

FACE-ATTACKING AND FACE-ENHANCING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This paper is based on the analysis of empirical data made by Face-attacking conflict strategies that attack a person's positive face (for example, comments that criticize the person's contribution to a relationship or any of the person's abilities) or a person's negative face (for example, making demands on a person's time or resources or comments that attack the person's autonomy). Face-enhancing strategies are those that support and confirm a person's positive (praise, a pat on the back, a sincere smile) or negative face (giving the person space and asking rather than demanding), for example. Not surprisingly, academics have a special acronym for these: FTAs or Face Threatening Acts. More specifically, we explore (1) linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies of face-attack employed in the Georgian politics and (2) linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies of face-enhancing employed in the Georgian politics.

Keywords: Face attack, Face enhance, belt lining

Introduction

A wide range of conflict strategies could probably be viewed from the perspective of face and politeness. For the most part, it seems the kinds of strategies textbook authors recommend to use are polite and the strategies recommended to avoid them are impolite. But, several strategies seem especially appropriate to discuss in terms of politeness.

One popular but destructive face-attacking strategy is belt-lining (Bach & Wyden, 1968). Much like fighters in a ring, each of us has a "beltline," (here, an emotional one). When you hit below this emotional beltline, you can inflict serious injury. When you hit above the belt, however, the person is able to absorb the blow. With most interpersonal relationships, especially those of long standing, you know where the beltline is. You know, for example, that to hit a childless couple with the inability to have children is to hit below the belt. You know that to hit unemployed people with the

failure to get a permanent job is to hit below the belt. This type of face-attacking strategy causes all persons involved added problems.

Another such face-attacking strategy is blame. Instead of focusing on a solution to a problem, some members try to affix blame on the other person. Whether true or not, blaming is unproductive; it diverts attention away from the problem and from its potential solution and it creates resentment that is likely to be responded to with additional resentment. The conflict then spirals into personal attacks, leaving the individuals and the relationship worse off than before the conflict was ever addressed.

Strategies that enhance a person's self image and that acknowledge a person's autonomy will not only be polite, they're likely to be more effective than strategies that attack a person self image and deny a person's autonomy. Even when you get what you want, it's wise to help the other person retain positive face because it makes it less likely that future conflicts will arise (Donahue & Kolt, 1992).

Instead of face-attacking, we should try face-enhancing strategies:

- Use messages that enhance a person's self-image;
- Use messages that acknowledge a person's autonomy;
- Compliment the other person even in the midst of a conflict;
- Make few demands, respect another's time, give the other person space especially in times of conflict;
- Keep blows to areas above the belt;
- Avoid blaming the other person;
- Express respect for the other's point of view even when it differs greatly from your own.

Below I will represent the example of face-attacking. The participants of this extract are two female leaders: speaker A belongs to the government party (which makes her a more powerful participant of the debate) and speaker B, to the opposition. The extract contains direct accusations aimed at the government. While performing direct attacks on each other, both participants choose to accuse the leaders from both side of being cowards. By doing so, they aim at damaging each others' group face (lines 1-5). At the same time, these accusations also contain indirect messages to the potential voters aiming at convincing them that (a) only the party speaker A belongs to is capable of genuinely opposing the governmental policy (line3) and (b) as the opposition does not have many followers, the governmental party remains popular (lines 6-8).As can be seen from the extract, both participants, irrespective of their power, are quite assertive and bravely attack each other's group face employing criticism, accusations and other means of conversational violence (lines 1,5, 6-7).

A: 1. *Xelisuflebam ver dadzlia is shishi, rats mat hkonda opozitisis mimart, (.)magram*

The Government did not manage to overcome the fear they had towards the opposition, (.) but

2. *axla moutsevt dadzlion es shishi da chaataron demokratiuli archevnebi.*(-)

Now they will have to do so and conduct democratic elections (-)

3. *Sxva partiebi, garda chevnisa, aris “psevdo-opozitsia”, tkveni satelituri partiebi da*

All the other parties but ours belong to the “pseudo-opposition”, your satellite parties and....

4. *tu tkvens liders eshinia konkurentunariani garemos, es misi problemaa.*(.)

If your leader is afraid of a competitive atmosphere, it is his problem (.)

B: 5 *.(-)Tkven axsenet sityva “shishi”, diax ak vighatsas eshinia, magrama es aris ara prezidenti,aramed*

(-)You mentioned the word “fear”, yes, someone is afraid, but it is not the President, the person who is

6.*sulsxva, tkveni lideri, romelsats martlats eshinia, rom ar gamochndes, rom mas ar hkavs* scared, it is your leader, who is genuinely terrified of people realising that he doesn't have

7. *mxdamcherebi, tuki es archevnebi chatardeba konkurentunarian garemoshi* many followers left, as they will do if these elections are conducted in a competitive atmosphere

8. *(.)diax, isini samartsxvinod tsaageben (-) [da kideverti](.)* (.)Yes, they will lose, shamefully (-)[and one more](.).

9. *[didi bodishi magram]ak sazogadoeba shegkavt shetsdomashi, radganats*[I am sorry, but here], you are leading the viewers to misunderstanding as a safe election

10. *tavisufali saarchevno garemo aris kanonis motxovna da ara vinmes piradi gadatskvetilaba.* environment is secured by law and does not depend on anybody's personal decision.

11. *dzalian samtsuxaroda, tukit kven es procesi iset tamashad tsarmogdeniat, romlis*

It is a shame that you should think that the whole process is a child's game and the issue could be

12. *gamosavali shesadzloa ikos is, rom vinmme tserlis gamoakveknebs da mere sheitsvleba kvelaferi*

sorted out by some politician publishing some letter and everything will change 13 *[Shesadzlebelia...]* (-). [It maybe.....] (-).

13. *[me ara, tkven, tkven (-), samtsuxarod, tkven ggoniat ase .*

[Not me but you, you] (-), unfortunately, assume so.

The choice of aggressive words and phrases with negative connotation (fear, absolutely terrified, lose shamefully), insincere apology (line 9) make the face-attack even stronger. In addition to this, extra-linguistic aspects of the debate, such as interruptions in turn-taking, loud speeches and aggressive facial expressions add to the verbal aggression and construct a clear picture of female leaders who, by attacking their opponents' group face openly, make a determined effort to convince the electorate that, in spite of being females, they are strong, able leaders and thus, to persuade them to vote for them.

Conclusion

While performing the face attack, Georgian political leaders address individual as well as group face of the opponent. While doing so, they employ direct and indirect accusations, criticism, contempt, irony and sarcasm manifested by the following linguistic means. Face-enhancing strategies are those that support and confirm a person's positive (praise, a pat on the back, a sincere smile) or negative face (giving the person space and asking rather than demanding).

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Transcription Conventions

- (.) indicates a pause of two seconds or less
- (-) indicates a pause of three seconds
- [] closed brackets indicate simultaneous speech