

Михайлина Меринюк
м. Чернівці

Науковий керівник: к.ф.н., асист. Ковалюк Ю.В.

**GRAMMATICAL AND SYNTACTICAL LANGUAGE
FEATURES OF ENGLISH TALK SHOWS AS A GENRE OF
TV DISCOURSE
(BASED ON THE SCRIPT OF THE ELLEN DeGENERES SHOW)**

Анотація. У статті аналізується специфіка англійського телевізійного дискурсу з лінгвістичної точки зору, розглянуто феномен ток-шоу та його місце у новітніх мовознавчих студіях. На практичному рівні визначено основні граматичні та синтаксично стилістичні особливості, що характеризують ток-шоу як жанр телевізійного дискурсу і є складовими стратегій та тактик впливу на глядачів.

Ключові слова: телевізійний дискурс, ток-шоу, стратегії та тактики, лінгвістичні особливості, словесні засоби

Summary. The article is devoted to the study of TV discourse and the notion of talk shows. Even though some preliminary work has been carried out since the beginning of the XXI century, these phenomena are still not investigated enough. Previous research, tending to focus on theory rather than conducting experiments and revealing the main linguistic characteristics, lack the practical data and need refinement. Our research demonstrates the main differences between the conventional model of communication, offered by R. Jakobson and a specific form of communicative interaction on TV, which include spatial and temporal distance between the interlocutors and unilateral direction of communication. In addition, it delves into the major strategies and techniques, used for influencing the audience, as well as it corroborates the main aim of talk shows, that is to deliver the information to the audience in the easiest and fastest ways possible, for the purpose of saving time and energy. Dealing with the analysis of the semantic, functional and frequency characteristics of various grammatical and syntactical features of the language used by the host

of The Ellen DeGeneres Show from the linguistic point of view, this article attempts at revealing the link between the effect that mass media has on the audience and the verbal means used for it. The findings of our investigation prove that on the grammatical level, the host mainly avoids complex and elaborate structures, while on the syntactical level the opposite is true.

Keywords: TV discourse, talk show, strategies and tactics, linguistic peculiarities, verbal means

Formulation of the problem. At the end of the previous and the beginning of this century, hardly anyone could imagine that there will be something that can influence people worldwide as it is done by TV. Its effect on the audience was so profound and far-reaching that people started questioning how it could enter our minds and manipulate our actions and worldview to such an extent. For that reason TV has become the focus of research in various fields of science. From the linguistic point of view, it has long been viewed as inappropriate for studies. Even though recently more and more investigations on this subject have been carried out, there are still a lot of aspects to work on. In our humble opinion, nowadays TV is slowly approaching its end, as the Internet is taking over. And even if it does not disappear soon, its relevance will no longer be the same as before. So our task is to investigate TV discourse and to contribute to its studies while it is still apposite.

Review of recent research and publications on this issue. Contemporary linguistic studies of discourses are based on the principles of cognitive linguistics, which has been the focus of analysis of such linguists as M. Boldyrev, S. Zhabotynska, O. Kubriakova, A. Levytskyi, Z. Popova and others; theory of communication, studied by F. Batsevych, G. Potcheptsov, O. Semeniuk, I. Shevchenko and others; theory of speech genres, presented by N. Arutiunova, M. Bahtin, L. Krysin, T. Shmeliiova; concepts of communicative strategies, whose representatives are T. Van Dijk, T. Larina, S. Levinson, O. Issers and others.

Serious scientific investigations on the phenomenon of mass media, television in particular, have been conducted by such linguists as I. Bohomolov, I. Brodskii, A. Vartanov, G. Kuznetsov, S. Muratov and others. During the last decades works of I. Aleshchanov, O. Gusev,

B. Zilbert, L. Maidanov and M. Iahubov devoted to problems of mass communication activities, manipulative techniques, strategies of influence on the audience have been published.

All aspects of our life can be classified according to various discourses. Yet, this term doesn't have only one definition and it is sometimes quite hard to define what exactly can be interpreted as discourse. But according to Batsevych, discourse is a type of communicational activity, interactive phenomenon and speech flow that exists in various forms, including oral and written [2, c. 137]. Many linguists have offered their classification of various discourses, however, we consider the typology presented by Potcheptsov in his work 'Theory of Communication' to be the most detailed and exact one [8, c. 75-90].

It is a well-known fact that informational influence, as a complex interdisciplinary problem, is given a lot of attention in various fields of science, namely in psychology, linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology, social psychology, political science and journalism, etc. It can be explained primarily by the fact that any information, including television influence in its various manifestations is both an act of communication in the broadest sense of the term, and a means to achieve nonverbal aims and objectives, covering a wide range of interpersonal (e.g. participants in TV programs and TV audience) relationships.

Of all the media, television is a model of communication, which, on the one hand, resembles the usual model of interpersonal communication, according to Jacobson's scheme [9] and on the other hand, it is a specific form of communicative interaction, because the active communication between the interlocutors (host and the audience) is one-sided.

According to Formanova, the very concept of television discourse is interpreted as a specific discourse that reflects the complex semiotic structure of the relationship between verbal and visual means in a single complex, immersed in a particular social space; communicates information, exerts influence with the dichotomy of word and image included in this concept, i.e. the totality of all possible representative forms by means of symbolic means - verbal and nonverbal. [3, cr. 257].

Among the genres of television discourse, the talk show genre should be singled out as one of the relatively new and popular varieties of mass media discourse. Talk show belongs to the dialogic type of discourse and represents a dynamic process of communicative interaction,

characterized by semantic and pragmatic coherence, communicative initiative of the presenter and communicative responsive reaction of the audience, a set of communicative strategies and tactics [5]. As for the specific characteristics of TV discourse, and talk shows in particular, we should mention, of course, that it does not require formality, that is to say, its aim is to imitate everyday communication. Yet, the TV host and the audience are at a great distance one from another, both spatial and temporal, so there is no possibility to clarify and to correct the message at once. For that reason, while choosing the information to be delivered on air, everything depends on the host. Taking into consideration such psychological notion as attention span, there is a dire need of careful selection of the devices used for delivering information and of the economy of its volume. In case the host neglects this extremely important aspect, there is a risk of minimizing the quantity of information perceived by the audience or losing its focus at all.

The **aim** of our work is to analyze the peculiarities of the language used by the host of one of the talk shows from the linguistic point of view, focusing specifically on the grammatical, syntactical and stylistic features. To achieve this aim we have studied the theoretical data of the concept of discourse in general and TV discourse in particular, underscored the general characteristics of talk shows and their status in the current studies of TV discourse and have analyzed the research material, paying attention to the abovementioned peculiarities.

The research material. For the purpose of the investigation we have chosen one of the most famous talk shows nowadays – The Ellen DeGeneres Show and the instances of various grammatical, syntactic, and stylistic characteristics have been drawn from the scripts of the host’s speeches in the eighteenth season of The Ellen Degeneres Show, which are presented in the article as illustrative examples.

The main part. Television and talk shows in particular have a great effect on the audience, which is manifested by the professionalism of the presenter. In our opinion, a skillful TV host must have extensive knowledge of principles of speech influence, including basic communicative strategies that are relevant in the English language discourse of talk shows. For that reason Ellen DeGeneres, who is one of the most successful and famous TV hosts and comedians of our times, was chosen as an object of our study. Her worldwide known

show was firstly released in 2003 and is one of not so many shows that has been on TV for such a long time and is still loved by the audience not less than ever. Ellen DeGeneres brings her unique ability to joke in everyday conversation. With an impressive series of interviews with celebrities, an eclectic mix of musical performances by famous singers and bands, and ordinary people with extraordinary stories and talents, the Ellen DeGeneres Show creates a fun and unpredictable alternative to daytime television and opens up the world in new ways.

Ellen begins each episode of her show with monologues, which have become very popular among viewers and which have served us as the material for the investigation. When we talk about a person's speech, we usually pay attention to the manner of speaking and the style that prevails. Professor Labov stated in his work that there are no one-style speakers, as it is impossible to follow the rules and use tokens inherent in only one style in all situations [10, ct.97]. The same is with Ellen's speech. It is full of components of various ones. So we can call it a mixture of several styles, the informal being the major one alongside with ironic and sarcastic ones. Ellen's performances are extremely diverse and full of many linguistic and extralinguistic features, which we are exploring in our work. This article includes the results of the investigation of grammar, which is subdivided into tenses, voices and mood, and syntax, subdivided into stylistics, sentence structure and purpose.

Grammar is the first aspect that comes to mind when we speak about the linguistic features. It is grammatical competence and fluency in speech that are indicators of the accuracy in a certain language. It is important to remember that these two concepts do not always coincide, because according to Chomsky, fluency is not always an indicator of competence. Often speakers who are well acquainted with literary norms, especially in an informal setting, may deviate from the rules, break off phrases, miss some words, and so on. [7, ct. 173] Grammatical categories in English encode conceptual domains and contrast them with others. They include the parts of speech, as well as morphological markers that encode functions such as tense, voice and mood., which are investigated in our work.

Tense category is a verbal category that reflects an objective time category. An essential characteristic of the category of tense is that it relates the time of the action, event or state of things referred to in

the sentence to the tense in which they are mentioned. Traditionally, 4 indefinite, 4 continuous, 4 perfect and 4 perfect continuous tenses are distinguished in modern English and most of them are expressed analytically. Yet, not all the tenses are actually used in oral speech, especially in the informal environment, as speakers tend to use the simplest way to express their thoughts for the sake of saving time and energy. The same is with Ellen. With the help of stratified sampling method we have managed to attribute the data to various tenses, while quantitative analysis and the statistical method have contributed to the calculations and identification of the frequency of use of certain verb tenses. According to the results, more than a half of utterances, that is to say 58% or 1380 instances were used in the Present Simple, 16% (393) Past Simple, 11% (267) Present Progressive, 6% (137) Present Perfect Simple and the rest of tenses make less than 3 %, while some, such as Past Perfect Progressive, Future Perfect Simple and Future Perfect Progressive were not used at all. Speaking about the accuracy in the use of tenses we have to say that in some cases Ellen disregards grammar rules, using state verbs in Present Progressive, like in the sentence ‘*You look beautiful, and I’m sure you smell great, that’s what I’m imagining, anyway.*’ Or in other cases, she substitutes the Perfect tenses with Simple ones, as in the example ‘*I started saying be kind to one another, after a young man named Tyler Clementi took his own life after being bullied for being gay.*’

The category of voice occupies a peculiar place in the system of verbal categories because it reflects the direction of the process regarding the participants in the situation denoted by a syntactic construction. The category of voice in the English language is realized through the opposition of active and passive voice and is a grammatical category, i.e. it is expressed by means of grammatical forms and not by lexical means. While examining the scripts drawn from The Ellen Degeneres Show we came across a relatively small number of passive voice instances. Only 4 out of 10 passive constructions were found in the speech, namely Present, Past and Future Simple Passive as well as Present Progressive Passive. But what is even more surprising is the general number of passive voice structures, that is 39, out of which Present and Past Simple passive were found in 18 instances each, 2 examples were in Present Progressive passive and only one instance of

Future Simple passive was found. With the help of statistical method we have calculated that only 1.6 % of all utterances were in the passive form. However, at this point we decided to move further and investigate this category deeper and so we found out that some grammarians hold that the number of voices is more than two. Some of them count even five voices in Modern English, namely: the Active voice, the Passive voice, the Reflexive voice, the Middle voice, and the Reciprocal voice.

The existence of the Middle voice is the most controversial, because according to many scientists, it does not have its own form of expression. Professor Barkhudarov, for example, generally argues that the Middle voice is a part of the Active and should not be distinguished separately. It is because of the inconsistency of grammars and the lack of clearly defined constructions that we cannot determine exactly which examples can be attributed to this category. However, with the reflexive and reciprocal voices the situation is completely different. In the process of investigation, we have found several instances of Reflexive voice, that is to say 21 utterances, e.g. *If that's ever the case, I've let myself down, and I've hurt myself as well.*; and 2 examples of Reciprocal voice, e.g. *I think they would like each other.*

In general, from the above statistics, we can conclude that, as in the case with tenses, Ellen avoids grammatical constructions that are not inherent in everyday communication. And even in a small number of passive constructions the two Simple tenses prevail, while more complex forms are completely absent.

The following category is mood, which according to professor Kaushanska is a grammatical category that indicates a speaker's attitude to an action expressed by a predicate in terms of its reality. [6, c.134.] In other words it expresses character of connection between the process denoted by the verb and the actual reality, either presenting the process as a fact that really happened, happens or will happen, or treating it as an imaginary phenomenon. In general the number of English moods in different theories varies from two to seventeen. In our paper we only focus on the indicative, imperative and subjunctive moods.

The indicative mood is the basic mood of the verb. Morphologically it is the most developed system including all the categories of the verb. The verb in this mood form strictly distinguishes the tense category, which was investigated by us as well, because it names actions taking

place in the objective time: present, past or future. So it is not a surprise that most of the instances drawn for the purpose of the investigation come in this particular mood. For example the excerpt '*Obviously, there are a lot of negative things going on. So instead, I want to talk about something positive-- my COVID test. It's positive. Yes, so I tested positive before the holidays. I'm fine now, everything's good. I'm all clear.*' is completely expressed with the help of indicative mood.

The use of subjunctive is quite various and among the techniques we can differentiate between the use of set expressions, which were not encountered in the process of investigation, the use of II and III conditionals for imaginary situations in the present, future and past, the use of modals 'should' and 'may', the use of 'I wish' structure etc. For example, '*You may hate me.*', '*And now when I hear 2020, all I think of is something I wish I never saw.*', '*I guess if I wore this, my back would be as straight as Cargo Shorts and fraternities*'

The imperative mood represents an action as a command, urging, request, exhortation addressed to one's interlocutor). It is a direct expression of one's will. In our research we mainly come across the use of this mood with the aim of addressing the audience and requesting an emotional response, as in the instances '*We only have an hour, so let's get down to business.*' or '*If anybody is thinking of changing their title, or giving yourself a nickname, do not go with the Be Kind Lady. Don't do it.*' However, we have found several examples with the use of imperative for urging the virtual audience to take some actions, for instance '*Raise your hand you have not voted yet*' or '*Vote! Vote, vote, vote, vote!*'. In addition it was also used on several occasions to express a mild command, like in the utterances '*Can we get a drum roll?*'

All in all the predominant in Ellen's speech is the indicative mood. And this is not surprising, because it is with the help of this mood that we express most situations in everyday speech. But the predominance of statements in the imperative over the subjunctive mood is the specifics of the speech of TV presenters, whose task is not only to convey information to the audience, but also to motivate them to certain actions both during the broadcast and after it.

The syntactic organization of English-language television discourse imposes on the participants of the speech act the task of selecting and combining language units in a special way, in order to ensure adequate and

clear perception of information provided by the host, taking into account the special characteristics of the addressee. The speech act, being the minimal unit of communication, can be viewed from various perspectives, including illocution, syntactic structure and stylistic peculiarities.

John Austin, who laid the foundations of speech act theory [4], was followed by many other linguists in the XX century, including John Searle, who classified the illocutionary speech acts into declaratives, directives, expressives and questives [1, сr. 102].

Based on the outlined types of speech acts, the analysis of research materials allowed us not only to distribute all statements according to the previously mentioned classification, but also to find cases in which two or three types of speech acts are combined in one subtype. The results of our study indicate that the vast majority of word usage contains features of only one type of speech acts, mainly declaratives, like in the example '*We have been stuck at home for months and months. All we did was puzzles and drink our weight in wine.*'. What also should be taken into consideration is that this type of speech acts is the only one that can come in combination with all the rest, while the others do not have such a possibility. Directive speech acts, for instance, cannot be used together with the expressive one. However, it is worth taking into account the fact that the situation changed with the beginning of quarantine and the transition of the show to a virtual audience. For that reason the number of directives has decreased, as it is rather hard to involve the audience the same way it was done before. Moreover, it is worth noting that the material of our study were the monologues of the host, rather than conversations with guests of the show, which are full of questives. Wherefore, the situation and the results of investigation of this aspect may deviate according to what exactly and when it is retrieved from.

Moving further, we worked on the structure of utterances and since the results of the previous sections showed us the tendency to use the simplest means in the process of speech, we expected to follow it here as well. However, to our surprise, the number of simple sentences turned out to be quite insignificant in comparison with compound sentences, for instance '*I realize that with that comes responsibility, and I take responsibility for what happens at my show.*' In addition, the use of complex sentences is also common in the host's speech, even

though sometimes such sentences cause difficulties in perception, as the addressee must listen carefully and memorize all the details of the dependant clause before proceeding to the information in the main one, we have found 684 instances of their use, which makes the third part of the general number of utterances. The purpose and benefits of using complex and compound sentences are quite clear. Although speech is not as dynamic as with the predominance of simple sentences, which, as a rule, are quite concise and at the same time emotionally and stylistically loaded enough to convey information to the recipient in full, with the help of compound and complex ones additional information can be expressed by avoiding the fragmentary nature of speech acts and tautologies.

The last, but no less important aspect that should be considered at the syntactic level is its stylistic features, which are represented by a set of different syntactic stylistic devices. Even though the task of such devices is to intensify the emotional emphasis, to give supplemental meaning to the utterances, as well as to refer to the emotional state of the speaker, in case of our research material, we have found a relatively small number of syntactic stylistic devices. Repetition, whose aim is to emphasize the word, phrase or even the whole utterance for the purpose of adding expressiveness to the speech act, is the most common and presented in several forms, for example *'It was awful, awful, awful.'*; while climax, which adds some tension to the speech and leads the listeners to the culminating part, was only found in one case: *'Last week moved so slowly it felt like a year. 2020 has already felt like it was a decade.'* In addition, we have found a few examples of ellipsis, aposiopesis, asyndeton, polysyndeton, parallel constructions and antithesis. Yet, their number is rather small. These data allow us to believe that at the level of syntax, stylistics for the sender of a message in a talk show is somewhat less important than other factors that are still to be investigated.

Conclusions. All in all from the aforementioned results of our investigation of the grammatical and syntactical features we can claim that for the purpose of achieving the communicative aim, in the majority of cases the TV host applies the strategy of using the easiest ways possible to achieve the audience, including the abundant use of Present Simple tense, the prevalence of active voice, indicative mood

and declaratives. The relatively small amount of perfect tenses, the absence of subjunctive set structures and the excess of stylistic device of repetition only prove our theory. As far as we are concerned, this is not only done with the purpose of the economy of time and energy, but also, to seem as natural as possible and not to try to confuse or overload the audience. Some other techniques, such as linguistic and stylistic means, and other extra-linguistic features add to this aim, and are still to be investigated.

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