

Jenny Arendholz – München

# “You sound very talented” – Negotiating Face in Online Message Boards

---

## 1. Introduction

Surprisingly little linguistic research has so far been conducted on online message boards, let alone on (components of) interpersonal relationships to be found therein (but cf. Locher 2006; Arendholz 2013). Still, having a closer look at processes of face constitution and negotiation in one of the most popular as well as diverse forms of online communication is an insightful and rewarding endeavour. For that reason, the present paper sets out to look for traces of face – in both Goffman’s (1967) and Brown/Levinson’s (1978/1987) sense of the term – in message board interaction. To be more precise, selected contributions, i.e. so called posts, taken from the British message board *The Student Room* will be subjected to a qualitative, and as yet explorative analysis. The aim of this investigation is to show that both ideas of the notion of face can be used expediently to explain basic, underlying processes of self-presentation and evaluations by others in this particular online platform. In so doing, special attention will also be paid to the (non-)verbal, medium specific strategies used by self-presenting contributors as well as by evaluating commentators.

## 2. The nature of the beast: Online message boards and *The Student Room*

The ideational roots of present-day message boards can be traced back to the year 1979, when an experimental bulletin board system called the *Usenet* was set up at Duke University, North Carolina (Jasper 1997: 12). Until its decommissioning in May 2010, the Usenet was a network of host computers which enabled users to contribute messages to so-called newsgroups, in which users could “speak” their minds about (almost) anything with anyone, anytime. Although modern-day online meeting places come in all shapes and forms and go by a remarkable range of names, among them discussion fora, bulletin boards, discussion boards and the term given preference in this study, message boards, they still cover more or less the same basic communicative purposes: getting to know others, looking for like-minded others, asking for advice, asking for opinions, blowing off steam and offering advice/information (cf. Arendholz 2013: 137-138).

The message board under investigation, *The Student Room* (henceforth TSR), serves mainly as a discussion platform for a somewhat homogeneous group of users, i.e. British and international (wannabe) students (URL 1). Once registered, participants are able to contribute to ongoing conversations or generate their own topical threads. They do so by means of typing messages into ready-made templates and by adorning or elaborating their contents with smileys and other instances of what Crystal (<sup>2</sup>2006: 19) used to call *netspeak*<sup>1</sup> as well as with multimodal elements, among them (links to) YouTube videos, photos and the like. Therefore, it goes without

---

<sup>1</sup> Note well that this term is rather used tongue-in-cheek as a very broad umbrella term. In fact, scholarly research is well-advised to reject the idea of one prototypical online language with clearly defined features (cf., for example, Herring 2001: 616-617; Dürscheid 2004; Thurlow et al. 2004: 123 and Bieswanger 2013: 465).

saying that presenting oneself and evaluating others' behaviour when engaging in asynchronous communicative exchanges can be accomplished in various ways.

Based on previous experiences of message board exchanges, TSR has cast its rules of the game into a code of conduct typical of CMC (URL 2). Besides prohibiting certain actions, e.g. advertising, and giving technical instructions on how to phrase contributions, this netiquette also demands to respect (the privacy of) other users and, most importantly, warns its members that personal attacks or inflammatory behaviour will not be tolerated. Transferred to Goffman's (1967) and Brown/Levinson's (1978/1987) terminology, which was also taken up by more recent authors such as Locher/Watts (2005), Watts (2003) and Spencer-Oatey (2007; cf. older publications), this means that interlocutors' *face needs* shall be valued.

### **3. Face revisited**

#### **3.1. Looking back: Goffman (1967) and Brown/Levinson (1978/1987)**

Traditionally, the notion of *face* is tightly linked to two prominent and well-received approaches proposed by sociologist Erving Goffman back in 1967 and by linguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1978 (and again in 1987). Although the latter approach references to and further develops lines of thoughts presented by the former, we are still dealing with two rather antithetical conceptions of one and the same notion, *face*. As recent research feels the need to choose between the two rivaling models, the trend is towards sidelining Brown/Levinson's approach in favour of a return to the older Goffmanian model. Before, however, pick-

Jenny Arendholz

ing sides too quickly, one should be aware of the advantages of both approaches.

Brown/Levinson (1978/1987) conceive of *face* as a rather static notion and define it as an individual's "public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself" (1987: 61). Accordingly,

[...] face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face. (Brown/Levinson 1987: 61)

Although both authors concede that *face* is a culture-sensitive notion, they still assume that "the mutual knowledge of members' public self-image or face, and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction, are universal" (Brown/Levinson 1987: 61f.).

What is more, they distinguish between a *positive* and a *negative face*. While the positive face is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (Brown/Levinson 1987: 62), i.e. the need to be accepted, even liked in a group and to be treated that way, the negative face is described as "the want of every competent adult member that his action be unimpeded by others" (Brown/Levinson 1987: 62), which could roughly be translated as the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others. As should be obvious, positive and negative face needs exhibit opposing alignments, which makes it hard for us to do justice to both of them at the same time. Although the terminology certainly reflects a rather unfortunate choice and must not be confused with evaluative labels for 'good' or 'bad', the central idea of communicating individuals having basic human needs should not be discarded that easily, as these needs can be the driving forces of our (non-)verbal behaviour,

present not only in message boards for our interlocutors to perceive. Since these needs are inherent in every conversationalist, they are not subject to negotiation in communicative exchanges.

Goffman (1967), on the other hand, puts very strong emphasis on the fact that *face* is the product of processes of negotiation among interlocutors. Thus proffering a social and dynamic perspective on *face*, he defines it as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman 1967: 5), whereas lines are understood as “pattern[s] of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses [...] his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (Goffman 1967: 5). In other words, by means of (non-)verbally behaving in a certain way, thus giving out lines for others to make sense of and base their judgments on, speakers aim for the attribution of a certain image, the so-called *face*. In contrast to Brown/Levinson, speakers rely on their interlocutors’ evaluations to be given the desired face, prompting Goffman to remark that

while his social face can be his most personal possession and the centre of his security and pleasure, it is only on loan to him from society; it will be withdrawn unless he conducts himself in a way that is worthy of it. Approved attributes and their relation to face make of every man his own jailer; this is a fundamental social constraint even though each man may like his cell. (Goffman 1967: 10)

In short, one could say that speakers want to convey a self-image by means of their (verbal) behaviour. Their lines can therefore be regarded as the condensate of whom they (think they) are and of whom they would like others to think they are (cf. Arendholz 2013: 67).

### 3.2. Looking ahead: A proposal for an integrative model of face

There is most certainly more than a grain of truth regarding human, interpersonal interaction in both models, which is why this paper advocates the opinion that we do not have to side with one model or the other but should actually capitalise on the advantages of both approaches. For that reason, an integrative model of *face* is argued for (Arendholz 2013: 75), one that brings together the “best of both worlds” by acknowledging Brown/Levinson’s face dualism and integrating it into Goffman’s dynamic model of face negotiation (see fig. 1):

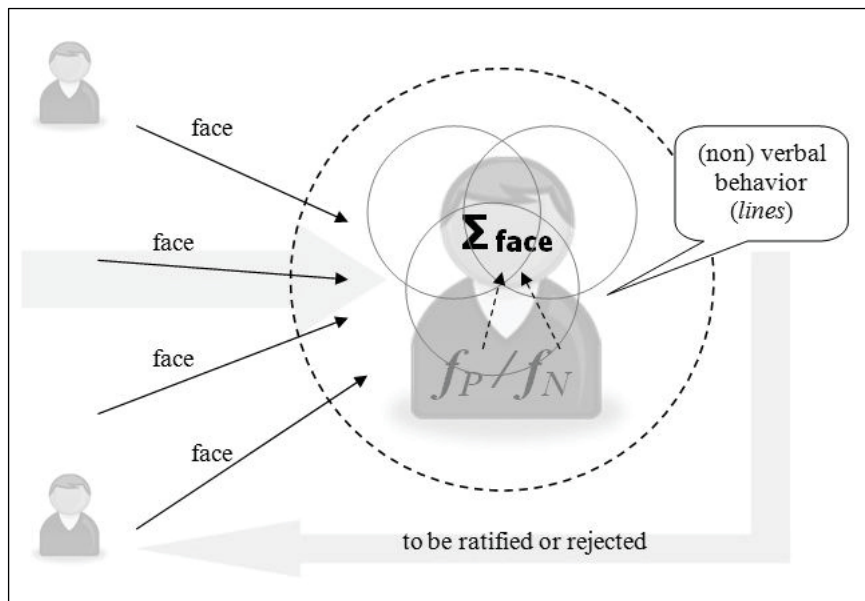


Fig. 1: Schematic representation of an integrative model of face (cf. Arendholz 2013: 76)

In this circular model, the dyadic process between interlocutors is strongly foregrounded with face attribution being the outcome of

a process that includes the ratification or rejection of lines. Based on a speaker's (non-)verbal behaviour, which contains and at the same time conveys lines to be read by interlocutors, *face* is indeed ascribed constantly, individually and temporarily for the moment of interaction. As indicated by the broken line, speakers are not only open for their interlocutors' value judgments but heavily rely on them to either see their face claims met or to rework their lines until the desired face attribution can finally be reached. Since we do not only wear one face at a time but usually showcase a mixture of several faces that have proven advantageous in the past, *face* should in fact be considered a summative conglomerate, indicated by the overlapping circles in Fig. 1.

Just as noteworthy about this integrative model as the Goffmanian influences are the two underlying factors taken over from Brown/Levinson's perspective. The positive and the negative face, abbreviated with  $f^P$  and  $f^N$  in Fig. 1, are allocated an equally fixed place right in the center of the schematic representation, as they represent interlocutors' fundamental human needs for association and dissociation (cf. O'Driscoll 1996). Tannen elaborates on this as follows:

We need to get close to each other to have a sense of community, to feel we're not alone in the world. But we need to keep our distance from each other to preserve our independence, so others don't impose on or engulf us. This duality reflects the human condition. We are individual and social creatures. We need other people to survive, but we want to survive as individuals. (Tannen 1992: 15)

Therefore, everything that we say or do, be it online or otherwise, can directly be traced back to these two central driving forces as they form the basis of every process of face negotiation. Despite the fact that their implementation in actual talk exchanges can differ significantly, which means that we can pursue highly individual ways of ensuring our positive and negative face needs, their

*Jenny Arendholz*

mere presence should not be questioned. After all, it is these basic human needs that shape our behavioural expectations with regard to ourselves and those around us and, even more importantly, that make these kinds of expectations assumed to be mutual and thus shared.

#### **4. Traces of underlying face dualism in TSR**

In applying these insights to actual communicative exchanges in TSR, we will have a look at underlying face needs first. The reason for this course of action can be seen in the fact that we need to be aware of the driving forces of interlocutors' behaviour, i.e. their most basic face wants, before we can even think about analysing more complex cycles of face negotiation. With this in mind, let us look for traces of face dualism in TSR.

On the one hand, a user's positive face need, i.e. his<sup>2</sup> need for association, finds expression in multifarious ways when he creates an account in order to get involved in the message board business, which is why the following list is certainly not exhaustive: Users verbally contribute to the discussion at hand (maybe even on a regular basis) and, in so doing, share (private) information. Sometimes, they also assume responsibility by becoming a moderator, extend their buddy lists, join so-called societies<sup>3</sup> within TSR, and accomplish many other things. The following example (see fig. 2) bears witness to the positive face need.

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that the pronouns *he/his* etc. are used generically to address both male and female referents alike.

<sup>3</sup> Societies are designed to bring together like-minded users under one heading, thus signaling a mutual interest in music, politics, sports teams and the like.



## Negotiating Face in Online Message Boards



Fig. 2: TSR post showcasing the need for association

In her<sup>4</sup> post, the user *superfrankie* illustrates the need for association. In one of her first posts ever (see number of posts, top right), she graphically shares very personal information and emotions with perfect strangers in order to introduce herself, make contact with like-minded others, be liked and finally become part of the group and find her place within TSR. The same impression is conveyed when looking at her profile. This template allows users to give personal information in sections such as “Bio”, “Where you study”, “Academic info”, “Interests” etc. *superfrankie* makes ardent use of the possibility to present herself to future acquaintances by filling out every section meticulously, again divulging personal details willingly.

On the other hand, a user’s need for dissociation, or his negative face, is also mirrored in behaviour visible in TSR. This time, however, the aim is to keep one’s distance in order to protect one’s privacy and one’s autonomy. This can, among other things, be

---

<sup>4</sup> Although we can never be sure about the real-life sex of a TSR-member, the sex indicated by the symbol next to the nickname will be taken at face value for the sake of convenience.

Jenny Arendholz

achieved by using nicknames and unrelated avatars instead of authentic personal items and thus also by refraining from disclosing (links to) private information and from joining societies. In this vein, requests for friendship are ignored and contributions are responded to in ironic, mocking, even insulting ways. Explicitly stating disinterest in a topic can also count as one of many ways to protect one's negative face.

However, the question that arises with regard to the last few strategies to safeguard one's freedom of action is this: Why answer at all, if all one is willing to give is a topically and/or interpersonally inappropriate answer? Such behaviour could account for the struggle between the positive and the negative face. As suggested before, it is rarely possible to meet positive and negative face needs at the same time, i.e. to be part of the group and still be one's own master. In this case, it could very well be that users wish to participate but still feel the need to either signal explicitly or at least protect implicitly their autonomy. This holds also true for parts of *superfrankie's* post (see fig. 2). Although it serves as a perfect example for the need of association, there are also traces of the need for dissociation. Why else would she have chosen an avatar that neutrally displays strawberries instead of uploading a photo of hers? Rather subconsciously, her positive face must be struggling with her negative face about the question of how much she needs to disclose about herself in order to reach her communicative goal, i.e. belong to the group.

We can thus conclude that although the avoidance of affiliation in the broadest sense of the word is rather atypical, if not even counterproductive for the collaborative nature of message boards, we still find instances that prove this point. Here is another example, demonstrating the need for dissociation (see fig. 3):



Fig. 3: TSR profile showcasing the need for dissociation

This screenshot displays the profile of an experienced user. We know so based on several clues: For one thing, he has earned himself the status<sup>5</sup> of a “TSR Demigod”; for another, he has a large collection of green gems. These represent positive reputation and are awarded by fellow users for contributions in previous conversations that particularly met with their approval. So despite – or maybe even just because of – the fact that this user is not a rookie anymore, he never bothered to fill out his profile and to disclose any personal background information. Consequently, he protects his privacy and attends to his need for dissociation. This does not, however, mean that interactants behave similarly secretive in

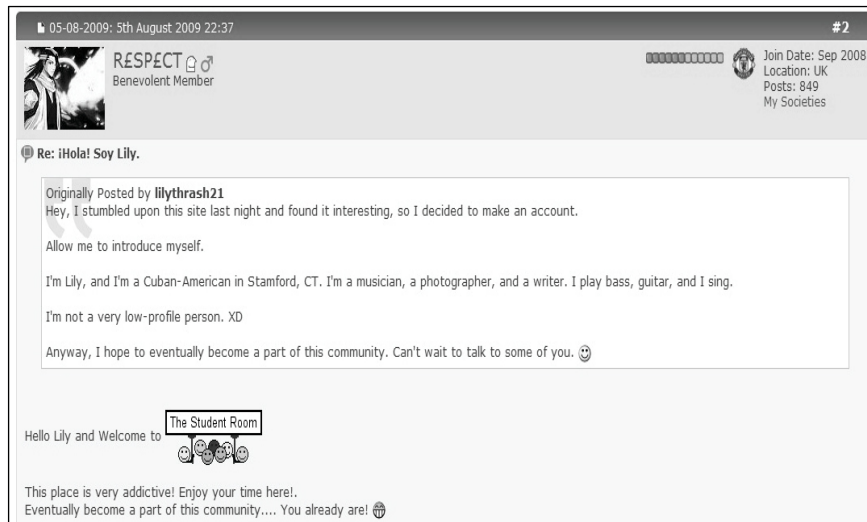
---

<sup>5</sup> Based on active participation, which results in a raised number of contributions, the system ascribes so-called *labels*, which indicate a user’s status. Being a “TSR Demigod” thus hints to a long lasting and active membership.

Jenny Arendholz

other templates, let alone in their postings, which might indeed prove to be very insightful (see fig. 2).

In changing perspective from the presenting self to the evaluating other usually involved in dyadic encounters, the remainder of this section fathoms some possible interlocutors' reactions to the two basic human face needs, starting with the need for association. In supporting someone's positive face needs, interlocutors generally uphold interaction and in so doing accomplish various other interpersonally relevant matters, such as looking for common ground, inviting people into a society, offering friendship, giving positive reputation by distributing green gems (see above), praising someone and many more. The following screenshot details a very TSR-specific way of attending to someone's positive face needs (see fig. 4):



**Fig. 4: Attending to positive face needs**

By closing her post with the words “Anyway, I hope to eventually become a part of this community. Can’t wait to talk to some of

you”, *lilythrash21* makes explicit her positive face needs. As can also be seen in fig. 4, *R£SP£CT* reacts in a very supportive way: He welcomes her with a typical TSR-smiley and states “You already are!”, thereby declaring her a part of this community and explicitly attending to her positive face needs.

Then again this need for association does not necessarily have to be supported, but can also be threatened in various ways: Interaction can be withheld deliberately and some users are ignored. Moreover, answers, when given, can be entirely inappropriate – topically as well as interpersonally – possibly resulting in bullying or flaming behaviour.<sup>6</sup> Another TSR-specific means of showing someone depreciation is by giving that user negative reputation, i.e. red gems (see above).

Similar observations can be made when considering possible reactions to negative face needs. Again, this need can either be supported, e.g. when users respect someone’s privacy, accept nicknames, do not press for further information or tolerate other opinions without picking a fight. Last but not least, this particular face need can also be threatened, for example by users that pressure someone to share more than he is willing to or by going even one step further and disclosing information about the other single-handedly (e.g. photos, private mails, links etc.). Again, these lists just give some insights and do not claim to be exhaustive.

---

<sup>6</sup> Among the many readings of the term *flaming*, Thurlow et al. define it as “hostile and aggressive interaction” (2004: 70).

## 5. Processes of face negotiation in TSR

### 5.1. Explicit vs. implicit face attribution

Another way of reacting to *lilythrash21*'s first contribution can be seen in the following screenshot (fig. 5):

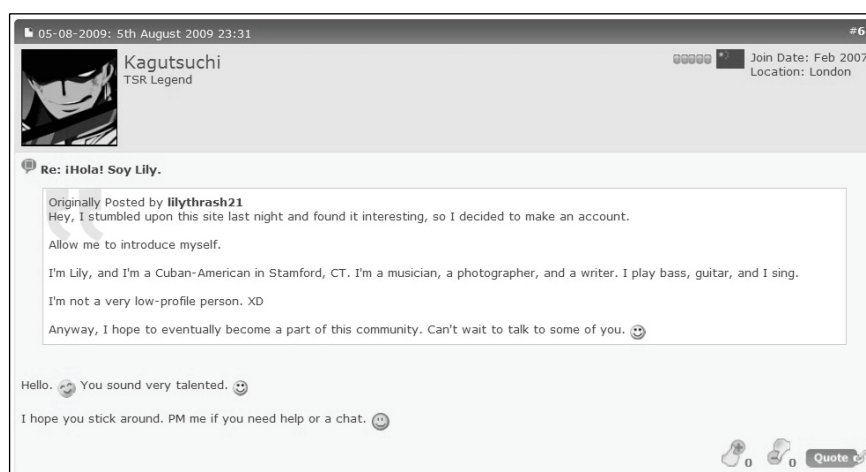


Fig. 5: Explicit face attribution

Again, *lilythrash21*'s positive face need is respected, as her interlocutor not only responds to her, but also does so in a very friendly and supportive way.<sup>7</sup> This example can, however, be analysed beyond the boundaries of Brown/Levinson's view of face. Although it is vitally important to acknowledge the underlying face dualism as the initial driving force behind all the interpersonal processes involved, we can, in fact, go one step further and detect a process of face negotiation as laid out by Goffman.

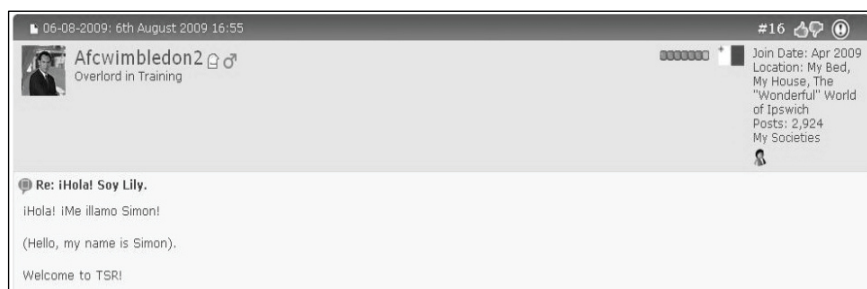
---

<sup>7</sup> Although an ironic reading of "you sound very talented" can never be discarded entirely, the surrounding context in the thread strongly suggests a non-ironic reading.

### *Negotiating Face in Online Message Boards*

Besides expressing her wish to become part of the group (see above), *lilythrash21* first and foremost introduces herself by verbally disclosing details about her character and her hobbies, thus giving her interlocutors an impression of whom they are dealing with – or rather of whom she would like them to think they are dealing with. In cases like these, the notion of *face* could therefore be used synonymously with the term *image* – as found, for example, in Holly (1979) and also in everyday talk. In Goffman's terminology, *lilythrash21* gives out lines for others to make sense of and, in the end, to give her face. We can only speculate whether the outcome of that face attribution is really the one that *lilythrash21* anticipated. What we can, however, see is that her interlocutor, *Kagutsuchi*, obviously perceives lines contained in her original contribution – among them “I'm a musician, a photographer, and a writer. I play bass, guitar, and I sing” – only to ratify and accept them. With his evaluative statement “You sound very talented”, *Kagutsuchi* makes his conclusion explicit and gives her face, namely that of a talented person. I propose to call the outcome of this face negotiation process an *explicit face attribution*.

Of course, face attributions are not necessarily explicit but can also be made implicitly. An example for an *implicit face attribution* can be found in the same thread (see fig. 6):



**Fig. 6: Implicit face attribution**

Jenny Arendholz

The line which sets this particular face negotiation process and ultimately the face attribution in motion is conveyed by the heading. Usually, contributions, including their headings, are expected to be phrased in English (see netiquette, section 2). *lilythrash21*, however, chose to make her first appearance with a Spanish heading (“Hola! Soy Lily!”), thus communicating a line, *viz.* of her having a Spanish-speaking background and most likely being fluent in that language. In his first (out of several) responses to her, *Afcwimbledon2* perceives her line, i.e. her language choice, gives her the face of someone being capable of understanding Spanish and thus decides to formulate his adjacent contribution in Spanish as well. Consequently, not only does he reply to her post, what he also does is implicitly ratify her face claim.

When analysing message boards, there is, however, another means of communicating face attributions. Besides the purely verbal display of face evaluations that we have dealt with so far, users can also rely on the pictorial mode, which is just as well suited to transmit evaluations and face attributions. After all, an animated smiley that is rolling on the floor laughing and pointing does get across just as clear a message. The same holds true for this exceptional “smiley” also available in TSR (see fig. 7):



**Fig. 7: A troll as a means of delivering face attributions**

Answering to someone’s contribution with a picture of a troll expresses – in not so many words – that the content and/or the author of the preceding contribution is not taken seriously. Lines present in this message are, for whatsoever reason, not taken at face value and resultant face claims are not ratified but rejected. For



that reason, the only face attribution possible could be phrased as follows: I don't believe who/how you pretend to be. You are a troll.<sup>8</sup>

## **5.2. Explicit and implicit face attributions in complex processes of face negotiation**

So far, we have been concerned with processes of face negotiation that strictly involved only two interlocutors, i.e. the presenting self that transmits lines for the receiving, interpreting other to come to a conclusion about the first user's face. This does not, however, mean that the role of the interpreting other is assumed by only one other person. On the contrary, and as is often the case in face-to-face as well as in message board interaction, interlocutors can be faced with a crowd of interpreting others to give him face. It is therefore only natural that the outcome of these face attribution processes can differ with each evaluating mind.

The following, rather complex example bears witness to a multi-party face negotiation process, involving again implicit and explicit face attributions. It is taken from a thread entitled "How to stop strange people speaking to me" (URL 3), which is set in motion by the opening post (OP) of a presumably female user who asks for advice on how to get rid of chatty strangers on her daily train commute. This first post triggered a lot of more or less helpful responses, leading to a branched hierarchy typical of message boards, in which users either answer directly to the first post or comment on comments. The springboard for the present analysis

---

<sup>8</sup> Donath explains *trolling* as follows: "[Y]ou set your fishing lines in the water and then slowly go back and forth dragging the bait and hoping for a bite. Trolling on the Net is the same concept – someone baits a post and then waits for the bite on the line and then enjoys the ensuing fight" (1999: 45). Trolling is thus a game in which some participants regularly and intentionally play with their face (attributions).

Jenny Arendholz

is post 9, a piece of advice given by a user who calls himself *n0c0ntr0l*. Both this nickname and the content of this user's posts (marked in grey in Tab. 1) send out lines to be picked up by altogether six different fellow-users (kept in white in Tab. 1), who take turns in evaluating these lines and in attributing rather similar faces to *n0c0ntr0l*. Graphically, this conversational excerpt can be depicted as follows (see Tab. 1):<sup>9</sup>

1 = OP					
	→ 9	→ 14	→ 18	→ 21	
				→ 24	→ 30
				→ 28	
		→ 22	→ 29	→ 31	→ 32

Tab. 1: Structure of excerpt under discussion

Since it is not possible to go into detail with every single contribution, only some of them will be selected to be discussed exemplarily. To start with, here is *n0c0ntr0l*'s first contribution:

post 9: You can tell them to f off. Wouldn't work on me, but on other less confident guys. MP3 Player works well too. But that ain't ever stopped me either, so really just be polite and if they creep you out move.

We could argue that the lines contained in this post are laid out to give him the face of someone who is self-confident and successful at what he does. It is interesting to see that by speaking of "other less confident guys", he explicitly attributes face to himself. Considering, however, the fact that his interlocutors are the ones judging about his face, we need to have a look at the two immediate reactions:

---

<sup>9</sup> For the sake of intelligibility, only the topically relevant posts are quoted here, leaving, however, the original numbering of all posts untouched. Note that posts 24 and 28 should be read as direct reactions to post 18 just as post 22 is a direct reaction to post 9.

*Negotiating Face in Online Message Boards*

post 14: You do realise how bad you make yourself sound right?  
[...]

post 22: If a girl told you to f- off you wouldn't take a hint and  
leave her alone? 🙄

In these two subsequent comments, *n0c0ntr0l* is attributed face; explicitly in post 14 and implicitly in post 22, in which the smiley at the end of the turn accomplishes most of the evaluative work. It is highly questionable, though, if this face attribution is the one that *n0c0ntr0l* was pursuing in the first place. For this reason, *n0c0ntr0l* seems to feel the need to take action so that he is given the desired face. He does so by responding to these two posts, sending out more lines, as, for example, in post 18:

post 18 (reaction to post 14):

Last time I hit on a girl on a train she originally told me to f off. 20 minutes later she was giving me her number and asking for mine. I'm good at what I do.

Once more, that fact that *n0c0ntr0l* perceives himself as a very successful communicative partner becomes especially visible in his turn-closing remark "I'm good at what I do.", which can again be interpreted as an explicit self-attribution. At the same time, it is also a line to be taken as a basis for further face attributions carried out by his fellow-users.

## 6. Conclusion

As could be shown with the help of examples, both readings of face complement each other when describing self-presentations and their evaluations in online message boards. The integrative model of face has thus proven to be use- and meaningful for the analysis of the negotiation of face in the limited range of examples

*Jenny Arendholz*

discussed. Certainly, face constitution in message boards imitates processes of face-to-face interaction – after all, we can hardly shake off norms and behavioural patterns that we have come to be so acquainted with just because we go online. The only difference lies in the vehicles used for both the transmission of lines and for the attribution of face. Although the purely verbal display within posts still dominates in both cases, other means of achieving these two goals can also be witnessed. In fact, a lot of lines are (repeatedly) present in every single post, as they form part of templates that are inserted automatically by the system, among them telling information contained in the number of posts, the reputation system or the label. Other lines are also provided systematically by the message board, but reflect deliberate choices made by users prior to their contributions, such as nicknames, avatars, headings, sometimes also the affiliation to TSR-societies. Besides these central templates within posts, there are also peripheral ones accompanying posts that also lend themselves as carriers of lines to be interpreted by interlocutors, *viz.* profile information and links to external personal webpages (e.g. on *facebook*). When it comes to the evaluation of these lines and the attribution of face, we have differentiated between implicit and explicit face attributions, delivered verbally and/or with the help of expressive smileys. In conclusion, piecing together online faces and evaluating them means operating message contents but also templates.

## 7. References

- Arendholz, Jenny (2013): *(In)Appropriate Online Behavior – A Pragmatic Analysis of Message Board Relations*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Bieswanger, Markus (2013): "Micro-linguistic structural features of computer-mediated communication." In: Herring, Susan C./Stein, Dieter/Virtanen, Tuija (eds.): *Pragmatics of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 463-485.
- Brown, Penelope/Levinson, Stephen C. (1978): "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena." In: Goody, Esther N. (ed.): *Questions and Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 56-289.
- Brown, Penelope/Levinson, Stephen C. (1987): *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, David (?2006): *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Donath, Judith S. (1999): "Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community." In: Smith, Marc A./Kollock, Peter (eds.): *Communities in Cyberspace*. London: Routledge, 29-59.
- Dürscheid, Christa (2004): "Netzsprache – ein neuer Mythos." In: Beißwenger, Michael/Hoffmann, Ludger/Storrer, Angelika (eds.): *Internetbasierte Kommunikation*. Osnabrück: Gilles & Francke, 141-157.
- Goffman, Erving (1967): "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction" In: Id. (ed.): *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 5-46.
- Herring, Susan (2001): "Computer-Mediated Discourse." In: Schiffrin, Deborah/Tannen, Deborah/Hamilton, Heidi E. (eds.): *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 612-634.
- Holly, Werner (1979): *Imagearbeit in Gesprächen. Zur linguistischen Beschreibung des Beziehungsaspekts*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Jasper, Dirk (1997): *Internet Newsgroups. Suchen, Anzapfen, Nutzen, Diskutieren*. Düsseldorf: Econ.

Jenny Arendholz

- Locher, Miriam A. (2006): *Advice Online*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Locher, Miriam A./Watts, Richard J. (2005): "Politeness theory and relational work." *Journal of Politeness Research* 1 (1), 9-33.
- O'Driscoll, Jim (1996): "About Face: A Defence and Elaboration of Universal Dualism." *Journal of Pragmatics* 25, 1-32.
- Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2007): "Theories of Identity and the Analysis of Face." *Journal of Pragmatics* 39, 639-656.
- Tannen, Deborah (1992): *That's not what I Meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks your Relations with Others*. London: Virago Press.
- The Student Room (n.d.): "FAQ: About The Student Room."  
<[http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/faq.php?faq=about\\_tsr](http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/faq.php?faq=about_tsr)>  
(2012-06-22). (= URL 1)
- The Student Room (n.d.): "FAQ: TSR Moderation Policy."  
<<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/faq.php?faq=rules>> (2012-06-22).  
(= URL 2)
- The Student Room (2009): "How to stop strange people speaking to me."  
<<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=994653>>  
(2012-07-08). (= URL 3)
- Thurlow, Crispin/Lengel, Laura/Tomic, Alice (2004): *Computer-Mediated Communication. Social Interaction and the Internet*. Los Angeles et al.: Sage.
- Watts, Richard (2003): *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.