

## FEATURES OF FOREGROUNDING OF THE COMMUNICATOR'S STATUS IN ENGLISH CONFLICT DISCOURSE

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### **О.В. Ємельянова, Є.С. Гончарова “Особливості актуалізації статусу комуніканта в англomовному конфліктному дискурсі”**

*Стаття присвячена вивченню особливостей актуалізації статусу комуніканта в англomовному конфліктному дискурсі. Проведене дослідження свідчить, що конфліктний дискурс, як особливий тип дискурсу, характеризується порушенням принципів кооперації, зіткненням ціннісних орієнтирів та інтересів учасників конфлікту. Під час конфліктного дискурсу вищий статус комуніканта актуалізується шляхом уживання директивів, інвективів, промісивів та асертивів. До вербальних засобів актуалізації вищого статусу також належать негація та уживання порівняння; особа з вищим статусом вдається до пейоративів, лексичних та синтактичних повторів, риторичних запитань, щоб нагадати адресату про його нижчий статус. Іронія, сарказм та пряма негація є впливовими засобами приниження самоповаги опонента та демонстрації власного високого статусу, що, в свою чергу, спричиняє конфліктну взаємодію. Нижчий статус комуніканта актуалізується шляхом уживання прямих питань, які імплікують умовляння, прохання, вимолювання, що супроводжуються відповідними невербальними засобами спілкування.*

**Ключові слова:** конфліктний дискурс, статус комуніканта, вищий статус, нижчий статус, директиви, інвектив, промісиви.

### **O.V.Yemelyanova, Ye. S. Honcharova “Features of foregrounding of the communicator's status in English conflict discourse”**

*The article deals with the study of the peculiarities of the communicator's status foregrounding in English conflict discourse. The conducted research shows that conflict discourse, as a specific type of discourse, is characterised by violation of cooperation principles in communication, collision of values and interests of the participants. In the course of conflict discourse, communicator's superior status is foregrounded through directives, invectives, promissives, assertives. Verbal means of superior communicator's status foregrounding also comprise negation and the use of comparison; a person with a superior status resorts to pejoratives, lexical and syntactic repetitions, rhetorical questions to remind the addressee of their lower status. Irony, sarcasm and direct negation are potent means in undermining an opponent's self-esteem, demonstrating a person's superior status and causing conflict interaction. A*

*communicator's subordinate status is foregrounded through direct questions with pleading implications, requests and begging, accompanied by corresponding non-verbal means of communication.*

**Key words:** *conflict discourse, communicator's status, superior status, subordinate status, directives, invectives, promissives.*

Communicative interaction between people belongs to one of the major problems of modern linguistics research. Recently, a vast number of linguists have focused on the study of specific discourse types, and on English conflict discourse, in particular. Researches in this area were carried out by such scholars as I. Ye. Frolova, O. I. Hrydasova , N. A. Bilous, M. Y. Seiranian, S. V. Formanova, S. Leung etc. Although English conflict discourse has been a subject of linguistic research more than once, the problem of identifying peculiarities of communicator's status foregrounding in English conflict discourse needs further development, and that stipulates the relevance of the research.

The objective of the research is English conflict discourse.

The subject area is peculiarities of communicator's status foregrounding in English conflict discourse.

Conflict discourse is a type of discourse, which objectives are in contradiction with the positive direction of communication. The specificity of communication within conflict discourse is that verbal behavior of its members reflects emotionally negative attitude of communicators to each other, to the situation and the factors that give rise to it. Violations of cooperation principles, collision of values and interests of the participants of the conflict is typical for conflict discourse. In speech activities of participants within conflict discourse the features appear, typical for that type of verbal communication, such as: [evaluativity](#), emotionality, threat to a communicator's "face", aggression [3].

On the basis of S. Leung's classification [10], that combines various strategies and forms of speech conflict situations, conflict discourse types are the following:

- disagreement: subject differences are contrasted with personal opinion, herewith participants apply not to the opponent's previous actions, but to

the primary applications complementing them with excuses or explanations;

- adversative episode: sequence of verbal moves, that begins with the rejection of the action, requirements or approvals;
- contacting routing: frame of differences is deliberately destroyed by participants – links are broken and references to previous actions are ceased, a change of subject or verbal strategy occurs;
- oppositional argument: an opponent or opponents directly support controversial positions, preferring confrontation strategies;
- quarrel: speech acts of opponents are viewed as adjacent pairs, that trigger sequence of communication moves, leading to escalation of the conflict;
- dispute, disputing: exchange of views in order to evaluate suggested statements and to select verbal strategy;
- conflict talk: interaction of participants is not limited to one subject of differences, speech acts or tactics.

Among socio-psychological factors that determine the construction of discourse, an image of a communicator's status plays a significant role. The social position or status is a formally established or tacitly accepted individual place in the social group hierarchy. Status characterizes a person's place on the vertical axis: high or low position occupied by an individual in the society. Verbal behavior within interpersonal communication obeys the laws of status-role interaction [5, p. 12].

They are social roles that define communicators' status relationship. The knowledge of a set of social roles and corresponding status relationship is an integral part of social competence and is necessary for a successful development of a speech situation.

According to I. Ye. Frolova the following is relevant for communicator's status estimation: social features (age, gender, profession, education and social level etc.); role features (a guest, a customer etc.); interpersonal and personal features (closeness – remoteness etc.); situational features (caused by location, time and other terms of

communication) [6, p. 181].

Due to social status, it is possible to study the behavior of people who speak a particular language and, by virtue of status differences, have different ideas about the norms of public behavior. Interpersonal relations are usually regulated indirectly, so we can talk about the implicit nature of social status [4, p. 195].

According to factual material, we can differentiate three types of dyads, in which the correlation of communicators' status is reflected (addressee ( $A_2$ ) and addresser ( $A_1$ )):

- 1)  $A_2=A_1$  reflects the speech situation between individuals with equal role status, namely among friends, family and colleagues about the same age and social status;
- 2)  $A_2>A_1$  situation of communicators' status inequality (supremacy of the addressee);
- 3)  $A_2<A_1$  situation of communicators' status inequality (subordination of the addressee) [2].

Status and role communicators' relationships can be objectified in conflict discourse in various ways. Among the ways of foregrounding, the following methods are distinguished:

- descriptive-evaluative – the speaker describes the status carrier's actions and role that converge or do not converge with the stereotypical knowledge and perceptions, expectations, demands and, on this basis, evaluates it.

For example: *"By the way, what's his name?"*

*'I haven't a notion. '*

*'Darling, we must know. I'll ask him to write in our book.'*

*'Damn it, he's not important enough for that.' [11, p. 3];*

- impellent – the speaker prompts the status and role carrier to perform actions provided by stereotypical requirements, expectations, beliefs or knowledge.

For example: *"Oh, but why did you give her more money?"*

*'Oh well. I wanted to! You have to be a bit lordly with people like that –'*  
[9, p. 5935];

- causal – the speaker performs a verbal act by virtue of desire or unwillingness to act according to the status and role requirements, expectations, knowledge or ideas [1].

For example: *"I'll not live with you, ' said Carrie. 'I don't want to live with you. You've done nothing but brag around ever since you've been here. ' 'Aw, I haven't anything of the kind," he answered. "' [8, p. 228].*

One utterance can combine a number of ways of communicator's status foregrounding.

For example: *"Stop it. Stop it.'*

*'You devil, you swine, you filthy low-down cad.'"* [11, p. 37] – the interlocutor resorts to both descriptive-evaluative and impellent methods of status foregrounding.

A communicator's status appears directly in speech acts. Among the verbal means of superior communicator's status foregrounding are:

- directives and invectives.

For example: *"Damn you, don't hold that girl as if she was a sack of potatoes, – Jimmie Langton shouted at him."* [11, p. 15];

- promissives and imperative verbs.

For example:

*"Do as you please with your damned money," said Dermot in a low voice. "I shall have the woman I love.'*

*'A woman who -'*

*'Say a word against her and, by God, I'll kill you!' cried Dermot.*" [7, p. 1228].

Verbal means of superior communicator's status foregrounding also comprise:

- negation and the use of comparison by the speaker to underline his superior position.

For example:

*"She faced him with blazing eyes. 'You damned fool, I've never acted better in my life.'*

*'Nonsense. You're acting like hell.'"* [11, p. 176].

A person with a superior status always strives to be persuasive. Doing that he

or she resorts to pejoratives, lexical and syntactic repetitions to remind the addressee of his/her lower status.

For example: *"You are mad, Dorian."*

*'Ah! I was waiting for you to call me Dorian.'*

*'You are mad, I tell you - mad to imagine that I would raise a finger to help you, mad to make this monstrous confession. I will have nothing to do with this matter, whatever it is....* [12, p. 117].

Rhetorical questions are also in the arsenal of those who are sure of themselves and are in power to ask questions, answers to which are quite obvious and shouldn't be given at all.

For example:

*...Do you think I am going to peril my reputation for you? What is it to me, what devil's work you are up to?"* [12, p. 117].

Irony, sarcasm and direct negation are potent means in undermining an opponent's self-esteem, demonstrating a person's superior status and causing conflict interaction.

For example:

*"He's got looks. I can carry him'.*

*'You've got a pretty good opinion of yourself, haven't you? But you're wrong.'* [11, p. 39-40].

A communicator's subordinate status can be foregrounded through direct questions with pleading implications.

For example: *"Keep quiet," said the man. "If you stir, I shoot you.'*

*'You are mad. What have I done to you?"* [12, p. 132].

Requests and begging, accompanied by corresponding non-verbal means of communication, as a rule, demonstrate the communicator's subordinate status.

For example: *"Sit still, Carrie, ' he said. 'Sit still. It won't do you any good to get up here. Listen to me and I'll tell you what I'll do. Wait a moment.'*

*She was pushing at his knees, but he only pulled her back. No one saw this little altercation, for very few persons were in the car, and they were attempting to doze.*

*"I won't," said Carrie, who was, nevertheless, complying against her will. "Let me go," she said. 'How dare you?' and large tears began to gather in her eyes." [8, p. 276].*

Factual material shows that verbal declaration of inability to do something ("I can't.") indicates the childish fear of failure and, as a result, readiness to be reassured and cajoled. And that can only be done by a partner with a superior status.

For example: *"Oh, you are cruel to me! You are wicked! I can't. You know I can't."*

*'Why can't you? You can. I am not wicked. To me it doesn't matter what the world is. You really want me, and nothing but me. "' [9, p. 4491].*

Interesting is the fact of status foregrounding in speech situation between individuals who are officially clothed with power, but are not fully aware of the opponent's real power. Such situations are conflict a priori.

For example:

*"And when he reached the great portal of the cathedral, the soldiers thrust their halberds out and said, 'What dost thou seek here? None enters by this door but the King.'*

*And his face flushed with anger; and he said to them, 'I am the king', and waved their halberds aside and passed in." [12, p. 255].*

Non-verbal kinetic means of communication (*face flushed with anger*) correlate with the highest status assertion.

The conducted research shows that conflict discourse, as a specific type of discourse, is characterised by violation of cooperation principles in communication, collision of values and interests of the participants. In the course of conflict discourse, communicator's superior status is foregrounded through directives, invectives, promissives, assertives. Verbal means of superior communicator's status foregrounding also comprise negation and the use of comparison; a person with a

superior status resorts to pejoratives, lexical and syntactic repetitions, rhetorical questions to remind the addressee of their lower status. Irony, sarcasm and direct negation are potent means in undermining an opponent's self-esteem, demonstrating a person's superior status and causing conflict interaction. A communicator's subordinate status can be foregrounded through direct questions with pleading implications. Requests and begging, accompanied by corresponding non-verbal means of communication, demonstrate the communicator's subordinate status.

The prospects of the research we seen in thorough study of communicator's status foregrounding through non-verbal means of communication.

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