A face-based approach to the study of learners’ agreements and disagreements in EFL

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Summary:
Study on the shape of agreement and disagreement sequences in interactions between learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in English

Focus:
Face attention and face damage

*Face:* the self-image one wants for him/herself in a specific society (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987)
Theoretical background

- Politeness Theory
  - Brown & Levinson (1987)

- Frameworks of impoliteness, rudeness and aggravating language
  - Bousfield (2007, 2008); Culpeper (1996, 2005); Culpeper et al. (2003); Lachenicht (1980); Kienpointner (1997)
Theoretical background

Agreements & disagreements:

- **Agreements:** discursive units that convey face attention (García-Pastor, 2006)

- **Disagreements:** discursive units that convey face damage due to:
  - Absence of face attention when required in a specific context
  - Deliberate face aggravation (ibid.)
Research question:

What is the shape of agreements and disagreements in interactions between learners in EFL in terms of categories of (im)politeness?

Data:

- EFL exchanges between learners with Spanish as L1 (approx. 20 hours of ongoing talk)
- Two-party conversations of 30 min. duration each on different topics proposed by the researcher
Methods

- **Data (cont.):**
  - The data was transcribed following Jefferson’s (1984) transcription system in the main

- **Analysis:**
  - Disagreements: impoliteness, rudeness and aggravating language frameworks already cited
Results

- **Agreements** adopted the form of jointly constructed floors or *F2s* (Edelsky, 1981) of a collaborative nature.

Extract 1. Agreement in the form of a collaborative F2 between two learners.

1. L1: =and you (.) you have toooo (.) too (.) to be
2. L1: able too (.) take your ↑chooice and too (.)
3. L1: to build up your perso↑[nality
4. L2: mhum=
5. L1: =and it’s (.) I don’t know (.) you can do it
6. L1: by yourself (.) maybe they can uh
7. L2: help↑youu (.) but (.) only HELP
8. L2: mhum for give their o↑pinion
9. L1: give advice
10. L2: ye↑ah
11. L1: it’s only that way
12. L2: but not to choose for them [...]
Results

- **Disagreements** adopted the form of jointly constructed floors or *F2s* (Edelsky, 1981) of a combative nature.

**Extract:** Disagreement in the form of a combative F2 between two learners.

**Topic:** Abortion.

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1  L1:  I don’t(...) I don’t think that(...) I don’t think that
2  that teenager(...) that eighteen years-old teenager(...) 
3  uuhm(...) take a that year to think about what he
4  wants to do
5  L2:  [well I disagree
6  L1:  because of I think(...) he’s going to(...) to take that
7  that year to get↑drunk(...) to have parities(...) to 
8  [to live a little bit
9  L2:  well I mean(...) that depends to you but I think
10 L1:  you’re going to get destroyed also(...) [you’re going 
11    to get drunk(...) you’re going to(...) you can say
12 L1:  o'hui but you are(...) o'hui but you are(...) in the
13 university and you can↑study(...) but you can↑do
14    many things at the same time(...) you can(...) having
15    that uuhm stuudies and you caan
16  L2:  well(...) I really disagree about that(...) [I think that
17      the gap
18 L1:  you can you can(...) have↑fun(...) and you can
19     ↑study
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Results

- **Agreements** were mostly shaped as *face attention*:
  - **Non-pure face attention** towards *positive face* and *negative face* or the desire to be unimpeded upon (Brown & Levinson, 1987), i.e. face attention with a face damage component consisting of *secondary impoliteness* based on indirect impoliteness oriented towards a third party (usually an abstract addressee) and shaped as a general social denounce or criticism (García-Pastor, 2006, 2008)
  - **Positive face attention** or attention to *positive face*, i.e. the desire to be approved of (Brown & Levinson, 1987) (see Extract 1)
Politeness strategies constituting \textit{positive face attention} and \textit{non-pure face attention} towards \textit{positive} and \textit{negative face} in \textit{agreements} were:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Politeness strategies}
  \begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Positive face}
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Notice, attend to H and close others
    \item Give understanding, cooperation to H
    \item Assert/presuppose S’s knowledge of, and concern for, H’s needs and wants
    \item Offer
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Negative face}
    \begin{itemize}
    \item Question, hedge
    \item State the communicative act(s) as a general rule
    \item Impersonalize S and H
    \end{itemize}
  \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Results

- Impoliteness strategies constituting positive face attention and non-pure face attention towards positive and negative face in agreements were:
  - Impoliteness strategies
    - Positive face
      - Convey dislike for, and disagreement with H and close others
    - Negative face
      - State the communicative act(s) as common or shared knowledge
      - Increase imposition weight
      - Refuse H and H’s things, actions, values and opinions

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Results

- Agreements as non-pure face attention with secondary impoliteness

Extract 3. Agreements sequence in the shape of non-pure face attention with secondary impoliteness

Topic: parents’ influence in their children’s life and future

L1: =but when they are teenagers or they are (.) eeh (.) like us (.) they can decide because (.) the life (.) you ma make your life (.) and you decide (.) mmhm (.) thinking about your (.) your [own i?deas
L2: yourself you are]
L1: so the the (.) your parents don't (.) doesn't (.) don't know (.) what do you think what do you want so (.) when you are children (.) you they (.) they have the obligation to (.) to decide mmhm=
L2: =something=
L1: =something but when you are year (.) no (.) ?older
R*: you may interrupt one another
L2: ok
R: you know=
L1: =ok (.) and you
L2: In my opinion (.) in the first (.) when you are really young your parent ?should (.) d decide for you (.) I'm I'm (.) I think that (.) you have the ?reason (.) but (.) is ?not (1.) exactly when you are teenager you are freee your decisions are good (.) no (.) I think that teenager (.) eeh (.) are (.) eeh (.) younger (.) and I (.) they are (.) eehm (1.) they are not sure (.) they are not have her there (.) mind clear (.) eh (.) parents (.) they haven't you to say "you have to do this" (.) but they have to (.) they should (.) say "in my opinion you should do (.) this or ?not (.) because think about ?that or ?not" but (.) thinking about children’s future (.) I think is a own (.) eeh (.) idea or mind (.) I (.) (unintelligible) (1.5) if you are teenager (.) you eeh (.) you have the idea of want (.) what do you want to study or if you want (.) leave your studies and start working (.) but (.) but when are children all the childrens eeh (.) think about (.) "I'm go I want to ?be a teacher I want to be (a
[a
R (researcher)
Results

- **Disagreements** were mostly shaped as *face damage*:
  - **Non-pure face damage** towards *negative face*, i.e. face damage towards negative face with a face attention component, i.e. *secondary politeness* or indirect politeness oriented towards the hearer (García-Pastor, 2006, 2008)
  - **Face damage** or damage towards *negative face* and *positive face*, especially the former
Results

- Impoliteness strategies constituting non-pure negative face damage and face damage towards negative and positive face in disagreements were:

- Impoliteness strategies

  - Negative face
    - State the communicative act(s) as common or shared knowledge
    - Increase imposition weight
    - Refuse H and H’s things, actions, values and opinions

  - Positive face
    - Convey dislike for, and disagreement with H and close others
Results

- Politeness strategies constituting non-pure negative face damage and face damage towards negative and positive face in disagreements were:

- Politeness strategies
  - Negative face
    - Question, hedge
    - State the communicative act(s) as a general rule
    - Impersonalize S and H
  - Positive face
    - Notice, attend to H and close others
    - Give understanding, cooperation to H
    - Assert/presuppose S’s knowledge of, and concern for, H’s needs and wants
    - Offer
Results

- Disagreements as non-pure negative face damage with *secondary politeness*

Extract 4 Disagreement in the form of non-pure negative face damage

**Topic:** parents’ influence in their children’s life and future

1. L1: if she is really good uh (.) she’s (.) good at doing (.) ↑this (.) I think that I will be with her
2. L2: buut (.) [I think the
3. L1: (unintelligible)] her and if she’s his (.) her future (.) buut=
4. L2: =buut it’s aa (.) a difficult future becau (.) you have to work very hard and its’ too difficult
too (0.5) tooo (1.) arrive to aaa (.) aaaa (0.5)
5. L1: the toped [↑no=
6. L2: at the] top ↑no (.) aaa (.) eeh (.) mediuuuum (0.5) to bee a medium ↑singer more or less
7. that you earn (.) thee (.) enough money to to live by ↑yourself (.) buuut (.) but if she (.)
8. eeh (.) really wants too (.) to do that (.) I think she should [sing
Results

- Disagreements as face damage towards negative face

Extract 5: Disagreement in the form of negative face damage

Topic: parents' influence in their children's life and future

1. L1: [...] if if (.) when I was eighteen (.) I (. ) I start working I think I (.) won't be back (.)
2. studying (.) here (0.5) because (.) when when (.) when you (.) uuh (.) have
3. money (.) you don’t have (.) you don’t want too (.)
4. L2: stop [having it]
5. L1: to st]oop (.) having money or to study it's different (.) it's a different way of life (.) and
6. if y (.) if you are working and and you [realize that
7. L2: but maybe that
8. L1: you are] (.) you are uuh (.) having money and you can (.) I don't know it's (.) a
9. different way of life
10. L2 but maybe that shows that (.) what you just (.) what you really want to do it's (.) not
11. to continue study because (.) if you really want to study (.) though (.) a whole year
12. passed (.) you would (.) go back to university and continue study or whatever
13. L1: well but f (.) if you don't think it clearly (.) maybe you don't come back
Conclusions

This study has focused on the shape of agreement and disagreement sequences in (im)politeness terms within interactions between learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in English.

- Agreements mainly adopted the form of non-pure face attention towards positive face and negative face within collaborative F2s.

- Disagreements mainly adopted the form of non-pure face damage towards negative face and face damage towards positive and negative face within combative F2s.
Conclusions

- **Implications of this study**
  - Modest contribution to second or foreign language (L2/FL) research concerned with the teaching and learning of linguistic functions in the target language
  - A better understanding of how functions like agreeing and disagreeing work in L2/FL can yield more effective instructional treatments and designs for learners

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION
References


