. In Asian cultures, the tendency for group admiration is stronger than for individual admiration (Prook et al., 2015), which approves the cultural pattern of collectivism versus individualism and could be the reason for the use of flattery in the Persian language. This is also consistent with earlier research that has highlighted the collectivist elements of Iranian society (e.g., Pishghadam & Attaran, 2014; Pishghadam et al., 2018). Another reason might be

the society itself. If society does not encourage flatterers, people gradually remove this from their behavior. This happens when listeners do not get carried away and are affected by hearing flattery.

The study also indicated that Persian people could get emotional more easily than English people. Because most of the people's requests seen in Persian films turned out to be accepted through flattery, this might be the fact that leads Persians to get more impressed by and interested in flattery than English people, which approves the cultural patterns of high-context versus low-context. In the same vein, Hall (1976) stated that Asian and Middle East people have high-context cultures; in contrast, western people have low-context cultures (Nam, 2015). Moreover, it seems to be hard for Persian people not to act so nice to others and reject someone's request. In contrast, English people find it easier to say no to others, and they do not see it necessary to please everybody. This confirms the cultural patterns of indirectness versus directness.

It is worth mentioning that every human being needs admiration. It is a kind of natural desire, and flatterers, unfortunately, take this aspect for granted. Studies have shown that flattery works on 95% of people (Esfahani, 2010). However, the point is that there is a thin line between flattery and kindness. If you want to be kind and admire and respect someone, you would not be saying things to yourself such as, "I showed him kindness, but he didn't show me that in turn". Therefore, when you try to be nice to others just to receive something in turn, it stands for flattery. Some good and bad behaviors in society are slightly different. In general, it can be said that many inappropriate behaviors are done by following and abusing moral virtues; besides flattery, there is good morality, such as encouraging and admiring others, which can be very decent and pleasant.

In conclusion, one of the threatening factors for social and economic capital is flattery in business, which, unfortunately, is the desire of people who are thirsty for it. This cultuling is more often seen in societies whose individuals have less mature development. The low level of growth and mental maturity of individuals provides the ground for developing flatterers and flattery lovers. The lag of some societies is not due to the lack of economic capital but the existence of authorities who are liked to be praised and are flattery lovers and have no moral commitment. Giving fake and unreal titles and misleading praise are among the types of flattery. If there are flatterers in society, it is because there are flattery lovers in it. Generally, rewarded behavior is repeated in the community. If authorities do not accept flattery, flattery will not exist. The presence of flatterers depends on the weakness of the authorities. Therefore, society should be aware of flatterers and flattery lovers and try not to reward negative behavior since encouraging flattery might increase inequality among people of a society, and people can easily achieve their desires even if they do not deserve it due to not having the qualification.

The present findings highlight the importance of investigating the cultural memes hidden in a language (i.e., cultuling) to make people, especially businessmen and women, aware of the positive and negative aspects of using different cultulings to improve their business communication. Particularly, this study was an example illustrating that having the knowledge of cultuling and being able to analyze the cultural patterns hidden in the language can also help people have a better and healthier business besides having good communication skills and appropriate business discourse (Adarbah & Goode, 2022). Also, considering cultuling analysis make people know about the impact of cultural diversity on business circumstances. When conducting business across national and cultural boundaries, they develop the ability to operate with cultural diversity both inside and outside the organization , so taking different languages and their various cultural patterns into account could be a prerequisite. Meanwhile, the insights gained from this study may support researchers in helping society move more effectively towards euculturalism. Moreover, these findings are limited by the use of data collected from the movies; therefore, further studies are required to confirm the generalizability of the results. In addition, this study did not investigate the relationship between the use of flattery and variables such as gender, age, and religion. Therefore, future studies can examine this cultuling in greater detail while taking into account other factors.

Disclosure Statement

The authors claim no conflict of interest.

References

Abbasi, S., Samimi, M., AliDost, I., Ahmadi, A., & Hatami, Z. (2015). Investigating the factors affecting employees and their relationship with job progress in the general office of sports and youth of Isfahan province. *Strategic Management and Organizational Behavior Studies in Sport*, *1*(14), 79-90.

Adarbah, H. Y., & Goode, M. M. H. (2022). Key demand factors in professional business courses: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Business, Communication & Technology, 1*(2), 44-53. https://doi.org/10.56632/bct.2022.1205

Agar, M. (1994). *Language shock. Understanding the culture of conversation*. William Morrow.

Aryee, S., Debrah, Y. A., & Chay, Y. W. (1993). An investigation of ingratiation as a career management strategy: evidence from Singapore. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *4*(1), 191-212. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585199300000010

Beyrami, M., & Shafiei, S. (2014). Recognizing and analyzing Ph.D. students' moral values. *Psychology and Religion*, *7*(3), 27-46.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Multilingual Matters.

Cerepinko, D. (2012). *Komunikologija: kratki pregled najvažnijih teorija, pojmova i principa* [Communicology: A brief overview of the most important theories, concepts and principles]. Veleučilšte u Varaždinu.

Cohen, L., Manion. L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education.* Routledge.

Dahl, G. (2004). Qualitative analysis of films: Cultural processes in the mirror of film. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research. 5*(2). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/593

D'Andrade, R., & Strauss, C. (1992). *Human motives and cultural models*. Cambridge University Press.

Dehghan, A. (2008). *The way for growth*. The Quran Cultural Lessons Center.

Ebrahimi, O., Bayrami , M., & Mohammadi, D. (2019). Flattery harm in social interactions and its pathology from Imam Ali's viewpoint. *Journal of Pizhūhish dar dīn va salāmat*, *5*(3),137-149. https://doi.org/10.22037/jrrh.v5i3.18632

Esfahani, A. N. (2010). Flattery in organization. *Management of Orgazitional Culture, 22*(8), 95-114.

Esmaeelbeigi, M., Rezapour Mirsaleh, Y., Behjati Ardakani, F., & Niazi, S. (2018). Effectiveness of teaching moral concepts in family through Islamic-based storytelling on coping style and mental health of teenage girls. *Journal of Research in Religion and Health*, *4*(3), 70-82.

Farah, I. (1998). The ethnography of communication. In N. H. Hornberger & P. Corson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Research methods in language and education* (pp. 125-127). Kluwer.

Fasold, R. (1990). *The sociolinguistics of language: Introduction to sociolinguistics*. Blackwell.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*. The Free Press.

Gunter, B. (1987). *Poor reception. Misunderstanding and forgetting broadcast news*. Erlbaum.

Hall, E. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Doubleday.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to systemic functional grammar* (2nd ed.). Edward Arnold.

Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1984). Hofstede's culture dimensions: An independent validation using Rokeach's value survey. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *15*(4), 417-433. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002184015004003

Hymes, D. (1967). Models of interaction of language and social setting. *Journal of Social Issues*, *33*(2), 8-28.

Hymes, D. (2003). The interaction of language and social life. In C. B. Paulston & R. G. Tucker (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: The essential readings* (pp. 30-47). Blackwell.

Ilagan, S. V. (2009). *Exploring the impact of culture on the formation of consumer trust in internet shopping*. Wyoming University Press.

Kramsch, C. (2001). Language, culture and voice in the teaching of English as a foreign language. *Language Issues*, *13*(2), 2-7.

Markus, H. R., & Hamedani, M. G. (2007). Sociocultural psychology: The dynamic interdependence among self systems and social systems. In S. Kitayama & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural psychology* (pp. 3–39). The Guilford Press.

Mehrabi, M., & Mahmoodi Bakhtiari, B. (2021). The cululing of "insult" in my Uucle Napoleon and English equivalents: A corpus-based study. *Language and Translation Studies*, *53*(4), 31-59. https://doi.org/10.22067/lts.v53i4.86546

Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. Public Affairs.

Minkov, M., & Hofstede, G. (2013). *Cross-cultural analysis: The science and art of comparing the world's modern societies and their cultures*. Sage Publications.

Mininni, G. (2007). *Psicologia e media* [Psychology and media]. Laterza.

Nam, K. A. (2015). High-context and low-context communication. In J. M Bennet (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of intercultural competence* (pp. 377-381). Sage Publication, Inc.

Oladoja, F., Tomere, D. (2022). Gendered voices and ideological communications: A case from the film industry .*Journal of Business, Communication & Technology*, *1*(2), 67-81. https://doi.org/ 10.56632/bct.2022.1207

Pishghadam, R. (2013). Introducing cululing as a dynamic tool in culurology of language. *Journal of Language and Translation Studies, 45*(4), 47-62.

Pishghadam, R. (2015, October). *Emotioncy in language education: From exvolvement to involvement* [Paper presentation]. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Language Teaching Conference, Mashhad, Iran.

Pishghadam, R., & Attaran, A. (2014). A sociological comparison of speech act of swearing: A case study of Persian and English languages. *Journal of Language and Translation Studies, 46*(4), 25-50.

Pishghadam, R., & Attaran, A. (2016). The "fatalism" discourse in the language and culture of the Iranian people. *Culture-Communication Studies*, *17*(35), 129-149.

Pishghadam, R., Derakhshan, A., & Jannati Ataei, A. (2020). Analysis of the cululings of "patriarchy" and "matriarchy" in Iranian culture: A comparative case study of Iranian movies in two decades. *Journal of Woman in Culture Arts*, *12*(1), 91-115. https://doi.org/10.22059/jwica. 2020.299933.1415

Pishghadam, R., & Ebrahimi, S. (2020). *Introducing cululing: A study into Iranians' cultural memes*. Amazon.

Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., & Derakhshan, A. (2020). Cululing analysis: A new methodology for discovering cultural memes. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *8*(2), 17-34.

Pishghadam, R., Ebrahimi, S., & Tabatabaeian, M. S. (2019). *A novel approach to psychology of language education*. Ferdowsi University of Mashhad Press.

Pishghadam, R., Firooziyan Pour Esfahani, A., & Tabatabaee Farani, S. (2018). Examining the concept of nāz and its related vocabulary items in Persian language in light of emotioncy. *Journal of Culture-Communication Studies*, *18*(39), 67-96. https://doi.org/10.22083/jccs.2017.96182.2240

Pishghadam, R., Firooziyan Pour Esfahani, A., & Vahidnia, F. (2015). A sociological look into speech act of cursing: A comparison of Persian and English languages. *Journal of Language and Translation Studies*, *47*(2), 45-72. https://doi.org/10.22067/lts.v47i2.35404

Pishghadam, R., & Norouz Kermanshahi, P. (2016). Relationship between language, religion and culture: Research and analysis of the functions of the Hajji and related terms in Persian language. *Zabanpazhuhi (Journal of Language Research)*, *8*(20), 27-51. https://doi.org/ 10.22051/jlr.2015.1859

Pishghadam, R., & Vahidnia, F. (2016). Uses of praying in Persian and English movies in the light of Hymes' model. *Language Related Research*, *6*(7), 53-72.

Pouryazdanpanah Kermani, F. (2021). A sociological study of cululing of certificate admiration and its discoursal function in Persian. *Journal of Language and Translation Studies*, *53*(4), 61-96. https://doi.org/10.22067/lts.v53i4.88442

Prook, J., Janssen, D. P., & Gualeni, S. (2015). *The negative effects of praise and flattery*. FDG.

Quinn, N., & Holland, D. (1987). Culture and cognition. In D. Holland & N. Quinn (Eds.), *Cultural models in language and thought* (pp. 3-42). Cambridge University Press.

Rezazadeh, H., Mortazavi, S., & Rahimniya. (2013). Analysis of personal and situational preconditions affecting flattery and its effect on employees' career advancement (Case study: Ferdowsi University of Mashhad staff). *General Management Research*, *22*(6), 5-25.

Samarzija, L. (2021). *Uporaba engleskog jezika u hrvatskom poslovanju* [Use of English in Croatian business] (Undergraduate Thesis, North University, Sveučilište Sjever]. https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:122:754208

Sapir, E., & Whorf, B. (1956). *Language, thought, and reality*. MIT Press.

Sarfo, E. (2011). Variations in ways of refusing requests in English among members of a college community in Ghana. *African Nebula, 3*, 1-13.

Siegel, J. Z., Crockett, M. J., & Dolan, R. J. (2017). Inferences about moral character moderate the impact of consequences on blame and praise. *Cognition*, *167*, 201-211.

Tektigul, Z., Bayadilova-Altybayev, A., Sadykova, S., Iskindirova, S., Kushkimbayeva, A., & Zhumagul, D. (2022). Language is a symbol system that carries culture. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *10*(3), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2022.562756.2781

Vonk, R. (2002). Self-serving interpretations of flattery: Why ingratiation works. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*(4), 515–526.

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and language*. MIT Press.

Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction into sociolinguistics*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Yin, K. R. (2010). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford Press.