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**SELF-DEFENCE STRATEGY IN AMERICAN POLITICAL
INTERVIEW**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to political communication analysis from the perspective of cognitive pragmatics and discourse analysis. Strategic approach to the discourse of American political interview is based on the communicative intention concept. Communicative intentions and purposes in political communication are studied. The purpose of the speaker is defined with the help of the whole complex of speech actions. Within the framework of communicative intention, the research of modern American political interview is presented. Political interview is viewed as a separate highly conventional genre of political discourse with strict distinction of speech roles. Careful consideration is given to its interlocutory nature, which determines political interview as an explicated dialogue on a certain problem, reflecting patterns of spontaneous public speech. American political interview text producing characteristics are addressed in the abstract. The research is dedicated to the self-defence strategy in American political interview, which is one of the most significant strategies in political communication on the whole. Self-defence tactics of justification and tactics of contestation are elaborated. This is a pragmatical “confusion pair” of tactics which are closely connected yet need to be specified. For that purpose, certain linguistic means of self-defence realization are clarified within the tactics of justification and contestation.

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Keywords: Cognitive pragmatics, communicative intention, political discourse, self-defence strategy, tactics of justification, tactics of contestation.



1. Introduction

1.1. Political interview as a genre of political discourse

Political interview is one of the most important forms of political communication. Nowadays it is a very popular genre in the media and has a high share of political sphere coverage compared to other genres. The central aim of acquiring political power is reached in political interview with the help of public opinion manipulation, with the help of imposing certain stereotypes on the audience, forming opinions and estimations (Pustovar, 2017).

Political communication, including political interview, has broad basic purposes that determine communicative strategies of political discourse. As a rule, a politician wants:

- To make an addressee vote for a particular candidate or political party during elections;
- To win great reputation or strengthen his own image, to be well-liked;
- To convince an addressee to agree with the speaker, with his opinion, to accept his point of view (concerning any problem);
- To create a particular emotional disposition, to evoke a particular emotional state of his interlocutor;
- To give an addressee new knowledge, new conceptions of a question under discussion, to inform about his stand on an issue (Parshina, 2005).

1.2. Characteristics of political interview

Political interview is the most frequent eventive genre form in all types of political discourse. In several studies it is described and specified as a speech genre. Political interview is defined as a separate highly conventional (socially conditioned) genre of political discourse with strict distinction of speech roles of its direct participants (Mikhalskaya, 2000). In the course of the interview a journalist is revealing or is trying to reveal politician's traits meaningful for the society including the "precarious ones", whereas a politician is striving to persuade the audience of his own relevance by answering the journalist's questions. Political interview has interlocutory nature, which determines it as an explicated dialogue on a certain problem, reflecting patterns of spontaneous public speech (Babich, 2015).

Being a genre of political discourse, political interview texts are indicated by specific semantic-pragmatic categories (Kenzhekanova, 2015):

- The image of the author,
- Addressee ability or factor of addressee,
- Informational content,
- Intentionality,
- Estimation,
- Conventionality,
- Emotiveness / expressivity,
- Modality,
- Inter-textuality,
- Socio-cultural context.

From the functional side, scientists single out pragmatic markers (Furko, 2013) or discourse markers of political interviews and categorize them by their function into the following categories: interpersonal, referential, structural and cognitive (Zand-Moghadam, Bikineh, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

Analysis of political communication in political interview from the perspective of cognitive pragmatics and discourse studies is of great interest to linguists and philologists. Scholars actively elaborate such contemporary problem. Strategic approach to the discourse of American political interview is mainly based on the communicative intention concept (Grice, 1975). Communicative intention is a unique recursive characteristic, a specific feature of an individual, which distinguishes him from other living beings. Communicative intention represents the speaker's intention to communicate some information, to convey in his utterance a certain subjective meaning. Therefore, intentionality is integral to our study. The problem of our research lies in examination and categorization of communicative intention of self-defence as exemplified in American political interview. The intentions of the addresser in communication consist of his aims and intentions and define the form and content of the speech. Communicative intention or purpose of a speaker is reached with the help of the whole complex of speech actions. Purposes appear in the concrete communicative situations as a result of the preliminary evaluation of the wide sociocultural context by the addresser (Petrochenkova, 2016).

3. Research Questions

Main questions of our research are formulated as follows:

- How the key concept of political interview can be clarified?
- How the characteristics of political interview can be specified?
- In what forms is communicative intention of self-defence realized in contemporary American political interview?
- What are the linguistic means allowing to realize self-defence strategy in a given communicative situation?

4. Purpose of the Study

Gaining political power is undoubtedly the main communicative purpose in political discourse in general and in political interview in particular. In the context of acquiring political power alongside the obvious dominant power fighting or attacking strategies, there brought forward some counterstrategies as a response to the outer attempts or aggression. Prominence of such strategies, to which self-defence strategy refers, is also largely determined by interlocutory nature and particular conversational structure of a political interview.

The research is dedicated to the self-defence strategy in American political interview, which is one of the most significant strategies in political communication on the whole. Within the strategy of self-defence, tactics of justification and tactics of contestation (Parshina, 2005) are elaborated. The main purpose of the study is to specify these tactics of justification and contestation, to compare and contrast

them. Furthermore, we aim to define verbal means of self-defence strategy realization in the case-study of American political interviews.

5. Research Methods

The data of research consists in contemporary American political interviews (2007-2017) of well-known federal level politicians in the USA. In the course of political interview a politician is asked many provocative questions. For that reason, he has to put up resistance and act on the defence in order to gain his point and protect reputation. The strategy of self-defence includes tactics of justification and tactics of contestation.

5.1 Tactics of justification

The first group of justification tactics can be analyzed through the following examples (Bill O'Reilly's Super Bowl interview with President Obama).

Example №1

- OK, but you understand that a lot of Americans feel you're a big government liberal who wants to intrude on their personal freedom. Now, they also say that you have been moving -- now, that's -- come on, you know that...

- I think that a lot of folks who watch you don't believe that.

- They think way worse than me.

- And I give you credit, you've got a pretty big viewership, so you can be persuasive.

In the given example, justification is realized directly through denial “don’t”. Furthermore, justification is not expressed from the speaker, but from the whole nation “folks”. Therefore, politician poses as a supporter of people, as a man, who is of the same view with people and has the same values. With the help of a witty remark about an interviewer’s viewership a politician shows that the journalist’s persuasiveness is based on his character qualities, not on the objective facts.

Example №2.

- So, you don't know when he's going to leave?

- Well, you know, ultimately, the United States can't absolutely dictate...

In the second example a series of parenthetical words in the beginning of the line “well, you know, ultimately” reveal perplexity of the speaker. Justification is expressed through denial “can’t”. The very choice of the verb “can’t” instead of initially put in the question “don’t” is interesting. This might allow to release the speaker from responsibility, because “can’t” sounds less firmly than “don’t” and refers to some external circumstances.

Example №3.

- So, you don't care?

- Well, I do care. I want -- I want a great game. I want a great game.

- You don't care who wins?

- But these are pretty evenly matched teams. You know, I think that, you know, Green Bay is probably a little faster. Steelers got a little more experience. I think the Steelers not having their starting center is something they've got to be worried about.

- Now, will you actually watch the game?

- Absolutely.

In the third example a politician instantly denies accusation of his incompetence in football (which is as well accusation of his non-solidarity with the American people who in their majority love football). He contradicts with triple syntactical and lexical repetition “I want” and intensifying auxiliary verb structure “do care”, which proves firmness of his position. To show contrast he then uses “but”. In addition to that, a politician operates facts using specific football terminology “starting centre” and names of football teams “Steelers”, “Green Bay” to justify himself and show his deep knowledge and genuine interest in the sphere.

Example №4.

- But are you going to watch the game? Are you going to...

- Of course. I'll watch the game.

- Are you going to sit and you're going to watch?

- I'm not going to --

- You know, like, football, you know, like, blitzes and coverage and all that?

- Oh, I know football, man.

- You do?

- Absolutely.

- I know you're a basketball guy.

- I know football.

- Yes?

- I know football and I will watch the game. What happens is I schmooze with everybody when they come.

- Yes?

- Give them a little bit of time. But once the game starts, they can just sit and watch the game.

- And you're out of there?

- Well, no, I'll be sitting there with them, but I don't want them coming up chitting and chatting.

- All right.

- We got to focus on football.

In Example №4 justification is expressed with the help of the whole row of repeated cross-oppositions.

5.2 Tactics of contestation

The second group of contestation tactics can be analyzed through the following examples (Bill O'Reilly's Super Bowl interview with President Obama).

Example №1

- Federal judge in Florida said, your health care law is unconstitutional. The Supreme Court may follow on that, it's going to be very close. Are you prepared for that law to go down?

- Well, I think the judge in Florida was wrong. Keep in mind that we've had 12 judges -- that just threw this case out -- the notion that the health care law was unconstitutional...

In most examples of contestation in addition to denial we can observe the following clarification of the correct point of view from the speaker's perspective. "Keep in mind that" introduces clarification in the first example.

Example №2.

- Can I tell you what they say?
- What do they say?
- You're much more guarded.
- Well, I think what is true is that, when you're in this job, everything you say could affect markets. It could affect...

To show disagreement all kinds of emphatic means are used. Here we can notice emphatic construction "what is true is".

Example №3.

- Do you deny the assessment? Do you deny that you are a man who wants to redistribute wealth?
- Absolutely.
- You deny that?
- Absolutely. I didn't raise taxes once, I lowered taxes over the last two years.

(NFL on FOX 5:27)

As can be seen from the third example, contrastive linguistic means serve to support an opposing argument. Denial here is strengthened by opposition "raise-lowered". What is more, repeated adverbs "absolutely" are used for emphasis.

6. Findings

According to the results of our research tactics of justification and contestation within the strategy of self-defence have the following ratio (Figure 01).

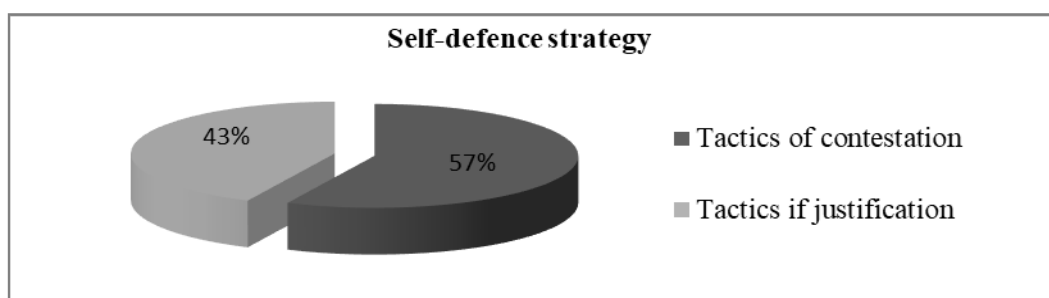


Figure 01. Self-defence strategy

The tactics of contestation appeared to be more frequently used (57%) compared to the tactics of justification (43%), though the difference is not huge. Justification seems a little less convincing, while contestation in its turn includes reverse proposition, disagreement and contrasting argumentation in addition to denial.

The main linguistic means of self-defence strategy realization are: direct denials, negative verb forms, parentheses, lexical and syntactical repetitions, emphatic constructions, contrasting conjunctions and contrasting lexical units.

7. Conclusion

Political interview is a frequent, eventive and highly conventional genre of political discourse with peculiar interlocutory nature. It combines features of political and media discourses and has basic characteristics: the image of the author, addressee ability or factor of addressee, informational content, intentionality, estimation, conventionality, emotiveness / expressivity, modality, inter-textuality, socio-cultural context.

To sum up, a case study of political interview illustrates realization of communicative strategy of self-defence. Two main tactics of justification and contestation as a whole complex of speech actions represent the strategy of self-defence. Self defence is revealed on linguistic level and its certain verbal means are found.

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