

ВЗАЄМОДІЯ ЛІНГВАЛЬНИХ І ПОЗАЛІНГВАЛЬНИХ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИК В ОФОРМЛЕННІ ЕМОЦІЙНОГО МОВЛЕННЯ

VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL MEANS OF FACE-SAVING IN ENGLISH CONFLICT DISCOURSE

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In the paper, the logic of the conflict discourse unfolding and the formation of the emotional and pragmatic potential of its utterances is seen as directly dependent on the dynamics of communicators' faces, where the concept of face represents a person's self-perception as a certain social value. A communicator's feeling that his face is threatened, damaged or lost due to the face-threatening acts on the part of his opponent gives rise to a strong negative effect on a psychoenergetic level, thus triggering the instinctive function of self-preservation to restore face and normalize the effect by means of certain actions. Such behavioral regulation of affect is achieved by activating complexes of verbal and non-verbal means.

Key words: conflict discourse, face, face-threatening act (FTA), emotional and pragmatic potential, verbal and non-verbal means of communication.

Current trends in modern global society development, including the political online-history and the growth of social networks' outreach, are conducive to a substantial growth of scientific interest in the regularities of the emergence and development of adversarial and conflict discourses. In particular, substantial attention is attracted to conflict discourses, which are charged with powerful negative emotions, are characterized by the domination of confrontational strategies and often yield unsatisfactory results of communication to its participants. A traditional linguopragmatic analysis of conflict interactions is limited to a description of the structure of speech interaction, the inventory of strategies and tactics, employed by the communicators, and their linguistic representation. At the same time, a satisfactory interpretation of the swings of the emotional and pragmatic potential (EPP) (Kalyta, 2007, p. 8), shaping the actualization of the utterances in a conflict discourse, is only possible when the values and motivations of the communicators, as well as the data concerning their current psychophysiological

state are taken into account. Some of the linguistic approaches tackling this problem include the politeness theory (Goffman, 1967/1982; Brown & Levinson, 1988; Leech, 2014) and, on a more in-depth and advanced level, the modern functional and energetic approach (Kalyta, 2007; Kalita, Klimeniuk, 2022; Kalyta, Klymeniuk & Taranenko, 2025). This paper focuses on the identification of the specificity of the linguistic representation of face-saving and renewing face balances in conflict interactions.

The idea of the interpretation of the underlying logic of communicators' behaviour on the basis of a well-known Chinese concept of face belongs to I. Goffman (1967/1982, pp. 5, 10). The face is understood as a certain social value, the individuals' customary, favoured image of themselves, as well as their idea of their interlocutors' faces – how they might perceive themselves and how this might influence the logic of their communicative behaviour. Communicators' faces, on the one hand, are defined by the aggregate of their relatively stable features including social status and reputation (Ho, 1976, p. 867–868), while on the other hand, they reflect a person's dynamic communicative and role status in the ongoing interaction (Derkach, 2018, p. 43). Face dynamics in communication can be described as its positive or negative growth or, even, loss of face, which, in particular, is experienced by a communicator as a destructive feeling of trouble and shame (Ho, 1976, pp. 870–871, 876). People's natural motion towards keeping the face, saving or “growing” it conforms to the instinctive functions of self-preservation and drawing pleasure (Derkach, 2025) and is recognized as one of the most powerful social motives (Ho, 1976, pp. 871–873, 883).

While politeness is considered as an effective means of mutual care for communicators' faces, prevention of aggression and conflicts, there is not enough ground to see it as a natural human feature. Rather, it is a display of communicative altruism, and a propensity for it is formed in individuals during their socialization (Leech, 2014, pp. 3–4, 6, 11, 26, 4290; Lakoff, 1990, p. 34). In reality, each new remark in the interaction can be perceived as a face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 10–11). The addressee has to react to the FTA in a certain way or, otherwise, to pretend that there is no face threat (*ibid.*, pp. 9, 13, 16–17), which is possible only to a certain extent, beyond which the criteria of social dignity make it impossible to tolerate the insult (*ibid.*, pp. 19, 32, 253–254). In order to level the face damage, individuals apply the techniques from the repertoire of their microculture, applicable subcultures and cultures (*ibid.*, pp. 9, 13).

The choice of the FTA type by the speaker is made on the basis of the sum of external factors of the communicative situation, communicators' characteristics,

including the interrelation of their statuses (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 15, 74–82; Leech, 2014, pp. 98, 103, 107), the degree of formality of their relations, the level of mutual sympathy (Leech 2014, pp. 98, 103, 107), as well as situational changes like weakness in the exhibition of power, force of character, the availability of allies, the range of existing sociocultural restrictions and taboos (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 15, 74–82). Having considered the above mentioned, the speaker chooses a certain type of FTA: explicit (bald on-record or on-record with face redress) or implicit (off-record) one, or refuses to perform an FTA (ibid., 1988, pp. 68–69).

A bald on-record FTA is chosen when the speaker loses social motivation for minimizing the risk for his own or the addressee's face (Leech 2014, pp. 87–89), e.g., when the speaker is enraged and/or has enough power over the addressee in order not to be afraid of the consequences of his FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 69, 94–97, 248). The use of invectives, in particular, taboo words, charges an FTA with aggression (Leech, 2014, pp. 229–231; Allen & Burridge, 2006, p. 237) and provokes the addressee to an immediate negative reaction (Leech, 2014, p. 230). On the other hand, an off-record FTA makes it possible for the addressee to choose between several potential variants of interpretation of the utterance and react accordingly (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 68–69). An off-record FTA also reduces the likelihood of the addressor's face damage (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 71, 78, 211–212; Arndt & Janney, 1985, p. 28), especially in the presence of powerful sociocultural restrictions (Brown & Levinson, 1988, pp. 225–227). The illocution of an off-record FTA may be conveyed with the help of metaphors, irony, rhetorical questions, understatements, tautology, hints, certain prosodic features and is decoded by the addressee with variable success (ibid., pp. 68–69, 212, 222, 237, 225–227).

Certain language units are considered as illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), able to transform the utterance into an FTA (Leech 2014, p. 119). Examples of such devices are negative questions with *why*: *why don't you*, *why can't you*, especially in combination with the intonation of annoyance (Leech, 2014, pp. 156, 205–206). In the same way *just*, e.g., in *Could you **just** do something?* can intensify the FTA-quality of the utterance (Leech 2014, pp. 161, 192). Disagreement as an unwanted response is often preceded by hesitation, temporizing expressions like *Well...* (Leech 2014, p. 97). The listeners are normally quite sensitive to the deviations from the invariant intonation models and are able to derive certain implicatures on their basis (Culpeper, 2011, pp. 57, 59, 67).

The dynamics of face threats in communication can be reviewed in the example of a conflict discourse from the TV series *Partner Track* (season 1, 2024),

unfolding within episodes 4–6. It should be noted here that we understand discourse as ‘a sign output integrated around a certain sense, which is jointly generated, spread and interpreted by the participants within their social interaction and is affected by the subjectively perceived contextual sociocultural variables’ (Derkach, 2024, p. 39). Such a sense, permeating about fifteen conflicts and conflict-associated interactions, is a law firm associate’s (Dan Fallon) treatment of his colleagues of colour, one of whom, Tyler Robinson, becomes Dan’s opponent in the emerging conflict. After the first incident the conflict develops with even more participants involved in it, and eventually results in the black associate’s voluntary dismissal, while the actions of the offender seem to remain unpunished. Let us have a closer look at the dynamics of the communicators’ face balances in the initial episode of the conflict.

The conflict discourse seems to start when Dan interferes in the conversation of his colleagues from which he understands that his friend has refused to meet him because of the previous arrangement with their black colleague. Apparently, Dan perceives this fact as an FTA because he reacts at this in the form of a rhetorical question ↘ *Wait, ξ you ↓ dropped me as a ↘ partner ξ so you could ↓ play with ‘Robinson?*, with which he interrupts Tyler and addresses his friend Todd. Two tone-units of the utterance are marked by the rising intonation, with the Mid Rise in the 2nd one and the High Rise with a high speed of pitch direction change in the 3rd one, which gives the utterance a shade of sarcastic incredulity. His next remark is intensified by a metaphor *A real friend stabs you in the front*, uttered with a scornful facial expression. Todd shrugs his shoulders and smiles, used to Dan’s behavioral style. Tyler, on his part, interprets Dan’s comment as an FTA and is urged to react, assuming a somewhat mentoring tone: ↘ *Jealousy ξ is ↘ not a ↘ good ↘ look on a ↑ grown ↘ maaan, ↓ Dan*. The intonation of the utterance exhibits a number of features, indicative of a high EPP, including the accidental rise on *grown*, which Tyler pronounces with a grin, and a vividly articulated *man* with a prolonged /æ/, together with the change of speech rate from a decelerated one on *jealousy* to an accelerated one on the Sliding Head.

With this restoration of Tyler’s face and extinguishing of his conflict energy by means of an utterance with a high EPP, the conflict could be over, but the balance of faces is lost again, and now Tyler’s FTA is perceived by Dan as a threat to his positive face (an office macho image). Dan cannot control himself and taunts Tyler by saying that his extreme industry at work is ridiculous as his job is secured by the fact that he is both black and gay. This is pronounced in a casual manner, Dan giggles

while making a drink and not even looking at Tyler. The address *baby* that he uses is an obvious riposte to Tyler's previous mention of adult behaviour. Such demonstrative ease sharply contrasts with the effect of this FTA, confirmed also by the shock on Todd's face. This insulting FTA cannot be tolerated by Tyler who rightfully observes that the remark is overtly racist. Instead of the excuse which could lead to the end of the conflict, Dan does not admit being racist, thus Tyler's face is not restored, and he mocks at Dan in the presence of Todd, who giggles, drawing Dan's disapproving glare. The mockery makes Dan change his rhetoric into an aggressively charged accusation-FTA expressed with the help of a rhetorical question and a directive with a taboo word: *Uh, 'are you ↑really /doing this •right •now? 'Don't be so ↑fucking ,sensitive.* This FTA demonstrates that Dan has lost control of himself, which damages his face even more, while Tyler keeps mocking him and intensifying his mockery with some theatrical gestures. Dan is getting even more irritated: *\Man, § you 'don't •know my` background. 'What? 'Cause I'm 'white, § I had the 'easiest 'fuckin' /life?* In response to such an aggressive and indignant remark Tyler's answer acquires an outwardly calm, but perceptibly dry and cold tone, emphasized by a clear didactic rhythm of the utterance and a wide negative pitch interval between the head and the nucleus in the second utterance: *O , kay. I 'can't 'deal with your 'white fra , gility right ,now.* While Dan continues to deny his racism and haughty treatment of his colleagues of colour *Be'cause I'm , not; 'Oh my` God, ,dude. It was , one ,time. I was in a , hurry,* Tyler bursts into a series of lecturing micro-monologues about Dan's treatment of other people which may look like an innocent joke to someone, but deeply insults more sensitive people. The EPP of Tyler's remarks is rather high, which is revealed also in the pitch range variations – narrow in the first remark, when Tyler attempts to control himself, but is unable to conceal a grin, a breathy timbre, making it all sound like he is snarling, to a wide pitch range with several accidental rises and the High Rises in the second remark.

The climax of the scene is Dan's remark *'What do you 'want me to , do? 'Huh? You 'want me to just 'shut •up and /listen?*, where a sharp difference between the low register of the first utterance and the high register of the rest of the remark is observed. Tyler's expressive response *'Yes, and` learn. 'Maybe say `thank you § if you 'have some` manner, I don't ,know* is followed by a long pause, after which Dan

expresses his agreement in a very calm and detached way, extremely surprising Tyler (, *Really?*), as the latter fails to understand where his opponent's aggressive energy is gone, but also is a bit excited by his small victory, as his face required at least some recognition of guilt or expression of accord on the part of his opponent. Dan's calm reply , *Really. I know what I gotta do* can be misleading, but when Tyler pats him firmly on the shoulder and concludes ¹*Great* , *talk*, Dan's face becomes distorted and hostile, he pronounces ¹*Good* , *talk*, ²*good* , *talk* in a low register, which sounds indicative of some sort of resentment.

Considering the imbalance of faces in the end of the analyzed interaction and its unsatisfactory result on the side of Dan, it is obvious that the conflict discourse is incomplete and is likely to be continued at some point in the future. It should be noted that a deeper understanding of the energetic bases of this conflict interaction and the instincts, emotions and feelings, activated in its participants in its course and conducive to conflict development could be achieved with the application of the invariant models of supervenient interactions of complexes of instincts, emotions and feelings, described in Kalyta, Klymeniuk & Taranenko (2024, pp. 140–153).

In view of the abovementioned, it becomes clear that the energetic foundation of the communicators' behaviour in the conflict interaction and, in particular, their speech behaviour is directly connected with the actualization of the instinctive function of self-preservation. In fact, a negative effect emerging in a communicator due to a perceived face damage caused by an FTA calls for certain remedial actions allowing to restore the communicator's face, e.g., by means of counter-FTAs. As the imbalance of communicators' faces charges the conflict discourse with sufficient psychic energy to continue, is not likely that it will draw to an end until a mutual balance of faces is restored.

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