SELF PRESENTATION AS SUBJECTIVE STANCETAKING IN CELEBRITY INTERVIEW SHOW

The paper explores the issues of self-presentation in celebrity interview show from the viewpoint of stancetaking theory. The research is focused on the analysis of self-presentationial motivations, the ways of public image reinforcement / modification and communicative characteristics of the celebrity interview show. It specifies the factors that affect celebrity’s subjective stancetaking as a verbal act of self-presentation in this type of social interaction. It is claimed that the tactics of self-presentation such as self-enhancement and self-criticism are realized through the self-acclaiming and self-disclaiming stancetaking correspondingly. These stance patterns are treated as indirect indexes of speaker’s social personality and are linked to the acts of performance which are aimed at impression management. The celebrity’s stancetaking is also regarded in the paper as a way of his/her self-construction. The method applied in the research is discourse analysis.

Key words: self-presentation, public image, stancetaking, verbal behavior, speech identity.

© Kyrychuk L., 2014
Formulation of the research problem and its significance. In the last decade discursive behavior of communicants has attracted increased attention of scholars. One of the functional parameters of speech and an important dimension of interpersonal and public communication which is now being intensively researched is speaker’s self-presentation. Although considerable amount of research has been done in this field, few attempts have been made to explore the issues of celebrity’s self-presentational behavior. We believe, therefore, that the verbal specificity of self-presentational moves a celebrity makes to sustain or enhance their image needs a thorough analysis. It seems promising that the study of lingual nature of self-presentation might also facilitate clearing up some issues of speech impact in social interaction, particularly, the expedients a speaker uses to achieve their extralinguistic goals. Self-Presentation as Subjective Stancetaking in Celebrity Interview Show.

This paper addresses the questions of self-presentation from the perspective of stancetaking theory, that is our study expands the existing models of self-presentation by introducing the notion of stance into them. It explores the methods of impression management in the celebrity interview show realized by means of selected verbal acts which are viewed as stances.

Since the research considers the verbal behaviors as being linked to social practices the method applied in it is discourse analysis. It seems to be an adequate approach to handle the problems of meaning construction in social settings and to examine self-presentation as a sociolinguistic phenomenon.

1. Self-presentation as a dimension of social interaction

The research of self-presentation encompasses various aspects of this verbal phenomenon, namely, the general principles of self-presentation, its motivations, strategies and tactics, self-presentation as playing a role, self-presentation in different social settings (interviews, public speeches, success stories, social nets, etc.).

Analysis of previous research dealing with this problem. The leading scholars who are doing their research in this field are E. Goffman, R. M. Arkin, A. B. Cialdini, E. E. Jones, R. F. Baumeister, A. H. Baumgardner, R. Hogan, M. R. Leary, R. M. Kowalski, T. S. Pittman, B. R. Schenkler, M. Snyder, M. F. Wiergold and others. They hold the view that self-presentation behavior is any behavior intended to create, modify or maintain an impression of ourselves in the mind of others in order to gain social reward, so that they could have a possibility to influence them. In other words, while self-presenting a speaker strives to convince others that s/he is a certain kind of person or possesses certain characteristics, that s/he is worthy of audience’s love, its friendship, its trust and its respect. Self-presentation motivations derive from two fundamental needs of human social life, namely, the need for status and for popularity [5].

Presentation of the basic content of the research and an interpretation of the results which were obtained. The key motive that regulates all self-presentational practices is creating a desired impression on others in order to influence them to benefit the presenter. For this reason self-presentation is associated with impression management. More specifically self-presentation is precisely seen as the process of impression management and the two terms are used interchangeably. M. R. Leary & R. M. Kowalski, in particular, define impression management as the process by which people control the impressions others form of them. Speakers attempt to maintain certain views of themselves by conveying images of themselves that promote their attainment of desired goals [9].

The brief overview of self-presentation makes us address it as a selected and tactical practice since the choice of self-presentational verbal structures is precisely motivated. That is, while self-presenting a speaker takes overt impression-relevant actions that are governed by two types of self-presentational motivations indicated by R. F. Baumeister:

1. Pleasing the audience, that is matching one’s self-presentation to the audience’s expectations and preferences.
2. Self-construction, that implies matching one’s self-presentation to one’s own ideal self [2].

The two motives necessitate using a set of strategies and tactics that facilitate realization of effective impression management. Often this is accomplished by impressing the audience as being
likable (competent, virtuous, respectful, responsible, etc.). The motives induce speakers to work out their own plan of impression management matching the specificity of a certain situational context and to decide on the optimal means to accomplish their purpose. Scholars regard the speakers’ action plan in terms of strategies and tactics. A strategy is defined as a high level plan to achieve one or more goals. A tactic is viewed as an expedient by which a strategy is carried out; it also involves planned and ad hoc activities meant to deal with the demand of the moment.

Consequently, a communicative strategy is referred to as a plan of action or a purpose of a communicative event whereas a communicative tactic implies a verbal act taken by a speaker to achieve the purpose set by the strategy. Oftentimes, the two terms are used interchangeably on the common basis of their general sense of ‘a road map’.

2. Self-presentation in the celebrity interview show

The celebrity interview show is a particular genre of the celebrity interview. Its structural singularity lies in the specific interactional model which includes a question about celebrity’s social activity or his / her personal qualities asked by one of the members of the audience and celebrity’s long responses that are focused on particular aspects of his/her selfhood or vivid episodes of his/her ‘success story’. Specifically, this type of the model is precisely followed to in the series of the interview shows with Oprah Winfrey (‘The Ultimate O Interview: Oprah Answers All You Questions’).

The celebrity interview show’s distinguishing character imposes a set of requirements and constrains on the celebrity’s self-presentational behavior. The publicity of the interviewee’s position is of central importance. It implies the presenter’s awareness of being observed by the others. ‘The others’ include not only the audience in the interview hall but also TV viewers and readers, that is the celebrity’s speech assumes a ‘spotlight’ quality. Admittedly, acting under these conditions the celebrity realizes that whatever s/he says will surely be evaluated by the broader audience on the national and international scale. The ‘spotlight’ communication calls for a careful selection of self-presentational acts on the part of the celebrity presenter. The more public one’s behavior, the more likely one is to be concerned with how it appears to others and more motivated one will be to impression management [3].

3. Identities’ construction as modification of the public image

A celebrity enters the interview with an already built up and fixed public image of him/herself which marks him/her as a distinguishable personality. Celebrities are actually conscious of the fact that it is their public image that makes them attractive. Consequently, there is no need for their image-building, however, some of the image components may be reinforced, or modified, or rectified, or declined in accordance with audience’s expectations.

The audience expectations follow from the public awareness of the celebrity’s image. Some of the image components are acknowledged as the core personal qualities, that is due to them the celebrity is recognized. Hence, making their speeches celebrities pursue the goal of reinforcing the core qualities which have been proven to be effective and attractive. This is realized through self-presentational tactics of self-enhancement where the emphasis is laid on providing new evidence that helps sustain and substantiate their public image.

However, trying to appear distinct, dynamic and self-improving a celebrity attempts to present new shades of their personality, that is to construct new identities which might complement or expand the core qualities. The self-construction process in the celebrity interview show is aimed at animation of the public image, thus, making it more interesting and salient. In order to enliven it a celebrity uses the self-presenntational tactics of self-development. In fact, “most people value certain aspects of themselves that they would proudly display to others at appropriate times. Impression management often involves an attempt to put the best part of oneself onto public view” [9, p. 40].

In this light, we believe that one more impression management motivation that governs celebrity’s verbal behavior in the interview show should be added, namely, the one of image reinforcement/modification. It is, apparently, linked to self-construction motivation and may be viewed as its specific aspect.
The self-construction behavior is related to the process of revealing multiple self-identities. Celebrity’s personal identities, as a rule, (though not necessarily) are constructed in the boundaries of the category of positivity. The positive identities that are being constructed in an on-going interview show are meant to gain social approval.

4. Stancetaking as a verbal act of self-presentation

Another singular feature of celebrity’s self-presentational behavior in the interview show is concerned with the particular forms of self-identities’ construction. As M. Leary & R. Kowalski state, all situational and dispositional factors that effect impression-relevant behavior motivate people to manage their impressions or determine the particular manner in which they construct their public images [9, p. 42]. In this respect A. Jaffe claims that multiple selves and social identities are constructed by particular patterns of verbal acts a speaker performs. The speaking personality is shaped up as a social identity due to a cluster of features observed in his/her individual acts of speaking [7]. Admittedly, while making a choice of a particular verbal act a speaker is taking a stance.

The term ‘stance’ is commonly understood as the expression of a speaker’s attitude, perspective, point of view, standpoint, opinion or position. This understanding has also passed on to much linguistic and interactional research, in which it has frequently been understood as a subjective attitude or position which rises from the speaker’s internal mental positions, aims and beliefs [5, p. 15].

Scholars hold the view that activity and identities are linguistically indexed through stance. Therefore, a repeated stance patterns taken over time may emerge as an identity [4, p. 52]. A. Jaffe assumes that linguistic stance can be read as more or less direct sign of a position, identity or role with which an individual wishes to be associated [7, p. 10]. As similar to this viewpoint, R. Englebretson says that through stancetaking speakers are constructing their social worlds, their social identities, their public images [4, p. 20].

In most interviews, interviewees are asked to take stances, for instance to state their views on some social issues, to evaluate some experience they have had, or to comment on some particular case [8]. The stances a celebrity takes in an interview show are intended for controlling the social impression. They can be wholly unconscious, reflecting the specific persona that a celebrity naturally projects, but at a higher level of skills they are used with conscious awareness. In this case, the speaker carefully selects specific style, words, arguments, etc.

It is necessary to emphasize that in the interview show celebrity’s stancetaking is determined by self-presentational strategies and tactics. It means that the choice of an appropriate impression management linguistic form is subordinated to the plan of action aimed at reinforcement / modification of the celebrity’s public image. Particularly, in the course of an on-going interview using one of self-presentational tactics from a wide range of possibilities is precisely an act of stancetaking.

As far as the celebrity interview show is concerned stance is viewed as a particular act of self-presentation undertaken with respect to the interview extralinguistic parameters, namely, the situational conventions, the status of the interviewee, the target audience, the public information, the role constrains, etc.

5. Subjective stancetaking in the celebrity interview show

Stancetaking process is widely recognized as an intersubjective activity since a stance taken by a speaker is his/her verbal reaction to the immediate interlocutor’s position. Intersubjectivity of stancetaking is clearly seen in a dialogical communication. However, the material of the interview show makes us treat the stances the celebrity takes as subjective, so far as the model of this kind of interview does not provide for a dialogue, interruptions, follow-up questions, etc.

The celebrity interview show is a case of asymmetric ‘spotlight’ communication where the participants enjoy unequal status: one party takes the foreground position while the other makes the background. In accordance with the rules of the interview show the celebrity alone is placed in the attention focus, the members of the audience who ask questions are unidentified (in sense of their
discursive characteristics). Celebrity’s responses are tailored not for the present participants but, mostly, for a broader potential audience. Under the conditions of asymmetric ‘spotlight’ communication celebrity’s speech appears to be impression-oriented rather than interlocutor-oriented, thus, losing its intersubjective quality.

The types of stance patterns a celebrity repeatedly uses demonstrate the manner of accomplishing his/her self-presentational goals. The dominating tactic of self-enhancement is realized through the self-acclaiming stances. A celebrity routinely offers positive evaluation of their abilities and qualities before the audience and, as a public persona who enjoys favorable social opinion they wish to “capitalize on that outcome” [1, p. 185]. Taking self-acclaiming stances a celebrity attempts to secure recognition for his / her success by accentuating his/her positive qualities.

Admittedly, overuse of self-acclaims by a celebrity may risk attribution of arrogance and bragging. Being aware of these conversational principles s/he levels off his/her self-presentational behavior by taking self-disclaiming stances. A self-disclaiming stance involves confessing celebrity’s flaws, foibles and mistakes. It is meant to portray the speaker as honest, modest and self-critical.

The balance of self-acclaiming and self-disclaiming stances enables a celebrity to be perceived as competent but modest, supportive but demanding, respectful but critical, that is, as a self-developing and self-improving social personality. This corresponds to the idea about stances as indirect indexes of speaker’s personality, that is the cumulative effect of variations of self-acclaiming and self-disclaiming stances results in multiple self-construction. So far as celebrity’s stances are linked to acts of performance which are aimed at impression management, by making their stance choices in the interview show speakers accomplish their self-presentational goals.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** Celebrity’s self-presentational behavior in the interview show matches the conventions of ‘spotlight’ communication and is governed by impression management goals. A particular aim that a celebrity pursues is his/her image reinforcement/modification through the verbal constructing of his/her multiple identities. The self-presentational behavior involves the choice of particular acts of impression management which are viewed as subjective stances. The self-acclaiming and self-disclaiming stances of self-presentation are used alternately in celebrity’s responses. Their balance makes it possible to avoid excessive self-enhancement and facilitates to present the speaker as a self-developing and self-improving personality. In this sense the celebrity’s subjective stances are tactical verbal acts of his/her self-presentation.

We believe that a profound analysis of stance markers is needed for it could provide the identification of a celebrity’s unique stance signature.

**References**


Киричук Лариса. Саморепрезентація як суб'єктивне позиціонування в інтерв’ю-шоу зі знаменитістю. У статті висвітлено питання саморепрезентації знаменитості в інтерв’ю-шоу з погляду теорії позиціонування. Дослідження зосереджено на вивченні мотивації саморепрезентації, способах посилення / модифікації іміджу та комунікативних характеристиках інтерв’ю-шоу зі знаменитістю. У роботі визначаються фактори, які впливають на суб'єктивне позиціонування як мовленнєвий акт саморепрезентації в цьому типі соціальної взаємодії. Створено, що такі тактики саморепрезентації, як самопосилення та самокритика, реалізуються, відповідно, через самоохваLENНя і самозаперечення позиціонування. Такі моделі позиціонування трактуюмо як непрямі показники соціальної особистості мовця і пов'язуємо з демонстративними діями, мета яких – контроль за здійснення впливу. Позиціонування знаменитості також трактуємо як спосіб її самоконструювання. Головним методом дослідження є дискурсивний аналіз.

Ключові слова: саморепрезентація, імідж, позиціонування, мовна поведінка, мовна ідентичність.

УДК 811.112.2. ’38 ’42

Наталія Лисецька

МОВНЕ ВИРАЖЕННЯ АНТИВОЄННОГО ХУДОЖНЬОГО ДИСКУРСУ

У статті досліджено художній дискурс. На основі інтерпретаційного аналізу вірша von G. Heym “Der Krieg” і п’єси von M. Ravenhill “Shoot / get treasure / repeat” // “Freedom and Democracy I hate you” проаналізовано одну з найбільш актуальних проблем сучасної лінгвістики – вираження антивоєнної тематики засобами німецької мови. В обох проаналізованих творах, віддалених у часовому просторі один від одного на 100 років, простежуються паралелі у виборі теми небезпеки війни та її загрози цивілізації, які містять, однак, деякі відмінності її формально-змістового викладу. Якщо Г. Хейм намагався розбудити пасивного спостерігача, то М. Рейвенгілл спробував протиставити добрий світ агресивному, сподіваючись перевиховання останнього. Руйнівну силу війни обидва автори наочно показали на основі метафорики, проте у віршованому жанрі це досягається насамперед засобами перенесеного значення (персоніфікація, символіка, гама кольорів), у той час як прозовий твір намагається переконати за допомогою фігуру накопичення (клімакс), протиставлення (порівняння), повтору, виділення (емфаза) тощо. У перспективі вважаємо доцільним проведення наукових пошуків вербалізації та об’єктивації антивоєнного дискурсу сучасної німецької преси.

Ключові слова: дискурс, метафора, клімакс, дистанційний / контактний повтор, апозіопеза.

Постановка наукової проблеми та її значення. Людське суспільство неодноразово зазнавало руйнації, спричиненою численними війнами. Світ здригається від погроз і жорстокості різних терористичних угрупувань. Усі ці події відображаються в мові. З огляду на це, звернення до теми вербалізації антивоєнного дискурсу цілком актуальне.

Аналіз досліджень цієї проблеми. Мову демократії і політики ґрунтовно досліджували німецькі вчені [1; 5]. Питання антивоєнного дискурсу цікавив багатьох учених, зокрема пошуки проводили на основі сучасного воєнного публіцистичного дискурсу (Жуков І. В., 2001), антивоєнної романістики в порівняльному аспекті на прикладі творчості Е. М. Ремарка