



## Стирание лингвокультурных различий в институциональном дискурсе (на материале русского и вьетнамского парламентского дискурса)

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### Аннотация.

Цель исследования – выявить характер влияния институционального дискурса на проявление лингвокультурных особенностей коммуникативного поведения политиков. Материалом исследования служит русский и вьетнамский парламентский дискурс. При его анализе были применены сопоставительный, описательный, классификационный, количественный и функционально-прагматический методы. Были изучены стратегии и тактики вербального выражения отрицательной оценки, применяемые российскими и вьетнамскими парламентариями. Результаты исследования показали, что, несмотря на лингвокультурные различия России и Вьетнама, способы выражения отрицательной оценки в русском и вьетнамском парламентском дискурсе обнаруживают значительное сходство. Оно свидетельствует о сглаживании лингвокультурных различий в институциональном дискурсе.

### Ключевые слова:

русская лингвокультура, вьетнамская лингвокультура, парламентский дискурс, институциональный дискурс, отрицательная оценка, лингвопрагматика, коллективистская культура, индивидуалистическая культура

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Original article

## Blurring of Linguo-Cultural Differences in the Institutional Discourse (based on Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse)

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### Abstract.

The study is carried out to investigate specifics of the influence of the institutional nature of discourse on linguo-cultural differences in politicians' communicative behaviour. The material of the study, which is Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse, has been analysed using comparative, descriptive, classificatory, quantitative, functional-pragmatic methods. Strategies and tactics of verbal expression of negative evaluation used by Russian and Vietnamese parliamentarians were analysed. The results of the study showed that despite the linguo-cultural differences between Russia and Vietnam, there are substantial similarities in the way negative evaluation is expressed

in the parliamentary discourse of the two countries. This indicates the blurring of linguo-cultural differences in the institutional discourse.

**Key words:** Russian linguoculture, Vietnamese linguoculture, parliamentary discourse, institutional discourse, negative evaluation, pragmatic linguistics, collectivist culture, individualist culture

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## INTRODUCTION

Understanding the differences between typical communicative behaviour of representatives of different linguocultures plays a key role in the success of intercultural communication, especially when it occurs between a collectivist culture and an individualistic one. Numerous linguocultural studies have classified Vietnamese culture as collectivist [Vu, 1997; Pham, 2008; Le, 2013; Нгуен, 2022a]. Meanwhile, according to some scholars, Russian culture may be classified as transitional, since scholars have observed in it a synthesis of the values of individualism and collectivism [Стефаненко, Донцов, Родионова, 2017; Войтенко, 2019]. This may be the reason why Vietnamese people highly value positive politeness in interpersonal communication with an accent on the positive face of the addressee, while Russian speakers are somewhat more concerned with their own positive face, sometimes even to the detriment of the addressee's face. T.V. Larina calls this feature of Russian communication 'self-centeredness'; among other characteristics of Russian communicative ethnostyle she mentions its direct, categorical, impositive and emotional character [Ларина, 2013].

However, the interlocutors' main communicative intentions in various types of discourse may differ, which affects their communicative behaviour. The institutional discourse, for instance, differs from the personal in that in the former the participants of communication represent a social institute, which makes communication between them role- and status-oriented as opposed to the person-oriented nature of daily life communication [Шейгал, 2000; Карасик, 2002]. In the present research we attempt to examine to what extent the institutional nature of discourse affects the choice of communicative practices, and whether it lessens communicative distinctions between different linguocultures.

## EMPIRICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH METHODS

The research is carried out on the material of parliamentary discourse as a type of institutional political discourse. Strategies and tactics of verbal

expression of the speech act of negative evaluation in Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse are compared. The data was collected from video recordings of the meetings of the Federation Council of Russian Federation's Federal Assembly (hereinafter referred to as the Federation Council) and the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (hereinafter referred to as the National Assembly) during the period from 2010 to 2023, which were published in free access on the Internet by official mass media of the two countries.

The material was collected using the random sampling method. 80 video recordings of the meetings of the Federation Council with a total duration of 205 hours and 71 video recordings of the meetings of the National Assembly with a total duration of 203 hours were analysed. Communicative situations in which the speech act of negative evaluation occurred were identified using the method of discourse analysis. Both general scientific methods (comparative, descriptive, classificatory, quantitative), and linguistic methods, such as functional-pragmatic analysis of speech acts, linguo-cultural analysis and conversation analysis, were used to study strategies and tactics of verbal expression of the speech act of negative evaluation.

## RESULTS

There are four strategies of verbal expression of negative evaluation identified in Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse: direct expression, indirect expression, intensification, and mitigation of negative evaluation. In our view, negative evaluation is direct when expressed using lexical units with negative evaluative meaning, regardless of the position of these units (predicative or not). An indirect evaluation is negative evaluation expressed without using such lexical units. Both directly and indirectly expressed negative evaluation can be subjected to mitigation or intensification. Thus, we consider strategies of direct or indirect expression of negative evaluation as the main ones, and strategies of mitigation or intensification as auxiliary ones since the latter cannot function

Table 1

TACTICS OF IMPLEMENTING VARIOUS STRATEGIES  
FOR VERBAL NEGATIVE EVALUATION EXPRESSION IN RUSSIAN AND VIETNAMESE PARLIAMENTARY  
DISCOURSE

Strategy	Tactics for strategy implementation
Direct expression of negative evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Use of negative evaluative object (e.g. words such as “vấn đề” (problem); “tình trạng” (negative state), “lỗi” (fault), “проблема”, “ошибка” etc.)</li> <li>2) Use of negative evaluative predicate (e.g. “không thể chấp nhận được” (unacceptable), “xấu” (bad), “плохой”, “корыстный”, “неприемлемый” etc.);</li> <li>3) Use of the modus of obligation.</li> </ol>
Indirect expression of negative evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Directives;</li> <li>2) Agreeing with a negative evaluation previously expressed by another communicator;</li> <li>3) Content-logical expression of negative evaluation;</li> <li>4) Question demanding an explanation of a negative situation;</li> <li>5) Disagreement;</li> <li>6) Positive evaluation of the opposite;</li> <li>7) Rhetorical question;</li> <li>8) Self-answer to a rhetorical question;</li> <li>9) Irony;</li> <li>10) Expression of wishes, hopes for the better;</li> <li>11) Promise to look into and/or resolve the problem;</li> <li>12) Accusation;</li> </ol>
Mitigation of negative evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Hedges (hedges such as “theo ý kiến của cá nhân tôi” (in my personal opinion), approximators such as “примерно”, “где-то”, etc.)</li> <li>2) Focus shift;</li> <li>3) Lexical mitigation (with such words as “hơi” (a bit), “немного” or structures such as “không ... lắm” (not really ...), “не очень ...” etc.);</li> <li>4) Preliminary or subsequent disclaimer;</li> </ol>
Intensification of negative evaluation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Presenting arguments in favor of a negative evaluation;</li> <li>2) Mentioning of measures that have been or may be taken;</li> <li>3) Expression of emotional state;</li> <li>4) Lexical intensification (with such words as “rất” (very), “quá” (exesively), “очень”, “слишком”, “чрезмерно”, etc.)</li> </ol>

independently without the main strategies. There is a total of 23 tactics used by Russian and Vietnamese parliamentarians to implement the above outlined strategies (see Table 1).

The stipulated strategies and tactics are illustrated below. *Example 1:*

Một cái cây cầu mà từ những năm 70, thập niên 70 đến bây giờ mà chỉ duy nhất cả nước chỉ có một cái cây cầu, mà đi cả ô tô, cả đi đường bộ, lẫn đường sắt đi cùng với nhau. Bây giờ duy nhất một cây đó mà nó nổi thông với lại cả Lạng Sơn, Bắc Giang, Hải Dương, Quảng Ninh, rồi mấy cái tỉnh ở đấy nữa. Cũng lại nguy hiểm cái tính mạng của người dân Bắc Giang hoặc là những người dân đi lưu thông qua cái cây cầu. – This bridge has been functioning since the 70s, **and** it is now **the only one** left in the entire country that was built since the 70s, **and** cars use it, **and** people walk on it, **and** trains go on it, **all together**. Now this single

bridge connects the provinces of Lạng Sơn, Bắc Giang, Hải Dương, Quảng Ninh, and several other provinces there. **It is also jeopardising the lives of the people of Bắc Giang and of those who use the bridge.**

In this example, negative evaluation is expressed directly by means of the tactic of using a negative evaluative predicate, expressed by the lexical unit “nguy hiểm” (dangerous). In addition, direct negative evaluation is intensified lexically by means of such units as “mà” (but), “chỉ” (only), “duy nhất” (the only, single), as well as parallel structure. *Example 2:*

Вы вдумайтесь: ну что за **бред** нам создало Министерство здравоохранения! И теперь мы принимаем поправки, через месяц **они нам еще одни поправки в принятые поправки предложат. Не проще ли признать ошибку, которая с самого начала была допущена?**

In Example 2, the negative evaluation is expressed by the speaker directly with a negative evaluative objects “бред”, “ошибка”, intensified via supposition of potential negative consequences and a rhetorical question. *Example 3:*

Thực tế cho thấy, ở lĩnh vực nào, khi xã hội hoá đều hạ giá, riêng sách giáo khoa thì càng xã hội hóa thì sách giáo khoa càng tăng. – Common experience shows that whatever areas are being socialised, the prices there go down, only in the case of textbooks, the further the socialisation, the higher the prices.

In the above example, the negative evaluation is expressed indirectly using the tactic of a content-logical expression of a negative evaluation through comparison. *Example 4:*

Vấn đề thứ 2, tôi cho rằng, lấy thời gian để xét xử vụ án để đánh giá giá trị công lý tôi cho rằng không toàn diện, không chính xác. – The second problem, in my personal opinion, is measuring the value of justice by the time it took to process a case. It is **incomprehensive, inaccurate**).

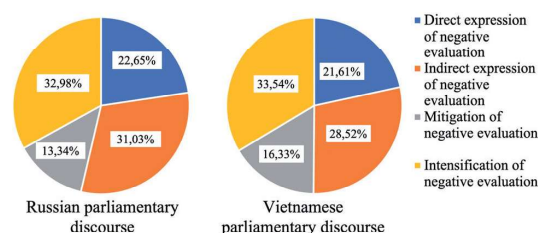
*Example 5:*

Я такая же, как и все, мама и поэтому, **наверное**, большинство фильмов смотрю детских либо мультфильмы. Ситуация, конечно, **не очень хорошая** и, **наверное**, именно поэтому она была проанализирована в Правительстве 17 февраля на заседании Правительственного совета по развитию отечественной кинематографии.

In Examples 4 and 5, the negative evaluation is mitigated by means of the tactics of using hedges “tôi cho rằng” (in my personal opinion) and “наверное” as well as lexical mitigation, namely the formation of euphemisms consisting of a negation marker and an antonym of a negative evaluative lexical unit: “không toàn diện” (incomprehensive) and “không chính xác” (inaccurate) instead of “phiến diện” (one-sided) and “sai” (wrong, erroneous), “не очень хорошая” instead of “плохая”.

Having compared the data on the frequency of use of the four strategies of verbal negative evaluation expression by Russian and Vietnamese parliamentarians, we came to the following conclusions: 1) both Russian and Vietnamese parliamentarians prefer expressing negative evaluation indirectly to expressing it directly; 2) among the four strategies of expressing negative evaluation, the most frequently used is the strategy of intensification, which makes up almost 1/3 of the total number of cases when various strategies of expressing negative evaluation were

used; 3) members of Vietnam's National Assembly use auxiliary strategies of verbal expression of negative evaluation (mitigation and intensification) (49,85 %) somewhat more frequently than their Russian colleagues (46,32 %) (see Figure 1).



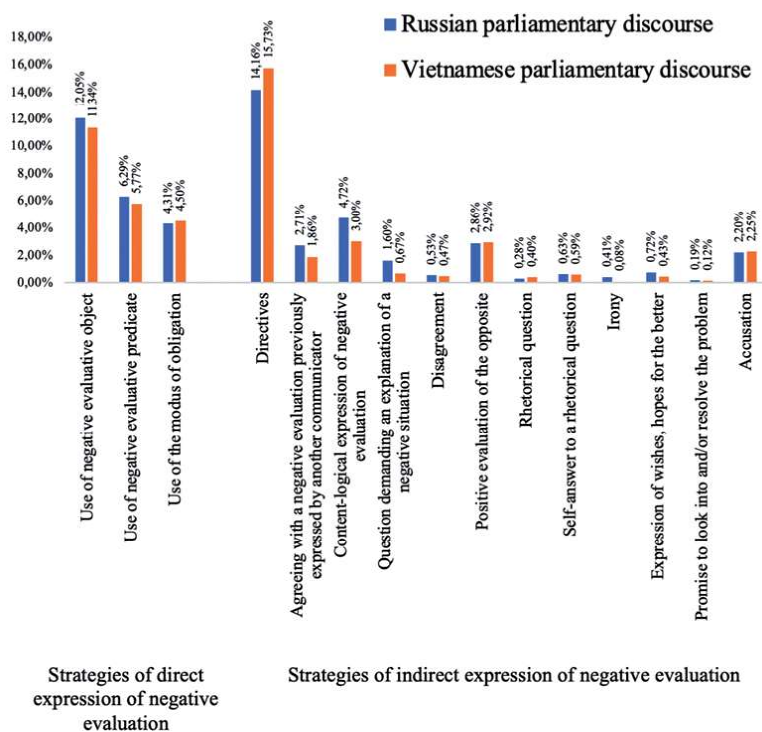
**Figure 1.** Strategies of verbal expression of negative evaluation in Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse and frequency of their use

Upon comparing the frequency of tactics belonging to the two main strategies, we discovered that in parliamentary discourse of both the Russian Federation and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam the most frequently used tactic is the use of directives, which refers to the strategy of indirect expression of negative evaluation. On the other hand, although on the whole the indirect strategy is more frequently used as compared to the direct strategy, in both Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse the next most frequently applied tactics (after directives) are those related to the strategy of direct negative evaluation, namely negative evaluative predicate and negative evaluative object (see Figure 2).

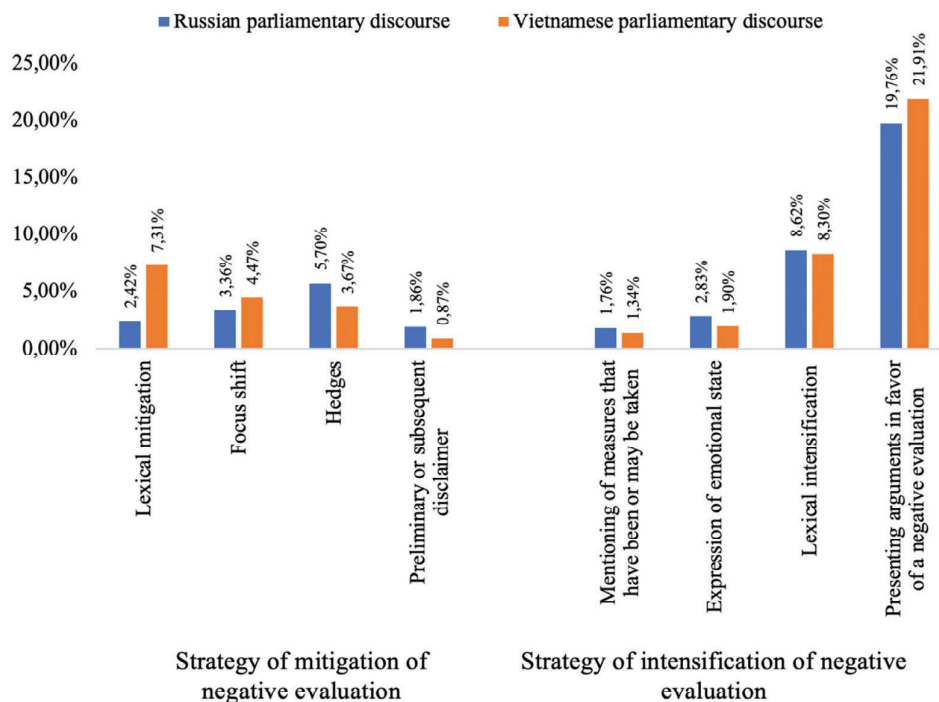
After comparing the frequency of use of tactics that belong to the auxiliary strategies for negative evaluation expressing (see Figure 3) we discovered that both Russian and Vietnamese parliamentarians use the tactic of presenting arguments in favour of a negative evaluation much more frequently as compared to other tactics. In the parliamentary discourse of both countries the frequency of this tactic's implementation is more than two times higher than the frequency of the lexical intensification tactic, which ranks second in frequency among the tactics compared. However, the third place in terms of frequency of use in Vietnamese parliamentary discourse is occupied by the tactic of lexical mitigation, while the equivalent position in Russian parliamentary discourse is occupied by the tactic of hedging.

## DISCUSSION

As mentioned before, Vietnamese culture is a collectivist one, which is the reason why in



**Figure 2.** Frequency of use of various tactics that belong to the main strategies of verbal negative evaluation expression in Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse



**Figure 3.** Frequency of application of various tactics that belong to auxiliary strategies of verbal negative evaluation expression in Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse



Vietnamese linguoculture the concept of “face”, expressed in the language by the lexical units “mặt” and “thể diện”, is, in terms of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, of positive nature, reflecting the communicator’s desire for prestige, good reputation and impeccable image in the eyes of society. Moreover, when compared with the “positive face” described in Western studies, it becomes clear that the Vietnamese “face” is different in that it is not simply positive, but shared-and-positive, since a group member’s “face” is inseparable from the group’s “face”. In other words, every person is committed to preserving the shared “face” of the group of people that he / she associates him / herself with, as well as that of the whole society to which he / she belongs, since his / her own “face” depends on the group’s or the society’s shared “face” [Hryen, 2022b].

In contrast, according to T. G. Stefanenko, in Russian linguoculture at present there is a tendency of shift towards individualism [Стефаненко, Донцов, Родионова, 2017]. Nevertheless, Russian and Vietnamese cultures still have collectivist features in common, which is the reason for significant similarities in the frequency of use of most strategies and tactics for expressing negative evaluation, as well as the reason for the greater frequency of application of the strategy of indirect negative evaluation in both countries’ parliamentary discourse.

However, “Russian politeness” and “Vietnamese politeness” still differ. The Russian communication ethnostyle, while being speaker-centered and status-oriented, is also direct, categorical, impositive, and has a medium-to-low degree of politeness [Ларина, 2013]. This indicates that the Russians are concerned not only with the “positive face”, but also with the “negative face”, which is related to the desire to retain autonomy of thought and action [Nguyen, 2022b]. Meanwhile, members of Vietnam’s National Assembly as representatives of the Vietnamese linguoculture are oriented towards the shared positive face.

Given that, one may expect to come across significant differences in the ways of expressing negative evaluation in Russian and Vietnamese parliamentary discourse, with Vietnamese politicians being more polite to their opponents than Russian ones. However, our analysis revealed more similarities than differences.

Thus, we can see a rather high frequency of the strategy of direct expression of negative evaluation both in Russian parliamentary discourse (22,65 %) and in Vietnamese parliamentary discourse (21,61 %). More than that, of all the four strategies for expressing negative evaluation, in both cases the most frequently

used is the strategy of intensifying negative evaluation. In Russian parliamentary discourse, intensification of negative evaluation occurs almost 2.5 times more often than mitigation, and in Vietnamese parliamentary discourse – 2 times more often. This is a rather unexpected result: in cultures oriented toward positive politeness, face-threatening speech acts (FTA) such as negative evaluation are supposed to be more frequently subjected to mitigation than to intensification.

The above can be traced to several reasons. Firstly, in the discourse analysed, communication takes place between virtually equal status communicators, which reduces the risk of damaging the “face” of a higher-status communicator while expressing negative evaluation directly and makes the speaker more confident to speak directly.

Secondly, parliamentary discourse, being a form of institutional political discourse, does not only perform the functions of preserving power and face, but also aims at maintaining the proper functioning of parliament and the order in the whole society. This requires its participants to be objective, impartial, and fair in their assessments, which also to some extent frees them of the obligation to not damage other people’s “face”.

Thirdly, the speech act of negative evaluation, when functioning within the framework of parliamentary discourse, is not always perceived by communicators as a FTA, since negative evaluation often refers to social, economic, cultural and other phenomena or problems, and, in such cases, it is not directed towards a specific individual’s “face”.

## CONCLUSION

The conducted research allows us to conclude that there are remarkable similarities in the frequency of application of various strategies and tactics for expressing the speech act of negative evaluation by Russian and Vietnamese parliamentarians. This is due to the fact that the institutional nature of parliamentary discourse partially blurs ethno-cultural distinctions, becoming the main factor to determine the choice of strategies and tactics of negative evaluation expression.

The study also shows that the classification of the speech act of negative evaluation as a FTA is not fully accurate since it is multi-face oriented and multifunctional. The negative evaluation may threaten the listener’s “face”, but also help maintaining the speaker’s “face” and that of other communicators. Besides, when tackling an issue that the whole society is facing, the negative evaluation does not threaten any person’s “face”.

Moreover, the research results suggest that in formal institutional communication ethnocultural peculiarities are less relevant than in informal interpersonal communication. In parliamentary discourse communicators mainly express negative evaluation not for the sake of unfavourable assessment itself, but to name a problem and call for its solution, which contributes to maintaining

the “face” of the social institution that they belong to, as well as gives them more liberty in choosing how to express themselves. In further studies of the features of communication in various linguocultures, it is necessary to consider not only ethno-cultural differences, but also the specifics of the discourse within which communication takes place, as they also have a significant impact on communication.

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