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Cognitive Dissonance as Factor of Influence in American Courtroom Discourse

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Abstract---The article reveals the specificity of cognitive dissonance in courtroom discourse as one of the mechanisms of communicative influence on the recipients. Two types of the phenomenon in question are grounded: dissonance caused by real-life facts, which include the nature of the crime itself, and dissonance artificially created by the prosecutor and the defense lawyer to persuasively influence the jury and the judge. Common is the use of a narrative as a persuasive, arousing the associative activity of the recipients by contrasting the axiological features of the concepts; combining elements of rational and emotional communicative influence. Distinctive features include the communicative strategies and tactics used by speakers and the choice of concepts around which communicative influence is modeled. The speeches of the prosecutor and the defense lawyer represent a kind of battle of narratives and a contest of cognitive dissonance. The research results in the following findings: the narrative that not only causes cognitive dissonance but also implicitly presents a way to overcome psychological discomfort and harmonize elements of the cognitive structure in the minds of the recipients wins. The influential power of cognitive dissonance is determined by communicative strategies, tactics, moves, and the successful choice of linguistic means of their representation.

Keywords---cognitive dissonance, communicative strategies, English-language courtroom discourse, linguistic means, moves, tactics.

Introduction

The phenomenon of cognitive dissonance is the object of research of various sciences and theories: cognitive science, psychology, psycholinguistics, communication theory, social communication theory, cognitive linguistics, pragmatic linguistics, etc. Each of them has its range of research tasks, directions, and methods of search, but all of them are to a greater or lesser extent related to each other since the human being is at the center of their theoretical and practical research. All scientific paradigms share a fundamental assertion: the cognitive structure of human consciousness must be harmonious, that is, coordinated and coherent ([Festinger, 2000](#)).

If an imbalance occurs, there is an immediate need to change this position to reproduce the inner equilibrium of the individual's cognitive system. The question of how to find ways to establish such an equilibrium, to ensure optimal decision-making in different situations, is still far from being fully and conclusively answered, so a thorough analysis of discursive practices in different fields of activity is required. Nowadays we have to state the existence of a contradiction in the scientific world: on the one hand, all branches postulate the anthropocentrism of scientific research, on the other hand, the issue of how to overcome cognitive dissonance, how to achieve coherence in the cognitive structure of man, has not been exhaustively examined ([Rabin, 1994](#); [Lazebna, 2021](#); [Archer, 2011](#)).

The paper focuses on the analysis of cognitive dissonance in courtroom discourse, where the harmony of the cognitive structure of the participants of the judicial process becomes a factor in asserting or ignoring the rule of law and justice. In courtroom discourse, like in no other, the relationship of psychological, proper linguistic, social, cognitive, and communicative attributes of the personalities – agents of the event is manifested. The importance of cognitive dissonance in a person's activities from the point of view of human cognitive structure harmony in making adequate decisions as well as the significance of identifying the specifics of the phenomenon in question in different types of discourse makes the topic chosen in this paper relevant.

A review of several theoretical sources on the topic of research has revealed that the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance was repeatedly the subject of study by scientists. The theoretical sources have substantiated the definition of the named concept, suggested ways of transition from dissonance to consonance, and grounded the different degrees of dissonance. The above-mentioned and other achievements, in general, have created a solid theoretical basis for further research in this field. And yet, some issues have fallen out of researchers' sight, namely: the varieties of cognitive dissonance, its specificity in different types of discourse; its artificial creation in the listener for the sake of achieving certain goals; the dependence of the ways of creating cognitive dissonance on the social status and role of the speaker, and others ([Andreyeva et al., 2002](#); [Newby, 2001](#)). The above-mentioned findings were taken into account in setting the goals and objectives of our paper. The research aims to establish the specificity of cognitive dissonance in courtroom discourse and to identify the mechanisms of its communicative impact.

Research Methods and Techniques

The key conceptual idea of the study is the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance and the interconnectedness of all its sides. Hence, the basic methodological principle of analysis is the principle of the synergetic approach, which focuses on combining elements of cognitive, pragmatic, and communicative analysis (Shermer, 2015; Sjøstad et al., 2020). The combination is interpreted not as the technical creation of a conglomerate, but as the use of the methods of the named scientific paradigms by the step-by-step implementation of specific research tasks aimed at achieving the goal.

At the first stage, we consider it necessary to clarify the essence of the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance as such, from definition to categorization. Using purposive sampling, we have compiled a list of theoretical sources that provide information on the essence of cognitive dissonance, from the classical to modern studios. Using the methods of comparison and classification, we have identified similar and different scholars' views on the phenomenon in question, its characteristics, causes of occurrence, and ways of establishing consonance. Along using modeling and argumentation methods, we have grounded our position on debatable issues. We have used elements of cognitive analysis in creating our theoretical conceptions: we highlight the core and peripheral features of the concepts "cognition", "dissonance" and "consonance". It helped clarify the scope of cognitive dissonance and the possible ways of expressing it. At the same stage, information about the specificity of judicial discourse has been summarised, which served to identify the subjects – agents of judicial discourse and in explaining the pragmatic basis of their position within the action of cognitive dissonance.

At the second stage, varieties of cognitive dissonance due to the specificity of the courtroom discourse have been identified. Using elements of discourse analysis, the reasons for the psychological discomfort of the agents of judicial discourse and their key targets were explained. The third stage was aimed at identifying ways of artificially creating cognitive dissonance, their conditioning on the social context, and the status roles of the agents (Stanchi, 2014; Aronson, 1969). The main methods at this stage were communicative analysis methods, which served to identify the specifics of communicative influence exercised by the agents of judicial discourse – the prosecutor and the advocate. In identifying ways to artificially create cognitive dissonance, methods of communicative analysis of agents' strategic arsenal – strategies, tactics, moves, and their linguistic expression – were used. The material for the study was texts of speeches made by the prosecutor and the advocate at the high-profile Casey Anthony Trial in 2011.

Discussion

The conception of theoretical research

The problem of cognitive dissonance has long been of interest to various scientists, which led to the almost simultaneous emergence of several somewhat similar theories: structural balance by Heider (1946), communicative acts by Newcomb (1953), congruity theory by Osgood & Tannenbaum (1955), and

cognitive dissonance/consonance theory by [Festinger \(1957\)](#). The central tenet of Osgood and Tannenbaum's congruity theory is that to achieve a correspondence in the cognitive structure of the subject-recipient, there is an attempt to anticipate the attitudinal changes that will occur as a result of trying to establish a congruence within the cognitive structure ([Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955](#)). If the recipient positively evaluates the communicator, gives a positive assessment of a phenomenon, which the recipient himself evaluates negatively, a situation of incongruity arises in the cognitive structure of the recipient because the two types of assessment – his/her own and the communicator's one – do not coincide (*ibid.*). The thesis formulated focuses attention on the need to analyze the persuasive communicative strategies and tactics of the communicator (in our case, the prosecutor and the advocate), aimed at ensuring such changes in the cognitive structure of the recipients (in our case, the jury and the judge), which correspond to the goals of the communicator.

The most convincing is L. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance/consonance. The scholar considers knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes as cognitive elements and notes that “the reality that affects the individual will exert pressure to bring the cognitive elements into alignment with that reality” ([Festinger, 2000](#)). He identifies the causes of dissonance, grounds ways of eliminating it, explains how it differs from conflict, and proves its role in decision-making. Dissonance, according to the scholar, has a magnitude that can be measured ([Festinger, 2000](#)). Festinger carefully explores ways of overcoming the dissonance imposed by the media, especially with regard to propaganda in politics. In this context, the scholar analyses a number of “macro phenomena”, in particular rumours.

The phenomenon of cognitive dissonance still attracts the interest of academics to this day. For instance, psychologists Hallgeir Sjøstad, Roy F. Baumeister, Michael Ent in their article “Greener grass or sour grapes? How people value future goals after initial failure” draw attention to the applied nature of this phenomenon, for example as a means of self-protection, i.e. the so-called “sour grapes effect”: the systematic tendency to downplay the value of unattainable goals and rewards. So, low-happiness predictions are a maneuver of a kind of self-protection, realized in an explicit denial of the personal and future significance of their results. [Owuamalam & Spears \(2020\)](#), viewed the phenomenon from a sociological perspective and studied the influence of cognitive dissonance in justifying the system within which one finds oneself: the vindication of social systems on which people depend is more common among the deprived than among the well-to-do population groups.

Sandrine Sorlin analyzes cognitive dissonance in terms of its manipulative impact ([Sorlin, 2017](#)). The article by Sebastian Cancino-Montecinos, Fredrik Björklund, Torun Lindholm “Dissonance reduction as emotion regulation: Attitude change is related to positive emotions in the induced compliance paradigm” (2018) focuses on the role of positive emotions in reducing cognitive dissonance. In her research Kathryn Stanchi's “What Cognitive Dissonance Tells Us About Tone In Persuasion” (2014) draws attention to the significance of cognitive dissonance for lawyers, that in their speeches the boundary between persuasiveness and coerciveness is very subtle. Many theoretical sources have

substantiated the identifying features of the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance (Wisner, 2019; Cherry, 2019).

While agreeing with the essential characteristics of cognitive dissonance substantiated in the works of scientists, we allow ourselves to express doubts about their universality for different types of discourse and the completeness of their verification. Given the doubts, let us accept this underlying hypothesis of the study: in courtroom discourse, cognitive dissonance has specific features in comparison with the generally known ones. This specificity concerns the varieties of the phenomenon in question and the cognitive mechanisms of its communicative impact (Duizenberg, 2020; Peron et al., 1985). The information set out in projection to the courtroom discourse has led to the formulation of the main conceptual idea of the study and its methodological principle.

Specificity of cognitive dissonance in court

As said, there is no fundamental disagreement among researchers regarding the definition of cognitive dissonance – they all name “a state of psychological discomfort”, “lack of congruence”, “contradictions between an individual's knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and reality” as identifying features of the phenomenon (Wisner, 2019; Cherry, 2019). The differences concern interpretations of the form in which the definition is expressed and the emphasis placed on certain attributes of the phenomenon, in particular its generic attribution. Some scholars identify the phenomenon referred to as psychological conflict, while others identify it as an unpleasant emotion. Some researchers narrow the scope of dissonance by focusing on the individual's contradiction «between what we believe and what we do», e.g. Wisner (2019). Some authors highlight the fact that there are two contradictory beliefs, values, and attitudes (Cherry, 2019).

It should be agreed that all of the above attributes are inherent in cognitive dissonance to some degree, but these attributes do not limit the concept of cognitive dissonance, and there may be not two, but many more, contrasting beliefs and values. We define cognitive dissonance using the classical interpretation as a state of psychological discomfort of an individual caused by a lack of compliance between the beliefs, views, value priorities attached to the subject of the said state and the actual unexpected course of events, actions, and communicative behavior of communication partners, other representatives of the surrounding world or the subject of the state itself.

In our research, we consider those elements of the cognitive structure of consciousness that emerge from the frame script of the concepts COGNITION, DISSONANCE, and CONSONANCE to be important. Not being able to present the detailed contents of the scenario, we start from the results of the scenario and to the knowledge, beliefs, values, and attitudes highlighted in Festing's writings, we add several communicative features: strategies and tactics adopted in the national consciousness of the linguistic community, as well as behavioral responses recognized as the norm in the national experience of society. The elements of the cognitive structure also include how the above elements are verbalized.

The core attributes of the concepts CONSONANCE and DISSONANCE are contrasted as congruence and lack of congruence, and about the cognitive representations of the named phenomena – as congruence, harmony and their absence. Consequently, it is important to fix criteria to distinguish harmony from disharmony, correspondence from inconsistency. We consider generally accepted national norms and assessments of phenomena to be the main such criterion. The specificity of cognitive dissonance in judicial discourse is due to the specificity of this type of discourse, which we have described in detail in previous articles ([Zaitseva & Pelepeychenko, 2021](#)). We have divided the types of cognitive dissonance in the courtroom discourse into those caused by real-life contradictions and those accentuated by the agents in court. The former include cognitive dissonance induced by the crime itself, a horrific event, while the latter include cognitive dissonance created by the speeches of the prosecutor and the attorney. Let us illustrate the types of cognitive dissonance schematically:

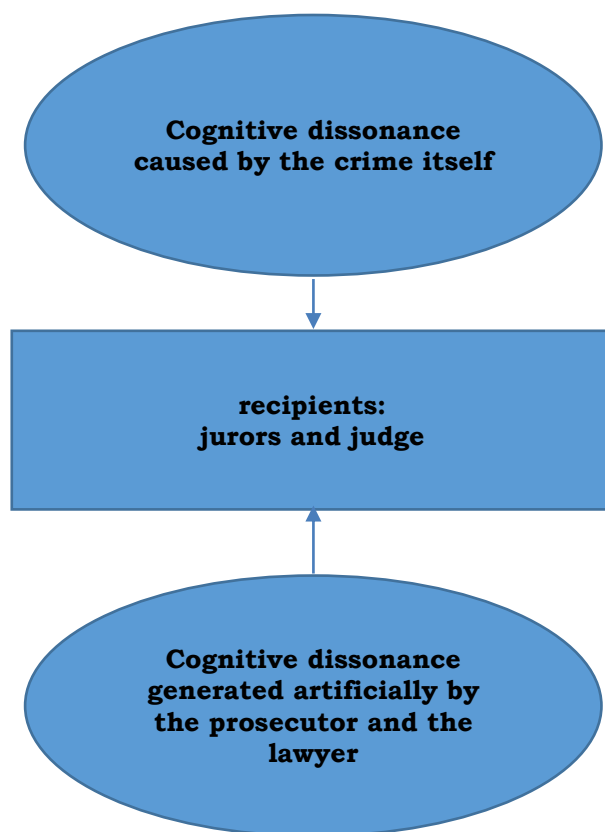


Figure 1. Types of cognitive dissonance in the courtroom discourse according to the way it is created

Each of the agents of courtroom discourse feels discomfort at the contradiction between the moral values of society, the laws, and the fact of their violation by the defendants. The content of the dissonance is somewhat different for agents of varying social status, but the fact of dissonance itself can hardly be denied for all. Thus, jurors are affected by the violation of the defendant's social value priorities

and are uncomfortable with the fact that they have to decide the presence or absence of guilt.

The judge's discomfort can be explained by the difficulty of making the right decision: his verdict may be either too lenient or too severe. Both the jury and the judge are assigned the role of recipients at the beginning and during the trial in the discourse analyzed: they would listen to the prosecutor, the lawyers, the witnesses, and their decision depends on who becomes the most persuasive. The prosecutor's cognitive dissonance can be explained by the fact that he is not only outraged by the event he considers a crime but also by how he has to prove the very fact of the apparent crime, to convince them of its reality (Malyuga & McCarthy, 2018; Razfar, 2005). The lawyer's discomfort is embedded in the ontogenesis of the status role: on the one hand, as a citizen, he is shocked by the fact of a horrible event, on the other hand, as the defendant's defender he has to make every effort to prove the suspect's complete or partial innocence. At the same time, the law and national moral values remain the key reference point for his communicative behavior. Let us illustrate the types of cognitive dissonance caused by psychological discomfort.

Table 1
Types of cognitive dissonance as a consequence of psychological discomfort

The reason for the psychological discomfort	Jurors	Judge	Prosecutor	Defense Lawyer
Crime: the contradiction between the moral values of society, the law, and the very fact of their violation by the defendant	+	+	+	+
The duty to decide whether there is guilt or innocence	+			
Challenges of a fair verdict		+		
The fact of the crime, which is obvious, must be proven, convinced of its reality			+	
The duty to prove the defendant's innocence, in whole or in part, and to convince the jury and the judge without upsetting the balance between the law and the right				+
Public pressure to be in support of the prosecutor	+	+		+

As can be deduced from the table, communication in courtroom discourse is predominantly persuasive with elements of repetitiveness. In addition, the speeches of the prosecutor and the lawyer resemble a kind of persuasive battle (Zaitseva & Pelepeychenko, 2021), the winner of which is determined by the jury and the judge. In such a communicative context, it is logical that the speakers use the entire arsenal of communicative influence. The analysis of the texts of the speeches revealed that both prosecutors and advocates quite often employ the technique of artificially creating cognitive dissonance in jurors and judges.

Psychologists explain the effectiveness of this technique: the brain distributes the received information into already existing patterns, filling them with meaning and “connecting the dots of our world” (Shermer, 2015). Such “...meaningful patterns become beliefs, while beliefs shape our perceptions of reality” (Shermer, 2015). Whoever of the speakers – the prosecutor or the lawyer – “fills in” the patterns with the right content and presents a unified version, wins in court. Moreover, since completion of the patterns is expressed using communication – communicative strategies, tactics, moves, and they are linguistic verbalize – the role of psycholinguistic traits of discursive personalities is undoubted. Then the battle of the persuasive turns into a duel of communicative dissonances. To illustrate the phenomenon described let us take as an example the trial of Casey Anthony, who is charged with several crimes simultaneously, which is already causing cognitive dissonance to all those involved in the trial and to the public:

The defendant is charged with the crimes of first-degree murder, aggravated child abuse, aggravated manslaughter of a child, and four counts of providing false information to a law enforcement officer. In our classification, this is cognitive dissonance, caused by the contradictions of real life – due to the neglect of society's value priorities by the accused. We remind you that it is experienced by all agents of the courtroom discourse. To convince the audience of the objectivity of the verdict to be announced at the end, the judge at the beginning of the trial (according to the rules) uses the tactic of appealing to the law: *Your verdict must be based solely on the evidence, or lack of evidence and the law.*

Let us pay attention to the associative halo of the words used by the judge (they are marked in bold): each of them reinforces the communicative impact – both intellectual and emotional. For the jury, these words are one way of reducing the force of the resulting dissonance: firstly, they are not the only ones making the decision, and secondly, arguments and the law will help to overcome the psychological discomfort. The prosecutor begins his speech with the paradoxical statement that this case is not about the defendant, but about her deceased daughter: *As we have heard several times throughout the jury selection proceedings, this is the case of the State of Florida versus Casey Marie Anthony. However, it is time to tell the story of a little girl named Caylee. This isn't just a case about Casey Marie Anthony; it's a story about Caylee Anthony as well.*

Such a statement is supposed to cause artificially created cognitive dissonance in the recipients who expect to hear facts about the defendant. In this case, the communicative strategy of persuasion is implemented through the tactic of supplementary narrative, which the prosecutor employed in an attempt to emphasize the contrast between the cloudless future to which the child was entitled and the tragic reality. This communicative move could have strengthened the jury and the judge's impression of the horror of the crime. The prosecutor started the story of the perished girl's happy childhood. In the fragment of her speech, let us highlight in bold the words and phrases with a positive associative halo, which verbalize universal conceptual notions of a happy childhood: *Over the next two and a half years, Caylee Anthony appeared to have an idyllic life. She was loved by her grandparents, they took lots of pictures of her. They doted on her. She was the apple of their eye. She did things like swim in the backyard in the family's pool, an above-ground pool. She watched Sponge Bob with JoJo, which is*

what she called her grandfather, George. She wore a Spiderman outfit.

We would like to draw attention to the fact that the narrative in the speech cited is used to achieve the purpose of the persuasive. The syncretism of the functions of narrative and persuasive is a specific feature of judicial discourse – a claim proven in our previous works on the problems of narrative and the specificity of judicial discourse (Zaitseva & Pelepeychenko, 2021). In this case, it is possible to record another phenomenon of the prosecutor's communicative behavior: the use of a contrasting strategy to reinforce the cognitive dissonance of the recipients. The contrast is created by juxtaposing narratives about the girl's happy childhood with the immorality of her mother (our comments are not in italics): *There is no Zani, there is no Juliette, there is no Annabelle* (the defendant's lies);

On Friday, June 20th, Casey Anthony went to a club called Fusion with her boyfriend Tony Lazzaro. And entered or participated in a hot body contest and was photographed at the hot body contest [inaudible] (indecent behavior amidst the disappearance of a daughter); Casey Anthony continues to tell her mother a lie about being in Tampa, about being in Busch Gardens, that the conference that she was at went late, that they decided to stay over at the hotel and then go to the park, Busch Gardens, on Sunday. Adding facts, adding details, trying to get her mother to believe that this is where she is and that Caylee is with her (the defendant's lies); Casey Anthony is perpetuating this lie to her mother that they're in Jacksonville (the defendant's lies).

The attorney also uses narrative as a persuasive tool in his speech, and his narrative is also aimed at artificially creating cognitive dissonance in the recipients, but the means of communicative influence are quite different. The main communicative strategy of his speech is that of explanation. It is built on an appeal to the facts, which is quite usual in courtroom discourse, but the facts are presented not simply as a statement of events but in such a way that, on the one hand, each of them creates a powerful cognitive dissonance in the recipients and, on the other, reduces the discomfort in the jury and the judge caused by the very fact of the happening, which so far is considered a crime (Pavlidou, 1991; Cooper & Fazio, 1984).

This effect is achieved through several methods of communicative influence, in which tactical techniques and their linguistic representation are well chosen. Firstly, the advocate emotionally describes the contrast between the horrific events that occurred in the defendant's childhood and the generally accepted moral values. Secondly, he makes a connection between events from the woman's past life and her behavior during the tragic event, a connection that is postulated as logical. Thirdly, it appeals to the facts guiding the investigation, and the importance of the facts had already been mentioned at the beginning of the trial by the judge.

Discuss a fragment of his speech, giving in parentheses the subtext of the statements and our comments: *Casey was raised to lie* (violation of generally recognized values of education). *This happened when she was 8 years old and her father molested her* (a terrible disregard for universally recognized moral values, a criminal offense). *But she went to school and played with other kids as if nothing*

had happened (Subtext: the defendant is innocent, she was forced to lie and is used to it). *Sex abuse does things to us, it changes you* (Subtext: the defendant's present moral character is a logical consequence of the abuse she experienced as a child; the guilty party is not the defendant, but the one who made her behave that way).

In refuting the accusations of covering up the missing daughter, the advocate joins in the reaction to such behavior, which reinforces the cognitive dissonance through the use of emotionally colored words: *How in the world can a mother wait 30 days before ever reporting her child missing? That's insane, that's bizarre...* And then immediately gives a logical explanation for the defendant's actions: *The answer is relatively simple. She never was missing. Caylee Anthony died on June 16, 2008, when she drowned in her family's swimming pool.* While continuing the speech impact, the advocate employs emotionally colored words and phrases that have a dual vector. It's a vector of increasing cognitive dissonance caused by the story of the defendant's childhood, and a vector of reducing the recipients' cognitive discomfort from the event itself, presented as unlikely to be a crime: *On June 16, 2008, after Caylee died, Casey did what she's been doing all her life, hiding her pain, going into that dark corner and pretending that she does not live in the situation that she's living in... it all began when Casey was 8 years old and her father came into her room and began to touch her inappropriately and it escalated.*

As we know from the theory of cognitive dissonance, cognitive discomfort ceases when the subject makes a decision. And, at the end of his speech, the advocate facilitates the recipients' process of conformity by appealing simultaneously to two national values: family and the democratic nature of the national judicial system, in which the priority of facts and evidence is the main lever of the verdict. The statements that verbalize the appeal to the values are highlighted in the following fragment of the speech: *At the end of this case, when you go back home and you are sitting around your dinner table ...and someone says to you "Why did you find Casey Anthony not guilty?" You gonna say "They could not tell me how she died. They could not prove that this was a murder. They could not prove that this was a manslaughter case. There was no evidence of any child abuse. And that's why we found that she is not guilty".* The jurors and the judge in the trial felt cognitive discomfort not only because of the horrific event itself but also because of the cognitive dissonance artificially created by the prosecutor and the advocate.

During the trial, the results of which were reported to the general public by the media, citizens actively expressed their protest against the defendant in support of the prosecutor's position. A kind of social cognitive dissonance was created: the public was outraged by the very fact of the girl's death and the behavior of her mother and, not being concerned with the details of the event, demanded harsh punishment for the defendant. To reduce the discomfort of the jury and the judge due to public pressure, in his speech before the verdict, the advocate resorts to an emotional impact built around the concepts of MOTHER, MOTHER'S LOVE: *They did not love Caylee the way Casey did. They did not breast Caylee every 2 hours when she was born. They did not wake up every 3 hours to feed her. They don't know when she first walked. Casey knows...* In addition, at the end of his closing speech, the advocate uses several communicative moves that implement different strategies and point to possible ways of reducing cognitive discomfort. The

strategy of bridging the distance between him and the jury is realized through an identical emotional evaluation of the tragic event, which is verbalized by the word nightmare: *You can never bring Caylee back for Casey BUT you can help end this nightmare by sending her home.*

As can be seen from the fragment above, the end of the nightmare is associated with Casey's return home, and this is one way of reducing the discomfort of the jury and the judge. And the advocate concludes his speech using the request strategy. It should be noted that discursive analysis of different trials, which we covered in our previous works (Zaitseva & Pelepeychenko, 2021), demonstrated that advocates very rarely address the jury with a direct request – instead they construct their speeches in such a way that the jury supposedly concludes the necessity of acquitting the defendant by themselves, focusing on the national priorities of value. In this trial, the advocate pleads, and his plea in the subtext represents, firstly, a reduction of the communicative distance between him and the jury (more often intimate people are asked) and, secondly, an indication of another way of reducing discomfort in making a fateful decision (the advocate pleads, and he is familiar with the merits of the case): *I'll ask you all individually and collectively to render a verdict of not guilty. Thank you.* Below is a table summarising the communication mechanisms between the prosecutor and the lawyer.

Table 2
Mechanisms of communicative influence of the prosecutor and the lawyer

Types of discursive and linguistic means of communicative influence	Prosecutor	Defence lawyer
Paradoxical statement tactics	+	
Contrast tactics to create cognitive dissonance in the recipients: the daughter's happy childhood - the mother's immorality	+	
Emotional impact around the concepts HAPPY CHILDHOOD, MOTHER IMAGE	+	
A strategy of explanation with appeal to facts that create cognitive dissonance in recipients		+
A tactic of contrasting the horrific events that occurred in the defendant's childhood with recognised moral values (to reduce the cognitive dissonance generated as a result of the crime)		+
Making a logical connection between events in the woman's earlier life and her behaviour at the time of the tragic event		+
The explanation is grounded by the facts that guide the prosecution		+
Emotional impact around the concepts MOTHER, and MOTHER' S LOVE		+
A strategy for bridging the distance		+
Request tactic		+
Use of emotionally loaded vocabulary	+	+

The trial ended with a jury verdict of not guilty. This verdict caused an outburst of indignation in the United States. What explains the jury's verdict? The lawyer managed to "fill in" the patterns with the necessary content and presented the complete version: she should not be prosecuted for lying, her father forcibly taught her to live a lie; she kept silent about her daughter's missing – she did not keep silent about the facts, but habitually suffered quietly, while knowing that her daughter was not missing, but tragically died; the prosecution team had no evidence of murder (Stone & Cooper, 2001; Danet, 1980). In addition, the advocate succeeded in creating stronger cognitive dissonance by linking the most important concepts in his narratives and by combining an arsenal of linguistic means with a rational and emotional halo in his delivery of information. Another important feature of his speeches is that he directly or subtextually showed ways of reducing the cognitive discomfort of the recipients, making it easier for them to move towards cognitive consonance.

Conclusion

The research of prosecutor's and lawyer's speeches in a real trial confirmed the underlying hypothesis of the paper about the existence of specific features of cognitive dissonance in judicial discourse, allowed to identify the following features and establish mechanisms of implementation of their influential potential. The specifics of cognitive dissonance and mechanisms of its influence in courtroom discourse are as follows:

- in the existence of two types of the phenomenon in question, distinguished based on the cause of its occurrence: on the one hand, dissonance caused by the facts of real life, namely the very essence of the event which was being tried and the psychological pressure of public opinion which supported the prosecution party; and, on the other hand, dissonance artificially created by the prosecutor and the advocate to exercise a persuasive influence on the jury and the judge;
- in artificially creating cognitive dissonance between the jury and the judge, the prosecutor and the advocate used different communicative strategies. The common features of modeling their communicative influence were as follows: using a narrative as a persuasive; stirring up the associative activity of the recipients by contrasting axiological attributes of the concepts; combining elements of rational and emotional communicative influence;
- The speeches of the prosecutor and the lawyer were like a kind of battle of narratives and a duel of cognitive dissonance; the stronger the dissonance and the narrative that not only created psychological discomfort but also pointed out ways to overcome it, guiding the transition to harmonization of elements of the recipients' cognitive structure;
- the influential power of artificially created cognitive dissonance depends on which communicative strategies and tactics speakers use, which concepts they choose to oppose, and how these concepts relate to the value priorities of the linguistic community; the influential power of the narrative as a whole depends on the presence in it of guidelines for ways to harmonize elements of cognitive structure in the minds of listeners and on how fully and logically they are delineated.

While analyzing the texts of the speeches, we noticed a certain aggressiveness of the lawyer's statements towards the prosecution team – he repeatedly emphasized that a whole team of specialists had worked on the accusation and no convincing evidence of the crime had been produced. We suggest that implicitly presented aggression may play a role in creating cognitive dissonance, but an analysis of this phenomenon was beyond the scope of our research. Communicative strategies of critical and aggressive attitude towards opponents, their linguistic implementation, explicit or implicit representation, and role in the artificial creation of cognitive dissonance in judicial discourse – the above-mentioned questions are considered as a research perspective of the stated research.

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