

# The Representation of Interpersonal Dynamics in Translation and Interpreting

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Face: the public self-image everyone claims

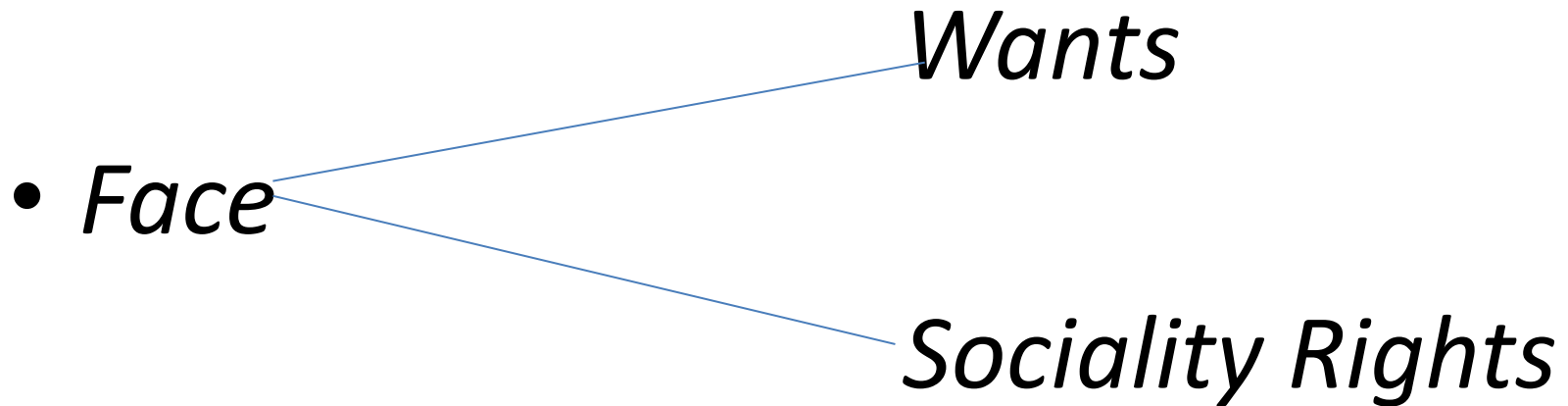


Illustration of the face notion in the Composite Model of Face Management (CMFM)

# Positive Face

the desire for people:

- i. to appreciate and approve of our wants;
- ii. to evaluate our personal qualities positively;
- iii. to uphold our social identities or roles;
- iv. to respect our right to associate with others

# Negative Face

the desire:

- i. for freedom of action and freedom from imposition
- ii. for our right to disassociate others with appropriate distance

# Positive Politeness (Make One Feel Good)

## **Claim common ground**

- i. Attend to and exaggerate interests to Hearer's wants
- ii. Seek agreement and Avoid disagreement

## **Convey Speaker and Hearer are co-operators**

- i. Presuppose Speaker's knowledge and concern for Hearer
- ii. Offer, promise

## **Fulfil Hearer's wants**

- i. Give gifts
- ii. Give sympathy

# Negative Politeness (Respect One's Space)

## **Don't coerce**

- i. Question, hedge
- ii. Be pessimistic

## **Communicate Speaker's desire not to impinge on Hearer**

- i. Apologize
- ii. Impersonalized Speaker and Hearer (passive voice)

## **Claim indebtedness to Hearer**

# Off-record Strategies > 1 Interpretation

## **Be ambiguous and vague**

- i. Give hints or clues
- ii. Understate or overstate
- iii. Use tautologies
- iv. Use contradictions

# Cultural Differences





# The Representation of Face in Audiovisual Translation

Audience Response Experiment



British vs. Chinese subjects

2-minute film sequences with Chinese/English  
translations

# British vs. Chinese Viewers' Impressions



British: warm, open, naïve on work issues, reacted with a fairly controlled attitude showing restraint and pride

Chinese: capable, confident, strong and stubborn, fiery and impetuous attitude

# Impact of Translations

I think maybe you should have them over and I'll  
give a little tap dance.

我想你应该请他们过来  
让我露一手

*I think you should invite them coming here*  
*Let me show a hand*

# Impact of Translations

Shame on you

你真可耻

*You real shameful*

# British vs. Chinese Viewers' Impressions



British: shifty, sneaky, calculating, emotionless,  
unsympathetic

Chinese: sympathetic, humane, with good  
people skills

# Reading Body Language



British: a few grunts and groans  
half-hearted attempt to laugh  
hearing the words but not really listening  
scant engagement and little eye contact  
stiff and upright gestures  
constantly looking down  
playing with the stem of wine glass  
a nervous cough

Chinese: sincere manner

facial expression shows he's sorry, pain  
+ reluctance

no mood for lunch

listens with patience

# Impact of Translations

Yeah, I'm letting you go, yes.

是 我要开除你 没错

Yes, I will fire you, no wrong



# Implication

- Interpersonal dynamics must be represented in translation for users
- Translation should compensate interpersonal messages encoded in body language via appropriate strategies
- Faithfulness in translation not just semantic but also interactional

# The Representation of Face in Political Interpreting

- When interpreting for Chinese-speaking Journalists, face concerns



- 1 Omitting honorifics, politeness and deference markers (谢谢, 请问, 请教, 请回答)
- 2 Omitting pronoun 'we' used to claim solidarity
- 3 Changing indirectness to directness

J: 不知道新政策对于外商的权益是不是会造成比较大的影响

*(not know whether this new policy will significantly affect foreign businesses' interests or not)*

I: Will this policy affect their interests?

# When Interpreting for English-speaking Journalists, Face Concern

- 1 adding deference markers 您, 请问, 请教, 请回答 (not used by the journalists)
- 2 adding off-record feature ‘...or not’ (是不是, 可不可以) to give leeway
- 3 changing directness to indirectness to be vague

- J: It linked China with North Korea's *nuclear weapons programme*...whether China did help North Korea or any other countries to develop *nuclear weapons*.
- I: 指出中国和北朝鲜有关*核计划方面的合作 (cooperation in nuclear are)* ...中国有没有帮助北朝鲜或者别的什么国家来进行*核方面 (nuclear area)* 的开发。

# interpreting for officials, face concern

- Adding pronoun 'we' to claim solidarity with the institutional employer

O: 对于中国经济来说，这是一个十分重要而且问题较多的环节，要下大力气。

I: This is a critical and often problematic aspect of **our** economy and requires great efforts from **us**.

# Implications

- Interpreters are not mere language conduits. They do negotiate their stance. They cannot be expected to be 100% neutral and nonpartisan.
- It is important for service users to know how to work effectively with interpreters to achieve desired effects.

Thank you! Any questions?

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