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AMERICAN COMMUNICATIVE STYLE IN THE CONTEXT OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Background. *In today's globalized world, the study of communicative styles plays a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and engagement across various fields. As cultural boundaries become increasingly interconnected, examining different communicative practices helps to bridge gaps in understanding, promote more inclusive dialogue, and enhance cooperation in diverse contexts. Among these, American academic discourse is of particular significance as its conventions and norms shape the way knowledge is communicated and shared worldwide. Its impact extends far beyond English-speaking nations, influencing higher educational frameworks, research methodologies, and scientific cooperation in many countries.*

Methods. *The study employs the descriptive method to examine the characteristics of the American communicative style. Discourse analysis is applied to analyze the research material to identify face-saving strategies, which refer to methods of preserving one's positive self-presentation during the communication process.*

Results. *Drawing on P. Brown and S. Levinson's face theory, the study proves that saving both "positive" and "negative" faces is a defining characteristic of the American communicative style in the academe. The strategies can be seen as representations of cultural preferences for interaction, cooperation, and mutual respect in academic environments.*

Conclusions. *American communicative style prioritizes saving both "positive" and "negative" faces, ensuring a balance between personal rapport and respect for individual autonomy. In academic discourse, "positive face" refers to the desire to be accepted, valued, and appreciated by others, which is achieved through addressing one another by name, using inclusive language, and expressing agreement. "Negative face" relates to the wish for autonomy and freedom from imposition. It is realized through using approximators, modal verbs, and impersonal phrases, which helps maintain distance and politeness.*

Keywords: *intercultural communication, academic discourse, communicative style, face-saving strategies.*

Background

In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding other cultures has become an essential priority. In the academe, this need is particularly significant as it fosters cross-cultural exchange and cooperation, enabling scholars and students from diverse backgrounds to share research findings and perspectives, engage in meaningful dialogue, and contribute to the global dissemination of knowledge. By embracing cultural understanding, academic discourse becomes a powerful tool for overcoming differences and addressing complex global challenges. American academic discourse is of particular interest as it significantly influences other cultures. Many non-English-speaking countries adopt the American communicative style in their academic settings, including conventions for classroom interactions and scholarly collaboration. Studying American academic discourse provides insights into the cultural foundations of its communicative style and its impact on international students and researchers.

Methods

The purpose of the paper is to explore face-saving strategies as a characteristic feature of American communicative style within academic discourse and their implications for cross-cultural understanding. The object of the study is academic discourse as a type of modern institutional communication. The subject of the study is face-saving strategies in American academic discourse.

The study employs descriptive analysis to examine the characteristics of American academic discourse through theoretical study and analysis of existing literature. Discourse analysis is applied to analyze the research material to identify face-saving strategies and explain how face-saving acts are committed. First, the material for the analysis was found in the Internet through an information search. The analysis is based on the transcribed texts of 64 lectures of the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) and 10 textbooks in various disciplines used in the educational process of American higher

educational institutions. Next, we identified the most typical strategies for saving "positive" and "negative" faces in the research material and analyzed the means of their realization. Then, the findings were summarized and discussed.

Results

Academic discourse refers to the process and result of communicative interaction within academic settings. It serves to transmit knowledge, establish methodological frameworks for understanding reality, and prepare highly qualified professionals. It encompasses a wide range of verbal and written communication forms, including lectures, discussion sections, lab sections, seminars, student presentations, colloquia, study groups, tutorials, classroom discussions, textbooks, conference presentations, etc. According to K. Hyland, academic discourse has recently become a developing research area due to three main reasons: the growing diversity of the students who are entering universities as a result of widening access policies; the increased attention given to teaching and learning by funding bodies; and the emergence of English as the international language of scholarship (Hyland, 2009). This is why studying communicative styles in academic settings is crucial for understanding how knowledge is exchanged, interpreted, and advanced in diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

Linguistic and discourse studies have introduced a range of works that incorporate the concept of communicative style. D. Hymes introduced the speaking model, which examines how communicative styles vary across cultures. He argued that communicative style is shaped by social norms, cultural expectations, and situational contexts (Hymes, 1989). P. Clancy describes communication style as one of the most striking meeting places of language and culture" and defines it as "the way language is used and understood in a particular culture. The style arises from shared beliefs about people and the way they should relate. In other words, these styles reflect

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cultural values and the different ways in which cultures believe that good interpersonal relations are best achieved (Clancy, 1986). J. House defines communicative style as a patterned way of using linguistic and non-linguistic means to achieve communicative goals, influenced by sociocultural norms and pragmatic expectations (House, 2006). R. Scollon and S. Scollon argue that communicative style is shaped by power relations, identity, and discourse structures, particularly in intercultural settings where different communication norms intersect (Scollon, & Scollon, 1995).

The foundational aspects of culture play a critical role in shaping communicative styles. As E. T. Hall explains in his theory of high-context and low-context communication, cultures differ in the way they encode and interpret messages. High-context cultures (e.g., Japan, China, and Arab nations) rely heavily on implicit, non-verbal cues and shared cultural knowledge, whereas low-context cultures (e.g. the United States, Germany, and Scandinavia) prioritize direct, explicit verbal communication, emphasizing that communicative clarity is valued over implied understanding (Hall, 1976). Similarly, G. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory sheds light on how cultural values such as individualism and power distance affect communication. For instance, in cultures with high individualism (like the United States), communication tends to emphasize personal opinions, self-expression, and autonomy. On the other hand, collectivist cultures emphasise group harmony and indirect forms of communication to avoid conflict (Hofstede, 1980). The notion of "face" in politeness theory by P. Brown and S. Levinson further demonstrates the influence of culture on communicative style. In cultures where maintaining "face" is significant, people may employ more formal and indirect communication strategies to preserve social harmony (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, in East Asian cultures, saving "face" often results in communicative restraint or avoidance of direct confrontation.

These studies emphasize the distinctive features of communicative style within intercultural communication, particularly in the context of interpersonal interactions between people from different societies, each with its own historically shaped communication practices, methods, and interpersonal influence strategies. In our study communicative style is defined as a culturally and socially influenced way of using language, encompassing linguistic and non-verbal elements that shape how individuals express themselves and interact with others. Therefore, exploring communicative style helps in identifying both its key features and the factors that shape it.

A crucial element of communicative style is the concept of "face". According to E. Goffman, social face refers to the positive social value a person claims for themselves in interpersonal interactions. It is the image of oneself that individuals present and strive to maintain in social encounters, shaped by societal expectations and norms (Goffman, 1967, p. 5). The concept of "face" models the social assessment of an individual and consists of positive and negative aspects (Gong, 2018). The "positive face" of an individual reflects their desire for approval by others, and the "negative face" – to protect their boundaries, status, right to personal integrity, freedom of action and freedom from coercion (Brown, & Levinson, 1987). In the process of communication, its participants seek to preserve not only their own face, but also the face of their interlocutor. Communicative style acts as a framework that determines how people express themselves while balancing their need for approval ("positive face") and autonomy ("negative face"). Let us consider the strategies of saving social face that are implemented in American

academe. P. Brown and S. Levinson distinguish fifteen strategies for protecting the "positive face" and ten strategies for protecting the "negative face".

The most typical strategies for saving "positive face" in American academic discourse are the following:

- use in-group markers;
- presuppose, raise, and assert common ground;
- seek agreement;
- avoid disagreement;
- include both S and H in activity;
- give or ask for reasons (Brown, & Levinson, 1987).

The positive strategy of *using in-group markers* is evident when both lecturers and students address one another by name, fostering a sense of shared identity and connection. This approach highlights their mutual desire to affirm their belonging to the same community and to minimize any perceived distance between them.

Lecturer: *I'm sure some of you have questions. Michael?*

Student: *Two questions. Gary, does the stereochemistry matter at all in that in the compound? Maybe three questions. Does it have any sedative properties? And in maybe the best of the three at least the one. How did you get from Ellman's library in this to down this path? (CBC)*

In academic settings, lecturers frequently use casual and inclusive language to engage their audience, in particular, they may use general terms of address, such as *guys* or *folks*, which are characteristic of informal communication. These friendly expressions contribute to a relaxed and approachable atmosphere, making interactions feel more personal and less hierarchical. By doing so, the lecturer not only strengthens rapport but also promotes an environment conducive to collaboration and open dialogue, for example:

Lecturer: *I mean do you guys know of any books like this? (FLL)*

Besides, in verbal academic discourse, we observe the use of informal words such as *awesome*, *cool*, *hang out*, which emphasises that the communicators belong to the same group. Here are some examples.

Lecturer: *So we wanna find the probability that X is greater than four, given that X is less than six. Another rule, another awesome formula is that you must know the probability of A given B, the sequence of the probability of A and B divided by the probability of B (ISL).*

The example above uses the American informal *awesome* in the sense of "beautiful", "wonderful".

Lecturer: *I wanna talk about repressor binding just really briefly in the gal operon only because there's an experiment that I think is pretty cool to introduce you to the concept of dose-dependent effects (MGL).*

As can be seen from the example, the slang *cool* is used to denote a high degree of positive attribute.

The positive strategy of *presupposing, raising, and asserting common ground* involves establishing common topics of conversation. According to P. Brown and S. Levinson, small talk serves as the territory for common topics (Brown, & Levinson, 1987), by which we mean communication on a contact-establishing topic that concerns the communicative event or the communicators themselves in academic discourse. The main function of a phatic conversation is to establish contact and prepare the interlocutor for further communication. As our research shows, in verbal academic discourse, the phatic conversation includes discussions of organisational issues, exams, upcoming trips, and various announcements at the beginning of classes. Initiating communication through a phatic conversation helps create a positive atmosphere of

communication and indicates the lecturer's desire to build positive relationships with students. For example:

Okay let's just begin with a couple of announcements of logistical issues. Some one of you emailed me and asked that the questions be tagged to the reading so you know where to look for answers to the questions. And starting next week I'll do that. There're some questions which sort of straddle, the reading as a whole, and so you won't always see that but to the extent that I can do it, I'll try to tell you the reading to go to answer to your questions. And someone else tried to get to the Wall Street Journal article that was recommended reading for this week and couldn't. Now the problem with this is that you have to actually do this from a U-of-M machine. So I think it needs to be in one of the computing clusters or in the residence from the residence hall. And the reason is that the University has sort of a site license to use this stuff but the host at the other end needs to know that it's a U-of-M machine. So I think if you're trying it from home it won't work unless you live in the residence hall. Did anyone actually try to get at this article? (PSL)

In the lecture excerpt above, the lecturer addresses organizational matters with the students. This helps him connect with them, prepares them for future communication, and highlights shared interests.

The positive strategies of *seeking agreement* and *avoiding disagreement* reflect the communicators' intention to demonstrate a favourable attitude toward their interlocutor by expressing agreement or shared opinions. When disagreement arises, a stereotypical polypragmatic structure such as "YES (okay, right)..., BUT..." is often used to soften the negative aspects. This structure first acknowledges the interlocutor's point, thereby showing respect, before presenting an alternative viewpoint. For example, this approach allows the speaker to establish common ground before subtly asserting their own perspective.

Student: *Mm, it wasn't too much it didn't take me too long to just, use the same word I just, I'd say the hardest part yeah was changing the sentences. Trying to make 'em all fit again. But it wasn't too bad.*

Lecturer: *Okay. But the rhythm seemed to work right and, it really did, come out to be a sestina and one of the effects of the sestina is that, since you're using those words over and over again they tend to acquire different meanings they tend to just, they sound different in different combinations and they mean something (IPOH).*

This example demonstrates a situation where the addressee first agrees with the addresser, thus showing respect, and then presents his information, emphasising his opinion.

In addition, tag questions frequently appear as a strategy to elicit support from the audience, as seen in examples like:

Your responses to the environment then are all behavioural, aren't they? (BEFL)

The "seeking agreement" strategy is also evident in repetition, particularly when a lecturer reaffirms a student's response to validate their contribution:

Lecturer: *How does Y compare to capital Y when the concentration is low?*

Student: *Y is approximately equal to the capital Y.*

Lecturer: *Yes. They're about the same. Once you start getting up above point zero five, it starts changing and up above point one is really concentrated (SPL).*

The inclusive *we* or *us*, as well as the possessive pronoun *our*, are the means of implementing the positive strategy, including both S and H in the *activity*. For example, by using possessive pronouns, the speaker highlights the topic or object of discussion, thereby actively engaging the listener in the discussion:

We've now covered the types of sediments and we'll come back to some of them in detail but let's start with the terrigenous sediment first (IOL).

Lecturer: *Let us make the reasoning involved here more precise. We are suggesting that speakers are in possession of certain broad generalisations about possible and impossible word-initial and final sequences and that these generalisations play a role in their inferences about syllable structure (LILT).*

The strategy of "giving or asking for reasons" is realized through causal conjunctions such as *because*, *for*, and *since*, as well as prepositional phrases like *because of*, *owing to*, and *due to*. This strategy allows the speaker to logically justify their statements while also providing an opportunity for the listener to seek clarification through questions.

Lecturer: *So here what we get is that thirty-two squared is congruent to one, mod three forty-one... But thirty-three is not congruent to one or negative one mod three forty-one. Three forty-one cannot be prime.*

Student: *Okay, I couldn't use that same theorem, since we were given that two-to-the-three-forty-three is congruent to one mod three forty-one?*

Lecturer: *Since two-to-the-three-fortieth is congruent to one mod three forty-one, that's not that in itself doesn't show that three forty-one is composite (NTML).*

Strategies for saving the "negative face" in American academic discourse typically include:

- minimise the imposition;
- impersonalize S and H;
- go on record as incurring debt or off the record as indebting H (Brown, & Levinson, 1987).

Let us examine these strategies in more detail. The strategy of *minimising imposition* is often carried out through the use of modal verbs, which help soften requests and suggestions. For instance:

Astaxanthin production perhaps, the trehalose production, the enzyme that is responsible for that maybe you're trying to produce that. The promoter, the choice of promoter can be very important. It can be of plant origin. It can be of viral origin, it can be of bacterial origin (GCBL).

The following excerpt is taken from a lecture. It illustrates the lecturer's use of various epistemic modalities that highlight the subjectivity of the addressee's opinion.

One of the key methods for reducing categorical statements is the use of approximators – words and phrases that convey an approximate meaning, e.g. *approximately*, *about*, *around*, *nearly*, *roughly*, *almost*, *all but*, *more or less*, *scarcely*, *hardly*, *quite*, *some*.

So, they take over the castle, they kill lots of people there but at first they can't find Moronao, it turns out that he's hiding, he's run away and he's cowering in fear hiding but one of them, the narrator on page one-seventy-six says, Yazama Jutaro Shigeyuki drags in Moronao all but carrying him in his arms (JLL).

In the given example, the speaker uses the approximator *all but* to soften categorical claims when describing events, thereby reducing the degree of certainty.

Quantitative approximators indicate approximation when referring to quantities. These include expressions such as: *many/much*, *a lot of*, *very many*, *a great number*, *a great deal*, *a large amount*, *numerous*, *mostly*, *or more*, *little/a little*, *few/a few*, *quite*, *between*, *from ...to*, *up to*, *over*, *below*, *under*, *within*:

Fiedler and his associates have conducted numerous studies linking the favourability of various situations to leader style and the effectiveness of the group (PM).

In this example, the speaker uses the quantifier *numerous* to imply a large but unspecified number of studies. Since the exact number is unknown or not verifiable, the speaker avoids making a definitive statement, relying instead on approximation.

Comparative approximators express estimation by comparison. These include lexical bundles such as *at least*, *(not) more/less than*, *much more (than)*, *like*. For example:

The same is true of crack and powder cocaine and this, of course, comes from the method of administration. By smoking the crack, the effect is much more intense; it's also much more short-lived (GPPS).

Here, the speaker approximates the impact of crack cocaine by using *much more*, suggesting a general tendency rather than an absolute fact.

Simile-based approximators are used when an object only partially or indirectly corresponds to the term being modified. Common phrases in this category include *(a) sort of*, *kind of*, *of some kind*, *for the most part*, *a bit*, *partly*, *some (of)*, *something like*, *somewhat*, *certain*. For instance:

Well, I'm not going to help all that much in that area, but I'd like to report some of the chemical effects as we had found them. This chapter really is a kind of summary of the work in our lab for the last twenty years (PMES).

In this excerpt, the phrase *a kind of* signals that the chapter is not strictly a summary but shares similarities with one. The addresser avoids making a categorical assertion, maintaining flexibility in interpretation.

The negative politeness strategy "impersonalize S and H" is realized through impersonal phrases, replacing the pronoun *I* with a general noun referring to a broader group or using the indefinite pronoun *one*. For example:

These ideas formed a strong ideology and reinforced habits and rigid traditions. But one should not assume that the belief that there should be no change in technology was merely a superstitious impediment to progress (EI).

Here, the pronoun *one* shifts the statement away from a personal perspective, making it more general and objective, thereby reducing any imposition on the addressee. By depersonalizing the argument, the addresser avoids directly targeting or challenging the audience.

Another negative politeness strategy "go on record as incurring a debt or off record as indebted H", is evident when lecturers express gratitude to students for attending class. For example:

Any questions? Okay, we're out of here. Thank you all for taking part in this study (GOSDL).

In the given example, the lecturer is thanking students for simply attending class, even though attending is their responsibility. By expressing gratitude, the lecturer downplays their authority and makes the interaction seem more reciprocal rather than directive, which can make students feel valued and respected while also softening any potential face-threatening acts, such as giving instructions or setting expectations.

Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of American academic discourse reveals a distinctive communicative style that prioritizes the protection of both "positive" and "negative" faces, ensuring a balance between personal rapport and respect for individual autonomy. In academic discourse, "positive face" refers to the desire to be accepted, valued, and appreciated by others, while "negative face" relates to the wish for autonomy and freedom from imposition. The strategies outlined can be understood as reflections of cultural preferences for engagement, collaboration, and mutual respect within academic settings. American communicative

style within academic discourse is shaped by particular norms and expectations, which, when contrasted with those of other cultures, can create both opportunities for cross-cultural understanding and challenges.

The findings of this study may also have important implications for intercultural communication. First, the recognition of face-saving strategies in American academic discourse can enhance the effectiveness of international collaboration. By understanding the implicit ways of expressing agreement, disagreement, and giving feedback, international students as well as scholars can navigate academic interactions more smoothly, fostering greater participation in scholarly discussions. Second, educators and institutions can apply these insights to design more culturally inclusive academic environments. Being aware of face-saving strategies allows instructors to create classroom interactions that accommodate diverse communicative styles, reducing potential misunderstandings and fostering a more supportive learning atmosphere. This is particularly relevant in settings with high levels of international student participation, where different cultural expectations regarding directness and politeness can influence classroom engagement (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010). Finally, these conclusions highlight the necessity of continued research in cross-cultural discourse analysis. As academic exchanges become increasingly global, future studies should explore how face-saving strategies vary across different academic traditions and how they evolve in response to shifting communication norms. Such research can provide deeper insights into the dynamic nature of academic discourse and contribute to more effective intercultural engagement in educational and professional settings.

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Abbreviations

- BEFL – Biology and Ecology of Fishes Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- CBC – Chemical Biology Colloquiu. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- EI – Sherman, H. J., Hunt, E. K., Nesiba, R. F., & Ohara, P. A. (2008). *Economics: An introduction to traditional and progressive views*. M. E. Sharpe.
- FLL – Fantasy in Literature Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- GCBL – Graduate Cellular Biotechnology Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- GOSDL – Graduate Online Search and Database Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- GPPS – Graduate Public Policy Seminar. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- IOL – Intro Oceanography Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
- ISL – Intro Statistics Lab. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>

IPOH – Intro to Poetry Office Hours. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
 JLL – Japanese Literature Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
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PSL – Principles in Sociology Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
 SPL – Separation Processes Lecture. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>
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АМЕРИКАНСЬКИЙ КОМУНІКАТИВНИЙ СТИЛЬ У КОНТЕКСТІ АКАДЕМІЧНОГО ДИСКУРСУ

В с т у п . У сучасному глобалізованому світі вивчення комунікативних стилів відіграє важливу роль у сприянні міжкультурному розумінню та взаємодії в різних сферах. З огляду на зростання взаємозалежності культур, вивчення різноманітних комунікативних практик допомагає подолати бар'єри у спілкуванні, формувати більш інклюзивний діалог і підвищує ефективність співпраці в різних контекстах. Серед них особливе місце займає американський академічний дискурс, оскільки його правила та норми визначають способи передачі й обміну знаннями у світовій науковій спільноті. Його вплив поширюється далеко за межі англomовних країн, впливаючи на освітні системи, наукові дослідження та міжнародну співпрацю в усьому світі.

М е т о д и . У дослідженні використовується описовий метод для вивчення характеристик американського академічного дискурсу. Дискурс-аналіз застосовано з метою виявлення стратегій збереження соціального обличчя, тобто способів підтримання своєї позитивної самопрезентації під час спілкування.

Р е з у л ь т а т и . Спираючись на теорію "обличчя" П. Браун і С. Левінсона, у статті доведено, що збереження "позитивного" і "негативного" обличчя є ключовою особливістю американського комунікативного стилю в академічному середовищі. Ці стратегії відображають культурні цінності, які підкреслюють важливість взаємодії, співпраці та взаємної поваги в освітньому середовищі.

В и с н о в к и . Американський стиль комунікації спрямований на підтримку як "позитивного", так і "негативного" обличчя, досягаючи рівноваги між налагодженням міжособистісного зв'язку та повагою до автономії особистості. В академічному дискурсі "позитивне обличчя" означає бажання бути прийнятим і схваленим іншими, що досягається через звернення один до одного на ім'я, використання інклюзивної мови, вираження згоди. "Негативне обличчя" пов'язане з бажанням автономії та свободи від нав'язування, що реалізується через вживання апроксимативів, модальних дієслів, безособових фраз, що допомагають зберегти дистанцію та ввічливість.

К л ю ч о в і с л о в а : міжкультурна комунікація, академічний дискурс, комунікативний стиль, стратегії збереження обличчя.

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