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## CONFLICTS IN VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION AND THEIR LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION

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### Abstract

This article provides a theoretical and practical analysis of the linguistic features of conflicts arising in virtual communication environments (social networks, forums, messengers). It highlights the causes of conflicts, their linguistic indicators, developmental stages, and mitigation strategies. Additionally, it explains how the format of online communication and its supplementary tools (paratext), in contrast to face-to-face conversations, influence the emergence of conflicts.

**Keywords:** Virtual communication, online conflicts, computer-mediated communication (CMC), politeness theory, face-saving, discourse analysis.

### Introduction

In linguistics, analyzing conflicts primarily relies on pragmatics, discourse analysis, and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) theories. Specifically, Brown and Levinson's "politeness theory" and the concept of "face-saving"—representing an individual's social reputation—are highly relevant to the online environment. However, the unique nature of digital communication necessitates a fresh approach to these concepts.

As digital communication tools become increasingly popular, people are choosing online platforms more often to express their opinions and engage in

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debates. In such environments, conflicts arise not only over the topic of discussion but also due to differences in communication styles and misunderstandings related to the projection of social identity.

A person's reputation and principles of politeness play a crucial role in conflict analysis. These concepts help identify when communication is escalating and how to mitigate the situation. Furthermore, visual tools specific to digital communication (emojis, GIFs, quoting) and platform features (liking, sharing, replying) directly impact the conversational flow. Using these theoretical tools, online conflicts can be detected through linguistic markers—such as the lexical layer, text structure, and visual elements.

The main factors triggering conflicts in the virtual world include:

- **Anonymity and identity concealment:** Because individuals can keep their identities hidden, they often feel unrestrained by social norms. This frequently leads to an increase in harsh and provocative comments.
- **Lack of non-verbal cues:** Since the interlocutor's facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language are absent, the likelihood of misinterpreting written text increases, which can escalate the severity of the situation.
- **Short-text communication:** It is difficult to articulate complex thoughts clearly in brief messages. This often leads to the misinterpretation of snide remarks, irony, and sarcasm.

Conflicts in virtual communication are often linked to the misinterpretation of linguistic units. Pragmatic tools like sarcasm and irony are especially difficult to decipher when expressed in writing. Consequently, interlocutors may misunderstand one another, leading to heightened arguments and tension. The use of linguistic units in virtual environments follows specific patterns, which can be divided into three groups:

1. Group One (Lexical and Grammatical Markers): This involves harsh expressions, aggressive vocabulary, strong negations, and direct—sometimes rude—forms of address that spark arguments or conflicts. For example, the

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emphatic use of the pronoun "you" or personal attacks can escalate conversational tension.

2. Group Two (Text Structure and Logical Tools): Virtual conflicts often feature the repetitive assertion of a single point, the use of rhetorical questions aimed at pressuring the interlocutor, and the aggressive expression of one's position through imperative sentences. Such methods derail constructive communication and escalate the argument.

3. Group Three (Visual and Supplementary Elements / Paratext): In virtual communication, emojis, stickers, or memes are frequently used to soften the tone of written speech, add emotional color, or express humor. However, in certain contexts, they can also convey irony, mockery, or sarcasm. Therefore, the correct interpretation of these elements largely depends on the communication context, the relationship between the interlocutors, and the overall communicative situation.

Virtual conflicts generally progress through specific stages:

1. Provocation (Initial Stage): The initial spark is ignited through harsh and brief phrases.

2. Escalation (Development and Intensification): Participants argue using counter-evidence, emotions flare, and the discussion often devolves into personal attacks.

3. De-escalation (Mitigation Stage): Efforts to "save face and reputation" emerge, such as stabilizing the situation, apologizing, or using polite language.

To restore mutual trust and stop an argument, using moderate language, rephrasing thoughts in a softer tone, and the intervention of a third party (such as a moderator) yield positive results.

To automatically detect conflicts, modern programming utilizes methods like sentiment analysis (detecting text emotion) and the statistical study of pragmatic markers. However, these technologies often lack a comprehensive understanding of local cultures and nuances. Therefore, analysis software must be improved to

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account for national language features, subtle sarcasms, and visual cues. Empirical studies show that it is possible to identify personal or work-related issues by observing changes in an individual's online writing style.

In conclusion, conflicts in virtual communication are not merely text-based disputes; they are complex socio-linguistic processes resulting from the limitations of the online environment and digital culture platforms. Through linguistic analysis, conflict indicators can be detected early, and necessary measures can be developed. Moving forward, continued research into multimodal systems capable of simultaneously analyzing text, emotion, and cultural nuances remains highly relevant.

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