

SOCIO-PRAGMATIC MARKERS OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES

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The aim of this paper is to investigate the socio-pragmatic factors influencing the use of politeness strategies in Oprah Winfrey's interviews and to elucidate their role in creating effective communication and rapport-building in the realm of media discourse. Politeness is interpreted in terms of the verbal decisions made by the speakers, the linguistic phrases that create respectful verbal behaviour and convey friendliness to the communicative situation. The data analysis which is conducted on the material of Oprah Winfrey's interviews with Michelle Obama, Lady Gaga, and The Rock, unveil the sociocultural intricacies that mold her conversational demeanor. It is concluded that Oprah Winfrey's adept utilization of direct and indirect interrogative speech acts in the process of inquiry serves as a cornerstone for fostering authentic communication and building rapport within the setting of the talk show. By strategically incorporating direct questions alongside indirect ones, she creates an inclusive atmosphere that encourages the interviewees to share their personal experiences comfortably.

Key words: *pragmatics, Politeness Theory, politeness strategies, face, direct and indirect speech acts*

Introduction

The contextual facet of communication became a pivotal point for the investigations in the field of Pragmatics, a linguistic sub-discipline that examines how language is

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shaped, i.e., encoded and decoded in a certain context. It examines the ways in which the speaker creates meaning in order to achieve specific goals, the ways in which the addressee understands the speaker's speech in the light of certain circumstances, and, furthermore, the ways in which the specific situation affects the speaker's speech¹. Due to its broad outlook on the communicative behavior, Pragmatics has gained importance as a major interdisciplinary research sphere that addresses a wide range of topics concerning cognitive science, anthropology, sociology, neuroscience, language pathology and many other disciplines. The present paper focuses on one of the issues of pragmatic analysis – language and politeness. Therefore, we will enlarge on Politeness Theory, a focal conceptual postulation in Pragmatics that is associated with sociology and sociolinguistics.

Generally speaking, politeness refers to the verbal decisions made by the speakers, the linguistic phrases that create respectful verbal behaviour and convey friendliness to the communicative situation. As defined by T. Holtgraves, being polite encompasses a wide range of behaviors that are related to linguistic, social, and cognitive processes rather than a set of rules on how one should act in various social contexts. In addition, politeness describes a person's communication style, including how they make statements in a certain situation and show respect for others' faces when speaking².

Politeness Theory studies different approaches to communication style such as politeness as social rules or norms, politeness as adherence to Politeness Maxims and politeness as strategic face management³.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the socio-pragmatic factors influencing the use of politeness strategies in media discourse. For this purpose, the communicative situational context of interviewing, one of the popular genres of media, has been chosen. The material for the analysis has been picked out from the interviews conducted by Oprah Winfrey with Michelle Obama, Lady Gaga, and D. Johnson (The Rock). Data analysis is carried out on the basis of qualitative research methodology by applying the methods of pragmalinguistic and contextual analyses. The survey addresses the interrelation between face and politeness strategies. It reveals how the intricate interplay of various socio-pragmatic factors such as social hierarchy, power dynamics and cultural conventions influence the effective use of facework. Furthermore, by examining the use of politeness strategies in Oprah Winfrey's

¹ **Levinson S. C.** Pragmatics. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983. **Verschueren J.** Understanding Pragmatics. London, New York et. al. Arnold, 1999. **Mey, J. L.** Pragmatics: An Introduction, 2nd ed. Oxford, Blackwell. **Griffiths P.** An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics, Edinburgh University Press, 2006.

² **Holtgraves T., Kashima Y.** Language, Meaning, and Social Cognition // Personality and Social Psychology Review. SAGE Publications. 2008, 12(1), pp. 73-94.

³ **Grice H. P.** Logic and Conversation//Syntax and Semantics. Vol. 3. Eds. P. Cole, J. Morgan. New York, Academic Press, 1975, pp. 41-58. **Leech G. N.** Principles of Pragmatics. London, Longman, 1983. **Brown P., Levinson S. C.** Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. **Watts R. J., Ide S., Ehlich K.** Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992. **Goffman E.** Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior. New Brunswick, New Jersey. Transaction Publishers, 2005. **Huang Y.** (ed.) The Oxford Handbook for Pragmatics, Oxford University Press, 2017. **Paronyan Sh.** Pragmatics. YSU Press, 2012.

interviews, an attempt will also be made to unveil the socio-pragmatic intricacies that mold her rapport-building power and conversational demeanor.

Politeness Strategies and Sociocultural Contexts

The main asset of this approach is that of the speakers' 'face' (positive or negative) which refers to their public self-image. The assumption of politeness as 'facework' was put forward by E. Goffman, a sociologist, who saw politeness as a crucial component of interpersonal ritual which authorizes the society to maintain public order. He introduced the concept of 'face' as "a positive value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact"⁴. G. Yule observes that describing 'face' as an individual's publicly evident self-esteem, E. Goffman admitted that any interactional act with a social-relational dimension is inherently face-threatening, and, therefore, it must be modified by appropriate forms of polite behavior that take into consideration 'face' requirements. The concept of 'face' is abstract and everyone must preserve their image during an interaction, either to save or threaten the image of another⁵.

Developing E. Goffman's idea of facework, P. Brown and S. Levinson proposed their own theory of politeness which examines facework, politeness strategies and their applications in the process of communication. In accordance with E. Goffman's conception, P. Brown and S. Levinson maintain the proposition that a person's 'face' is something emotionally involved and can be lost, preserved, or enhanced during a conversation. Thus, keeping one's 'face' present throughout engagement will either lessen or prevent conflict. They also state that being polite is the action - linguistic or otherwise - that restores the 'face' of the speaker and the hearer in circumstances where 'face' is at risk. No doubt, the face-threatening acts that P. Brown and S. C. Levinson define as "those acts that by their very nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or speaker" are a significant part of their theory of politeness⁶.

The concept of 'face', the strategies used to address face-threatening acts (FTAs), and the social factors that influence the appropriate responses to FTAs are M. Redmond's main concern when examining Brown and Levinson's theory. M. Redmond acknowledges that face threatening acts can be directed at our positive or negative faces and can be the result of our own behavior or the behavior of others toward us. He further specifies that some definitions of 'face' place an emphasis on the social setting, others on language, and yet others on interpersonal relationships. When the social setting is stressed, 'face' is interpreted as a socially or interactively based phenomenon. In other words, 'face' responds to other people's presence and develops via interactions with them. When language is prioritized, 'face' is understood as a particular representation of oneself to other people. We want particular people to perceive us in a particular manner. When the interpersonal relationships come to the fore, the demands of the circumstance or environment have an impact on the picture the speakers project. R. Redmond also notes that our awareness and purpose about the 'face' we portray might vary, but they become more intense when anything happens

⁴ Ibid., p. 5

⁵ Yule G. Pragmatics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

⁶ Ibid., p. 65.

that causes others to doubt the sincerity of our ‘face’ (a face threat). Finally, the way people speak and engage with others is the primary method that their faces are shown⁷.

G. Yule acknowledges that people must take into account both their own positive and negative faces when interacting with others. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, they can make statements that are perceived as a threat to the ‘face’ of another⁸. As revealed by pragmalinguistic analysis of facework, actions such as ordering, reminding, advising, suggesting, and warning can be seen as negative face threats. Verbal behaviors that could threaten positive face include criticizing, disagreeing, contradicting, and bringing out the worst in the listener⁹. Obviously, it follows that there are a number of verbal actions, or speech acts that are highly expressive of both emotion and threatening and can endanger the speaker’s ‘face’. These FTAs can be disguised if the speakers make use of politeness strategies and communicate their illocutionary force indirectly¹⁰.

The choice of politeness strategies, as worked out by P. Brown and S. C. Levinson and theorized by other linguists, is determined by at least three sociological characteristics associated with FTA: power, proximity, and rank (Brown and Levinson, 1978). These characteristics affect the forms of conversational activities, prompting the speakers to consider using more indirect strategies in order to save their reputation, image, and face. Having studied different approaches to politeness as a linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon, we cannot but agree with K. Ch. Hei who maintains that despite differing viewpoints, the ultimate goal of politeness is to make everyone involved in a discourse feel at ease and peace with one another. In keeping with socio-cultural norms that link communication to social order, politeness also contributes to sustaining order in communication¹¹.

Thus we can state that the concept of ‘face’ and politeness strategies provide nuanced insights into how individuals negotiate social interactions through their linguistic choices. The incorporation of sociological factors such as power, social distance, and rank in the strategic selection of politeness strategies enriches our understanding of the intricate interplay between language and social dynamics.

Effective Communication in Media Interviews

Studying the communicative characteristics of the interview, I. Kovtunen et al. observe that it serves as a dynamic and multifaceted medium for communication. It transcends the written or spoken word, capturing the essence of human interaction and providing a platform for dialogue, exploration, and the exchange of ideas. It acts as a bridge between the interviewer and the interviewee, where questions become the tools for uncovering insights, perspectives, and the underlying narratives that shape individuals and stories. She also states that initially, the interview was included in a

⁷ **Redmond M. V.** Face and Politeness Theories. Iowa State University Digital Repository, 2015, pp. 26-29.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ **Watts R. J.** Politeness. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

¹⁰ **Paronyan Sh, Barseghyan G.** Euphemistic Replacement as Communicative Strategy in the News Media// Armenian Folia Anglistika, 2023, Vol. 19, Issue 2 (28), pp. 31-44 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46991/AFA/2023.19.2.031>

¹¹ **Hei K. Ch.** Strategies of Politeness Used by Grandparents in Intergenerational Talks. Serdang: Penerbit University of Malaya, 2008.

publicistic style and was considered to be a journalistic genre. With the development of mass media discourse, the interview came to be viewed as a substyle of Media Discourse, a genre of media communication¹². H. Huwel and S. A. McLean also admit that the interview is a component of media discourse or media communication, and is style-free, flexible, expressively rich. It includes elements of colloquial speech and features of popular science style¹³. In general, the interview is marked by the presence of two or more interlocutors - the interviewer and the interviewees. Anyhow, the communicative context of this genre of media communication implies the presence of one more participant role – the audience. The audience, although not always physically present, remains a crucial participant in the communicative exchange. The audience's expectations, interests, and reactions shape the interviewer's approach and influence the topics covered during the interview. The fact that the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee is decoded by an unidentified audience¹⁴ enables the linguists to acknowledge that, after all, the interview may form people's perceptions of reality and its pragmatic purpose is to influence the audience¹⁵.

Studies show that media interviews can take various forms, including face-to-face interactions, phone conversations, or video conferencing, and may be live or recorded for later dissemination. They fall into different substyles such as TV news interviews, talk shows, documentary interviews, radio news interviews, and podcast interviews. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the interviews can vary according to the formation system, being structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, or in-depth¹⁶. As stated above, this paper focuses on the substyle of talk shows. They represent unique qualities of hybrid broadcast discourse in which different conversational speech practices, social and communication patterns are used¹⁷. C. Illie discusses the relationship between the discursive and linguistic characteristics that distinguish talk shows as a speech event, indicating that it is broadcaster- controlled, host-monitored, participant-shaped, and audience-evaluated. She further explains that the situational constraints of talk shows are limitations associated with talks, including time and agenda constraints, limitations on speakers' choices, and limitations on turn-taking.

¹² **Kovtunen I., Bylkova S., Borisenko V. Minakova N., Rogacheva, V.** Interview as a Genre of New Media Communication: Rhetorical Relations and Pragmatic Effects// *XLinguae, People's Friendship University of Russia*, 2018, 11(2). pp. 95-105.

¹³ **Huwel H.** Media Stylistics: Linguistic Representation, Realization, and Perception// *Uruk for Humanities, University of Thi-Qar*, 2022, 14(4), pp. 3056-3064. **McLean S.** The Basics of Interpersonal Communication. Pearson, Boston, MA, 2005.

¹⁴ Though a vital component of a talk show is the audience, A. Fetzer notes that the role of the audience is usually not obvious, since the shows are arranged in a way that simulates natural conversation without the audience. The audience does not actively participate in interview shows, and the great majority of them are located both temporally and spatially apart from the interview. In addition, the interviewer and interviewee address one another as though they were the primary addressees rather than facing the audience. Cf. **Fetzer A.** Minister, We Will See How the Public Judges You: Media References in Political Interviews// *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2006, Vol. 38, Issue 2, pp. 180-195.

¹⁵ See, for example, Huwel H. 2022. Ibid.; Kovtunen et al., 2018. Ibid.

¹⁶ See **McCracken G.** The Long Interview. Qualitative Research Methods, Sage Publications Inc, 1988, Vol. 13.

¹⁷ See **Munson W.** All Talk: The Talk Show in Media Culture. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993. **Mittel J.** Audiences Talking Genre: Television Talk Shows And Cultural Hierarchies// *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 2003, pp. 36-45.

Talk-framing conventions like the preset topic schedule, traditional openings and closings, and frequent breaks all represent the discursive restrictions¹⁸.

S. McLean affirms that the question-answer format is fundamental for talk shows, with the interviewer posing questions designed to elicit relevant responses from the interviewee. The interviewer often guides the flow of the conversation, directing it towards the intended objectives of the interview. Specifically, the interviewer may employ both direct and indirect questions as a politeness strategy, depending on the sensitivity of the topic or the rapport established with the interviewee. She also stresses that this communicative context underscores the importance of effective communication strategies in conveying information accurately and ethically within the media landscape¹⁹.

When we reflect on the communicative role of the talk show participants, we have to admit that the key to most talk shows is the personality of the interviewer, or the host. A lot of hosts become famous, and their shows are frequently given their presenters' names such as Oprah Winfrey, Keith Ablow, Byron Allen, Drew Barrymore and many others. P. J. Priest notes that hosts have considerable influence over how the discussion goes. Celebrities, actresses, writers, and politicians who are promoting new plays, movies, and books or fighting for a cause are frequent guests on talk shows²⁰.

On the whole, the effectiveness of an interview hinges on how well the interviewer and interviewee navigate their roles in posing and responding to questions. Anyhow, J. Heritage argues that the conventional notion that interviews follow a straightforward pattern of the interviewer asking questions and the interviewee providing answers is superficial. Instead, interviews involve a nuanced and debatable set of customs and practices wherein the suitability of a question and the obligation to answer it are deliberated by those involved. Even though participants prepare for interviews with predefined topics, the actual content emerges dynamically during the conversation, shaped by how participants handle their conversational turns. They further note that despite the inherent asymmetry in their roles and the prescribed division of turn types, participants retain a degree of freedom in crafting their contributions. For instance, an interviewer can choose to introduce a new topic in their question or expand upon the responses from the previous turn. Moreover, the interviewer can influence the conversation's tone and direction by making adjustments²¹.

A closer examination of the question-answer format of the interviews reveals that the interviewers' turns are often more intricate, and it is not uncommon for their turns to lack any interrogative structure at all. J. Heritage defines a question as a "form of social action, designed to seek information and accomplished in a turn at the talk by means of interrogative syntax."²² Obviously, in Pragmatics, the term 'interrogative syntax' can be interpreted as 'indirect speech acts', the question being formulated with

¹⁸ **Ilie C.** Semi-Institutional Discourse: The Case of Talk Shows// *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2001, Volume 33, Issue 2, pp. 209-254.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ **Priest P. J.** *Public Intimacies: Talk Show Participants and Tell-All TV*. Cresskill, NJ, Hampton Press, 1995.

²¹ **Heritage J.** The Limits of Questioning: Negative Interrogatives and Hostile Question Content// *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2002. Volume 34, Issues 10–11, pp. 1427-1446.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1427.

the help of declarative utterances and pronounced with an implied interrogative tone of voice. Y. Huang suggests that deciphering the intended meaning of the interviewer is not challenging in the context of interviews, as the interview setting itself serves as a cue. Talk show guests are familiar with the genre's norms, which include the expectation to respond to questions. Even if the interviewer's statement appears declarative, guests interpret it as a signal to provide more information. He further explains that the use of indirect speech acts is commonly linked to politeness. By opting for an indirect approach instead of a direct one, the speaker allows the listener to respond solely to the literal meaning of the statement and overlook the implied inference. Consequently, even though the interviewee understands the interviewer's declarative statement is a quest for information and may comprehend the type of information sought, there is some flexibility for the interviewee to sidestep a direct answer²³.

Studying the interview practices from cross-cultural perspective, A. Becker observes that the extent of freedom granted to the interviewee in formulating a response is influenced not only by the choice between a direct and indirect speech act but also by the nature of the question. She underscores the significance of categorizing questioning turns based on their complexity, making a distinction between single-unit and multi-unit questions. A multi-unit questioning turn is described as a turn comprising more than one unit and is characterized by one or more interrogative indicators, with its complexity aligning with the concept of indirectness. The communicative objective of a multi-unit question includes alleviating the face-threatening act posed by the question through conventional indirectness²⁴.

G. Lauerbach also highlights the principle of politeness in interviews by observing that due to the intricate dynamics between interview participants and the limited mechanisms for imposing their agendas, both the interviewer and interviewee must exercise caution and creativity in framing their statements. She indicates that the challenge of maintaining 'face' becomes more formidable in the presence of an audience. Unlike informal, non-institutional conversations where the speaker only needs to consider the hearer's perception of face-threatening acts, an interviewer on a talk show is continually observed and evaluated by the audience. Furthermore, since every interviewer aims to elicit suitable responses, it is not in their interest to make interviewees feel threatened and jeopardize their cooperation²⁵.

Politeness Strategies in Oprah Winfrey's Talk Shows

Oprah Winfrey, an American talk show host, television producer and media proprietor is best known for her talk shows, The Oprah Winfrey Show and The Oprah Conversation. She is considered a cultural icon and a powerful woman by many, and her unprecedented success in the media has won her great respect and affection. Her image as a famous media personality is one of respect and admiration due to her eloquence, self demeanour and charitable activities. This paper aims to investigate the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Becker A. Are You Saying...? A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Interviewing Practices in TV Election Night Coverages Amsterdam, NLD: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007.

²⁵ Lauerbach G. Argumentation in Dialogic Media Genres - Talk Shows and Interviews// Journal of Pragmatics, 2007, 39(8), pp. 1333-1341.

politeness strategies used by Oprah Winfrey in her interviews with four celebrities: Michelle Obama, Lady Gaga, and Dwayne Johnson²⁶.

We will illustrate how politeness strategies employed by the interviewer eliminate the imposition of inquiry and create a harmonious atmosphere where the addressees are willing to give appropriate and thoughtful feedback.

We will begin our survey by exploring the use of positive politeness strategies in Michelle Obama's interview:

O. Winfrey: Hi, everybody! (applause) We are here for the United States of Women! (applause)

M. Obama: Now, I know you all have had a busy, packed, full day -- very inspiring, right? (applause)

In the opening lines of the interview, Oprah Winfrey's energetic greeting immediately establishes a lively and inclusive atmosphere. The use of applause reinforces a sense of shared excitement and anticipation among the audience. Oprah then articulates the purpose of the gathering. By declaring '*We are here for the United States of Women!*', she aligns the audience with a unifying cause, togetherness and emphasizes the significance of the event. Following this, Michelle Obama skillfully builds on the positive tone set by Oprah as she acknowledges the audience's busy day and describes it as '*very inspiring, right?*' This rhetorical question engages the audience and invites them to connect with the notion of shared enthusiasm. Both speakers employ friendly and relatable language, utilizing applause strategically to enhance the positive atmosphere and create a sense of camaraderie, ensuring that the audience feels not only welcomed but also actively involved in the uplifting conversation that follows.

Moving forward, Oprah compliments Michelle on her handling of the First Lady role, drawing a positive comparison and expressing admiration:

The way you've handled this office, the way you carry yourself, have presented yourself to the United States of America, and the women of the United States of America, and men of the

United States of America, reminds me of a line that Maya used to say.

²⁶ As the former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama enjoys considerable rank in society because of her support for military families, health care, and education. She develops into a respected and recognized public figure due to her composed manner and dedication to solving social issues. <https://rb.gy/xvniun>

The singer and songwriter Lady Gaga is a pop culture icon because of her innovative contributions to the music and entertainment industries. Recognized for her avant-garde artistic expression and social activity, she is honored for defying conventional wisdom, so securing her position of social rank and impact. <https://rb.gy/yli1uy>

Prominent in Hollywood and professional wrestling, Dwayne Johnson has broken through conventional norms to become a beloved global personality. His charm, hard ethic, and good impact both on and off screen help him to have a social rank that is characterized by sincere affection and broad acclaim. <https://rb.gy/5ctig9>

In this segment of the interview, Oprah Winfrey employs the positive politeness strategy via off-record speech acts. By making indirect compliments to Michelle Obama, she showcases a high level of admiration and respect, and implies a recognition of Michelle's social rank as the former First Lady of the United States. The word combinations *'handled this office'* and *'presented yourself to the United States of America'* describe Michelle Obama's duties and underscore the significant high-profile position that she held. Obviously, the compliment is not just about her personal qualities but also about the public role she has occupied, indicating a recognition of her influence and impact on a national scale. Additionally, the reference to Maya Angelou suggests a cultural and intellectual connection, further elevating Michelle's social status. In this way, the compliment is not only a gesture of admiration but also a form of deference, acknowledging Michelle's social rank and the impact she has had in her public role as the First Lady. Thus we can assume the positive politeness strategy employed in this compliment aligns with the societal norms of showing respect and deference to individuals occupying elevated social positions.

In the interview with Lady Gaga, Oprah Winfrey skillfully employs positive politeness strategy by expressing admiration for Lady Gaga's emotional resilience:

O. Winfrey: Well, I think this is remarkable that you feel so open-hearted, vulnerable enough to share this.

In this example, Oprah Winfrey performs an indirect praise which communicates a sense of understanding and support. Moreover, it generates a positive and friendly atmosphere in the conversation. This positive politeness strategy aligns with the sociolinguistic theory that emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and validating the emotions of the interlocutor to create a harmonious and supportive communication²⁷. Oprah Winfrey's strategic use of language not only encourages Lady Gaga to share personal experiences but also contributes to building a strong rapport between them, and conducting an open and meaningful dialogue.

In the following example, Oprah Winfrey employs the positive politeness strategy by acknowledging and appreciating Lady Gaga's sacrifice:

O. Winfrey: Indeed, Lady Gaga gave up her vacation to come and sit and share her truth with us.

The gratitude for Lady Gaga's decision to prioritize the interview over a vacation is expressed with the help of an indirect speech act. This strategy allows Oprah Winfrey to reinforce a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. Moreover, it fosters a positive atmosphere, emphasizing the importance of the conversation and Lady Gaga's role in it. Obviously, by applying the positive politeness strategy in this part of the interview, the interviewer silently acknowledges Lady Gaga's influential social status as a guest of importance whose presence is valuable and noteworthy.

Let us illustrate samples of analysis from Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson's interview.

²⁷ Paronyan Sh., Rostomyan A. On the Interrelation between Cognitive and Emotional Minds in Speech// Armenian Folia Anglistika, Yerevan, 2011, 1(8)/, pp. 26-34.

O. Winfrey: OMG, it's about to happen. So, of the nine visionaries joining us on the WW Presents 2020 Vision Tour, there's only one man. But when it's one of the most recognizable, big-hearted, delightful, fun, strong people on the planet, he's all you need.

In this introductory remark, Oprah Winfrey expresses her intense excitement and admiration at the prospect of conducting an interview with a renowned guest. In the praise, which is performed indirectly, the adjectives ‘recognizable,’ ‘big-hearted,’ ‘delightful,’ and ‘fun’ have a positive denotative meaning. They serve to paint a vivid picture of The Rock’s persona and, at the same time, create a friendly and appreciative tone, building an aura of warmth and admiration even before the interview formally begins.

In the following remark, which is made at the beginning of the interview, Oprah Winfrey sets a compassionate and empathetic tone by acknowledging the recent passing of Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson’s father, Rocky ‘The Soul Man’ Johnson:

Oprah: You know, it means so much to everyone that you are here with us today. Since it was only ten days ago that your father, Rocky 'The Soul Man' Johnson, passed away.

The indirect speech act of thanking ‘You know, it means so much to everyone that you are here with us today’ reflects Oprah Winfrey’s appreciation for The Rock’s presence and an understanding of the emotional weight he might be carrying after the recent loss of his father. This indirect speech act also demonstrates her sensitivity and creates a supportive environment for the upcoming interview. By addressing the recent bereavement, Oprah Winfrey subtly signals to Dwayne ‘The Rock’ and the audience that the conversation may touch upon personal and emotional aspects, and, in doing so, she fosters an atmosphere of empathy and connection. This initial gesture lays the foundation for a more profound and authentic dialogue, reflecting her adeptness at navigating conversations with empathy and genuine care. Following the discussion of this unhappy event, Oprah Winfrey employs a closed-ended question, giving the interviewee freedom to disclose as much discomfort associated with the topic as he wants:

Winfrey: So, it's been, has it been a challenging week?

Rock: It has. It's been a challenging past couple of days. My father, he passed away on January 15th, and we just buried him a few days ago, yes.

Oprah Winfrey uses a euphemistic formulation, describing the hard times experienced by Dwayne ‘The Rock’ with the word combination ‘challenging week’. This substitution softens the gravity of the situation, acknowledges the difficulties he may have experienced and conveys empathy and understanding. Through the deliberate use of positive politeness strategy, Oprah Winfrey navigates the delicate terrain of inquiring about a sensitive topic. This helps her maintain a positive and supportive atmosphere throughout the interview.

Going ahead with her inquiry, Oprah Winfrey displays a sincere interest in Dwayne ‘The Rock’s emotional state and personal reflections by referencing a post on Instagram where he expressed his inner thoughts with his late father:

Winfrey: I read on Instagram where you'd said you wish you'd had just one more day. Do you think you got all the things said that you wanted to say?

The direct question she poses, ‘*Do you think you got all the things said that you wanted to say?*’, demonstrates empathy and a recognition of the complexity of grief. By inquiring about Dwayne ‘The Rock’s sense of closure or any unspoken sentiments, Oprah Winfrey opens a space for him to share his emotions and underscores her commitment to delving into meaningful and personal aspects of his life. This approach contributes to a deeper and more authentic conversation, fostering a connection between the interviewer and the interviewee. As positive politeness involves using language and behavior to emphasize friendliness, solidarity, and understanding, Oprah Winfrey’s inquiry is phrased with consideration and compassion. By acknowledging Dwayne ‘The Rock’s emotions and allowing him the space to reflect on his feelings, she creates a supportive and empathetic atmosphere. This approach aims to affirm Dwayne ‘The Rock’s experiences, reinforcing a sense of shared understanding and connection, which is fundamental to positive politeness strategies.

The analysis of data has also revealed cases of negative politeness strategy, when the interviewer tends to be polite by minimizing the imposition on the interviewees and showing respect for their autonomy and freedom. Negative politeness strategy is mostly performed by using indirect speech acts, hedges, and expressions that mitigate the potential pressure of the illocutionary force. Interestingly enough, in the following example, during the interview with Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey uses a direct speech act. Meanwhile, she intentionally softens the illocutionary force of the question:

Winfrey: So, by the time you got here you knew how to do that?

By framing her inquiry as a direct question, Oprah Winfrey demonstrates her recognition of Michelle Obama’s knowledge and capabilities, thereby showing respect for her authority and position. The phrase ‘*by the time you got here*’ serves as a hedging device that mitigates the imposition of inquiry about Michelle Obama’s ability to handle challenges. This phrase subtly implies that Michelle Obama has already demonstrated her proficiency and adaptability and suggests that her competence is evident without the need for explicit confirmation. Furthermore, by maintaining a polite and respectful tone, Oprah Winfrey navigates the conversation with tact and diplomacy, ensuring that M. Obama’s authority is affirmed.

In the interaction between Oprah Winfrey and Lady Gaga, the former skillfully employs negative politeness strategy to delicately inquire about Lady Gaga’s personal journey in creating her artistic persona.

O. Winfrey: I want to know when you got clarity for yourself about the vision of creating Gaga.

By phrasing the direct question with the infinitive phrase ‘I want to know’, Oprah Winfrey makes a hedge which softens the illocutionary force of the inquiry and gives Lady Gaga the freedom to share her experience at her discretion. Additionally, the prepositional phrase ‘for yourself’ acknowledges Lady Gaga’s personal perspective, respecting her autonomy in the creative process. By framing the question around the development of Lady Gaga’s artistic vision, Oprah Winfrey demonstrates sensitivity to the potentially intimate nature of the topic, fostering a respectful and comfortable exchange. The linguistic choices made by the interviewer exemplify her consideration for Lady Gaga’s feelings and autonomy, contributing to a harmonious interaction grounded in mutual respect.

Going on, Oprah Winfrey employs a nuanced application of negative politeness strategy in the following indirect question. In particular, she makes use of mitigating language when she addresses the sensitive and potentially distressing topic of trauma experienced by Lady Gaga.

O. Winfrey: So when you are raped, and you have no way of processing that, the triggers come in all forms in ways that you cannot predict and show up in your life in areas that at the time you don't know that this is mental illness.

The adverbial phrase ‘So when’, which starts the inquiry, serves as a hedge which softens the impact of the sensitive subject matter and makes a gentle transition into the discussion. Furthermore, the phrase ‘you have no way of processing that’ acknowledges the complexity and difficulty of dealing with traumatic experiences and mitigates the emotional challenges faced by survivors. The euphemistic replacement of the trauma with the demonstrative pronoun ‘that’ also lessens the effect of the negative experience of the interviewee. In fact, Oprah Winfrey’s indirect question, like an open-ended question, needs considered feedback. As we can see, by making conscious linguistic choices, Oprah Winfrey creates a supportive and empathetic environment that respects Lady Gaga’s emotional vulnerability while engaging in a thoughtful discussion about the impact of trauma on mental health. Her use of hedges and mitigating language exemplifies her commitment to maintaining rapport and consideration for Lady Gaga’s emotional well-being during the conversation.

The audience is also included in the situational context of the talk show. Though the audience is a silent participant of the communicative process, both the interviewer and the interviewee take into account their presence and address them. In the following example taken from the interview with Dwayne ‘The Rock’, Oprah Winfrey employs hedging as a negative politeness strategy to soften her statement and mitigate the potential imposition on the audience.

O. Winfrey: Well, you know, we got a few good men here in the audience, not only showing up here today, as I said to them again, it's gonna get them points for the next eight weeks, yes.

The hedging phrase ‘Well, you know’ creates a more tentative and less assertive tone. This hedge functions to cushion the forthcoming assertion, indicating that what follows may not be definitive or universally accepted. Moreover, by framing the

statement as a casual observation or conversational aside, Oprah lessens the directness of the assertion, thus reducing the likelihood of causing offense or discomfort among the audience. Furthermore, the use of the hedge allows Oprah to present her remark as less authoritative, inviting the audience to interpret it as a personal observation rather than an absolute truth. By employing this hedging strategy, Oprah demonstrates sensitivity to the potential impact of her words on the audience's perception and seeks to maintain a polite and considerate discourse.

In the following example, Michelle Obama employs hedging as a negative politeness strategy to soften their statement and minimize imposition on the audience:

M. Obama: So you just -- again, you begin to understand how much you can tolerate, how much growth you can have, how much growth you can have, how much potential there is, how much opportunity there is to help people, how fulfilling it is. I mean, that's been the thing that I've learned.

By starting her answer with ‘*So you just - again,*’ M. Obama introduces a level of uncertainty and hesitation, indicating that she is not asserting a definitive statement but rather offering a perspective or observation. The use of the phrase ‘*so you just*’ suggests a tentative approach, inviting the audience to consider the idea without feeling pressured to agree or disagree outright. Additionally, the insertion of the adverb ‘again’ after a long pause further emphasizes the tentative nature of the statement, as if the speaker is revisiting a point previously discussed or highlighting a recurring theme. This hedging technique helps maintain a conversational tone while showing respect for the autonomy of the audience and allowing them space to interpret and respond to the idea being presented.

Conclusion

The pragmalinguistic analysis carried out on the material of the interviews conducted by Oprah Winfrey with Michelle Obama, Lady Gaga, and Dwayne ‘The Rock’ has revealed nuanced employment of politeness strategies shaped by social rank and relational dynamics. Positive and negative politeness strategies contribute to fostering a supportive environment across all interactions. The data analysis underscores Oprah Winfrey's versatility in employing diverse politeness strategies adeptly within different interview contexts. Furthermore, hedges and softeners are also used to navigate delicate topics with sensitivity and respect. Through these linguistic maneuvers, Oprah Winfrey showcases her awareness of certain emotional subtleties and her deep commitment to maintaining a harmonious interaction.

Oprah Winfrey's adept utilization of direct and indirect speech acts in the process of inquiry serves as a cornerstone for fostering authentic communication and building rapport within the setting of the talk show. By strategically incorporating direct questions alongside indirect ones, she creates an inclusive atmosphere that encourages the interviewees to share their personal experiences comfortably. This balanced approach ensures that interviewees maintain their dignity and emotional comfort while engaging in open dialogue. No doubt, Oprah Winfrey's mastery of speech acts enables her to navigate sensitive topics with finesse, allowing for genuine and meaningful exchanges that resonate with audiences and contribute to the success of her talk shows.

ՇՈՒՇԱՆԻԿ ՊԱՐՈՆՅԱՆ, ՄԱՆԵ ՎԱՐԴԱՆՅԱՆ – Քաղաքավար խոսքի ռազմավարությունների սոցիալ-գործաբանական նշույթները – Հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել քաղաքավար խոսքի ռազմավարությունների կիրառման վրա ազդող սոցիալ-գործաբանական գործոնները Օփրա Ուինֆրիի հարցազրույցներում և պարզաբանել դրանց դերը մեդիա դիսկուրսի համատեքստում արդյունավետ հաղորդակցություն իրականացնելու և հարգալից փոխհարաբերություններ ձևավորելու գործում: Հոդվածում քաղաքավարությունը դիտարկվում է որպես խոսքային ռազմավարություն, որի շնորհիվ գրուցակիցների կողմից ստեղծվում է հարգալից վերաբերմունք միմյանց նկատմամբ: Հետազոտությունն իրականացվել է գործաբանական լեզվաբանության հայեցակերպով՝ վեր հանելով ուղիղ և անուղղակի խոսքային ակտերի կիրառման գործառույթները քաղաքավար խոսք շարադրելիս: Քննության են առնվում քաղաքավար խոսքի ռազմավարությունները, փաստական նյութի քննությամբ լուսաբանվում են դրանց կիրառման առանձնահատկությունները մեդիա հարցազրույցներում: Հետազոտությամբ պարզվում է, որ Միշել Օբամայի, Լեդի Գազայի և Դ. Ջոնսոնի (մականունը՝ The Rock) հետ Օփրա Ուինֆրիի վարած հարցազրույցներում ուղղակի և անուղղակի հարցական խոսքային ակտերի հմուտ օգտագործումը մեծապես նպաստում է բարեկամական փոխհարաբերություններ ստեղծելուն և անկեղծ պատասխաններ ստանալուն: Այսպիսով, ուղիղ և անուղղակի հարցերի հմուտ գուգորդմամբ՝ հարցազրույց վարողը խուսափում է իր բարձրաստիճան հյուրերի հասարակական վարկը թիրախավորող խոսքային գործողություններ կատարելուց և անհրաժեշտ տեղեկատվություն է ստանում:

Բանալի բառեր – գործաբանություն, քաղաքավար խոսքի տեսություն, քաղաքավար խոսքի ռազմավարություններ, հասարակական վարկ, ուղիղ և անուղղակի խոսքային ակտեր

ШУШАНИК ПАРОНЯН, МАНЕ ВАРДАНИЯН – Социально-прагматические маркеры стратегий вежливости. – Целью данной статьи является исследование социально-прагматических факторов, влияющих на использование стратегий вежливости в интервью Опры Уинфри. Авторы статьи выясняют роль этих факторов в создании эффективной коммуникации и построении взаимопонимания в контексте медиадискурса. В статье вежливость интерпретируется на основе речевой деятельности говорящих. Это – слова, выражения, речевые акты, которые передают уважительную и дружелюбную атмосферу коммуникативной ситуации. Анализ вопросительных речевых актов, который проводится на материале интервью Опры Уинфри с Мишель Обамой, Леди Гагой и Д. Джонсоном (также известным как «The Rock»), раскрывает социокультурные особенности, формирующие ее разговорную манеру поведения. В статье делается вывод, что умелое использование Опррой Уинфри прямых и косвенных вопросительных речевых актов способствует построению взаимопонимания в рамках ток-шоу и побуждает собеседников к содействию. Таким образом, тактика комбинирования прямых и косвенных речевых актов имеет большое значение для создания дружеского взаимопонимания и получения откровенных ответов во время ток-шоу.

Ключевые слова: прагматика, теория вежливости, стратегии вежливости, публичный рейтинг, прямые и косвенные речевые акты.

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