

Addendum: Brown/Levinson (1987), Chapter 4.3.1

Four directions of FTAs according to Brown/Levinson (1987:65ff.)

A) threats to the hearer's negative face:

- 1) Those acts that predicate some future act A of H, and in so doing put some pressure on H to do (or refrain from doing) the act A:
 - a) orders and requests (S indicates that he wants H to do, or refrain from doing, some act A)
 - b) suggestions, advice (S indicates that he thinks H ought to (perhaps) do some act A)
 - c) reminders (S indicates that H should remember to do some A)
 - d) threats, warnings, dares (S indicates that he – or someone, or something – will instigate sanctions against H unless he does A)
- 2) Those acts that predicate some positive future act of S toward H, and in so doing put some pressure on H to accept or reject them, and possibly to incur debt:
 - a) offers (S indicates that he wants H to commit himself to whether or not he wants S to do some act for H, with H thereby incurring a possible debt)
 - b) promises (S commits himself to a future act for H's benefit)
- 3) Those acts that predicates some desire of S toward H or H's goods, giving H reason to think that he may have to take action to protect the object of S's desire, or give it to S:
 - a) compliments, expressions of envy or admiration (S indicates that he likes or would like something of H's)
 - b) expression of strong (negative) emotion toward H – e.g. hatred, anger, lust (S indicates possible motivation for harming H or H's goods)

B) threats to the hearer's positive face:

- 1) Those that show that S has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H's positive face:
 - (a) expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults (S indicates that he doesn't like/want one or more of H's wants, acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values)
 - (b) contradictions or disagreements, challenges (S indicates that he thinks H is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about some issue, such wrongness being associated with disapproval)

2) Those that show that S doesn't care about (or is indifferent to) H's positive face:

- (a) expressions of violent (out-of-control) emotions (S gives H possible reason to fear him or be embarrassed by him)
- (b) irreverence, mention of taboo topics, including those that are inappropriate in the context (S indicates that he doesn't value H's values and doesn't fear H's fears)
- (c) bringing of bad news about H, or good news (boasting) about S (S indicates that he is willing to cause distress to H, and/or doesn't care about H's feelings)
- (d) raising of dangerously emotional or divisive topics, e.g. politics, race, religion, women's liberation (S raises the possibility or likelihood of face-threatening acts (such as the above) occurring; i.e., S creates a dangerous-to-face atmosphere)
- (e) blatant non-cooperation in an activity – e.g. disruptively interrupting H's talk, making non-sequiturs or showing non-attention (S indicates that he doesn't care about H's negative- or positive-face wants)
- (f) use of address terms and other status-marked identifications in initial encounters (S may misidentify H in an offensive or embarrassing way, intentionally or accidentally)

C) threats to the speaker's negative face:

- 1. expressing thanks (S accepts a debt, humbles his own face)
- 2. acceptance of H's thanks or H's apology (S may feel constrained to minimize H's debt or transgression, as in 'It was nothing, don't mention it.')
- 3. excuses (S indicates that he thinks he had good reason to do, or fail to do, an act which H has just criticized; this may constitute in turn a criticism of H, or at least cause a confrontation between H's view of things and S's view)
- 4. acceptance of offers (S is constrained to accept a debt, and to encroach upon H's negative face)
- 5. responses to H's *faux pas* (if S visibly notices a prior *faux pas*, he may cause embarrassment to H; if he pretends not to, he may be discomfited himself)
- 6. unwilling promises and offers (S commits himself to some future action although he doesn't want to; therefore, if his unwillingness shows, he may also offend H's positive face)

D) threats the speaker's positive face:

- 1. apologies (S indicates that he regrets doing a prior FTA, thereby damaging his own face to some degree – especially if the apology is at the same time a confession with H learning about the transgression through it, and the FTA thus conveys bad news)
- 2. acceptance of a compliment (S may feel constrained to denigrate the object of H's prior compliment, thus damaging his own face; or he may feel constrained to complement H in turn)
- 3. breakdown of physical control over body, bodily leakage, stumbling or falling down, etc.
- 4. self-humiliation, shuffling or cowering, acting stupid, self-contradicting

5. confessions, admissions of guilt or responsibility – e.g. for having done or not done an act, or for ignorance of something that S is expected to know
6. emotion leakage, non-control of laughter or tears

Fifteen substrategies to illustrate positive politeness (1987:102ff.):

Claim ‘common ground’

Convey ‘X is admirable, interesting’

- 1) Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods): *What a beautiful vase this is! Where did it come from?*
- 2) Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H): *How absolutely incredible!*
- 3) Intensify interest to H: *I come down the stairs, and what do you think I see? – a huge mess all over the place ...*

Claim in-group membership with H

- 4) Use in-group identity markers: *Help me with this bag here, will you luv/son?*

Claim common point of view/opinions/attitudes/knowledge/empathy

- 5) Seek agreement: A: *I had a flat tyre on the way.* B: *Oh God, a flat tyre!*
- 6) Avoid disagreement: A: *What is she, small?* B: *Yes, yes, she’s small, smallish, um, not really small but certainly not very big.*
- 7) Presuppose/raise/assert common ground: *It’s at the far end of the street, the last house on the left, isn’t it.*
- 8) Joke: *How about lending me this old heap of junk?* (H’s new Cadillac)

Convey that S and H are cooperators

Indicate S knows H’s wants and is taking them into account

- 9) Assert or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants: *I know you can’t bear parties, but this one will really be good – do come!*

Claim reflexivity (between S’s and H’s wants)

- 10) Offer, promise: *I’ll drop by sometime next week.*
- 11) Be optimistic: *You’ll lend me your lawnmower for the weekend, won’t you.*
- 12) Include both S and H in the activity: *Let’s have a cookie, then.* (i.e. me)
- 13) Give (or ask for) reasons: *Why don’t we go to the seashore!*

Claim reciprocity

- 14) Assume or assert reciprocity: *I’ll do X for you if you do Y for me’*

Fulfil H’s want (for some X)

- 15) Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

Ten substrategies to exercise of negative politeness (1987:131ff.):

Be direct (on record only, clashes with ‘be indirect’)

- 1) Be conventionally indirect: *I’d like to borrow a cup of flour if I may.*

Don’t presume/assume

Make minimal assumptions about H’s wants, what is relevant to H

- 2) Question, hedge: *I suppose that Harry is coming.*

Don’t coerce H (where x involves H doing A)

Give H option not to do act

- 3) Be pessimistic: *You don’t have any envelopes, do you by any chance?*

Minimize threat: Make explicit Rank, Power, Social Distance values

- 4) Minimize the imposition: *Could I have a taste (c.i. slice) of that cake?*
- 5) Give deference: *Excuse me, sir, but would you mind if I close the window?*

Communicate S's want to not impinge on H

- 6) Apologize: *I'm sorry to bother you ...*

Dissociate S, H from the particular infringement

- 7) Impersonalize S and H: *One shouldn't do things like that.*
- 8) State the FTA as a general rule: *I'm sorry, but late-comers cannot be seated till the next interval.*
- 9) Nominalize: *It is our regret that we cannot ...*

Redress other wants of H's, derivative from negative face

- 10) Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H: *I'd be eternally grateful if you would ...*

Fifteen substrategies to go "off record" (1987:214ff.):

Violate Relevance Maxim:

- 1) 'Give hints': *It's cold in here. (c.i.¹ shut the window)*
- 2) 'Give association clues': *Oh God, I've got a headache again. (c.i. could I borrow your swimsuit)*
- 3) 'Presuppose': *It wasn't mé that did it. (c.i. someone else did it)*

Violate Quantity Maxim:

- 4) 'Understate': *How do you like Josephine's new haircut? – It's all right / pretty nice / OK. (c.i. I don't particularly like it)*
- 5) 'Overstate': *I tried to call a hundred times, but there was never any answer. (c.i. I apologize for not getting in touch)*
- 6) 'Use tautologies': *Boys will be boys. (c.i. I apologize for their behaviour)*

Violate Quality Maxim:

- 7) 'Use contradictions': „one might say of a drunken friend to a telephone caller: *Well, John is here and he isn't here.*“ (c.i. *I complain about his behaviour*)
- 8) 'Be ironic': „to postman drenched in rainstorm“: *Beautiful weather, isn't it!* (c.i. *the weather is not beautiful*)
- 9) 'Use metaphors': *Harry's a real fish. (c.i. he drinks / swims like a fish)*
- 10) 'Use rhetorical questions': *What can I say? (c.i. nothing, it's so bad)*

Violate Manner Maxim:

- 11) 'Be ambiguous': *John's a pretty sharp / smooth cookie. (c.i.: „could be either a compliment or an insult“)*
- 12) 'Be vague': *I'm going down the road for a bit. (c.i. I'm going to the pub)*
- 13) 'Over-generalize': *The lawn has got to be mown. (c.i. you should mow the lawn)*
- 14) 'Displace H': „pretend to address the FTA to someone whom it wouldn't threaten, and hope that the *real* target will see that the FTA is aimed at him“
- 15) 'Be incomplete, use ellipsis': „S can leave the implicature 'hanging in the air'“: *Well, if one leaves one's tea on the wobbly table ...*

¹ c.i. is short for *conversational implicature*.