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THE TALK SHOW INTERVIEW AS A SPEECH GENRE: GEORGIAN-ENGLISH PERSPECTIVE

1. INTRODUCTION

Each genre of journalism has certain features that distinguish it from other genres. They differ in form and manner of delivery, emotional expressive means, etc. Despite its apparent simplicity, the interview is one of the most difficult genres that requires specific tactics and strategies. In addition to asking a question and recording the answer, it is necessary to conduct a dialogue, to provide the necessary direction.

The first purpose of political interviews is to inform and, secondly, to entertain, while the main purpose of talk show interviews is to entertain. Nevertheless, both functions are combined in all types of interviews. As for the educational function, it can be said that it includes all media messages and, therefore, interviews as well.

Talk shows have become a ubiquitous feature of American and European television. Scholars and journalists have discussed various examples in order to place them within some cultural parameters. In the end, both sides conclude that talk shows are important because they are important subjects of public discussion and important in shaping the landscape of popular television.

All variations of talk shows, from chat shows to celebrity interviews, have one basic element: they all feature a group of guests, not as indi-

vidual respondents, but each involves audience participation. The studio audience is not only visible, but is also given the opportunity to engage in commentary and interaction.

The present paper deals with the talk show as one of the interesting and current speech genres. The study employs the contrastive analysis method for investigation of selected American and Georgian realisations of this genre in the form of selected talk shows. The aim is to discuss general characteristics of this speech genre. American and Georgian entertainment talk shows, which are very popular in their countries, are taken as research material. As mentioned above, the research is based on the comparative, contrastive method, as we contrast American and Georgian talk shows, in order to identify the similarities and differences between them.

2. THE TALK SHOW INTERVIEW AS A SPEECH GENRE

The language used in the discourse of different genres is defined by several main factors: relevance, functionality, dynamism, context, situation. Modern discourse analysis is based on the concept of speech genre (SG) as one of the most effective explanatory mechanisms in the process of teaching speech production and interpretation. Speech Genre Theory (SGT) is one of the existing practices of verbal communication, which includes the situation and the field of communication, style, intention, speech form, ways of beginning and ending speech, initiating dialogue, as well as communication strategies and techniques. The study of TV shows is the most interesting in this regard, as it is here that live dialogue is presented. The language of the show is close to the everyday conversational style used in an informal situation. Therefore, it is common to rely heavily on colloquial lexis and phraseology as well as syntax typical of oral communication. It should be emphasized that the TV genre system is a combination of interconnected and interactive genres. One of its constituent units is the interview – a verbal interaction in which one person aims to obtain information from another in a question-answer mode.

The interview is situated in the field of mass media communication. Mass media, in turn, includes social, highly organized, structured institutions. In this sense, the interview reflects the characteristics of one of the institutions: broadcasting. Broadcasting is a powerful social process of communication. The interview is one of the most popular genres of modern media. It became especially popular in the 90s of the XX century, when the

respondent was given the opportunity to freely express opinions on this or that issue. The collapse of the institution of censorship allowed the journalist to address the respondent as an individual. A talk show interview tends to be person-centered, but it also shares the peculiarities of an informative interview. The structure of television broadcasting refers to the means used to achieve the goals of different television genres. These facilities include both physical (e.g. buildings), as well as human resources (e.g. operators, presenters, reporters). These television events are public representations and justify the need for organizational structure, time constraints (time is limited during broadcasting), and other specific characteristics that arise from this ritual context.

Broadcast forms of political interview, talk show interview and audience debate represent different types of conversation genres. A talk show is a complex genre whose boundaries are difficult to determine. The classification of Carbaugh's talk shows by personality type and issue type reflects the change that talk shows have undergone in a person-only chat show with members of the audience ending with discussions on social topics (Carbaugh 1988). Hence the use of the term chat show as a synonym for personal type talk shows. Issue-type talk shows are also referred to as audience discussion programs (Livingstone & Lunt 1994). The term *talk show* is used only by Tolson (1991) for a personal type of talk show. This genre includes a series of short interviews (and sometimes also in the form of a presentation) with individuals who are primarily representatives of the entertainment industry. Its characteristics are based on the rules for determining a political interview.

The talk show interview function is constantly changing between information and entertainment. The goal of the interviewer's information search is to approach the format of an informal conversation or chat, the content of which is often personal and private; it sometimes takes the form of gossip and is often characterized by its humorous and witty tone. The main features of chat as a genre are found in many formats (interviews, discussions, game shows, etc.), but it is fully produced in a talk show. The characteristics of a talk show are the same as those of a chat (Tolson 1991: 182).

According to Tolson (1991), the violation of the general rules of an interview is the most characteristic feature of the talk show, which stems from the informal nature of the meeting. The difference between formal and informal interviews is based on the formal procedures that mandate turn-taking, the length of the dialogue, etc. The closer the interaction is to

everyday conversations, the more informal it is, but it still retains some “formal” qualities depending on who opens, closes, or directs that interaction.

Thus, the interview is considered less formal, the more it deviates from a relatively fixed agenda, and the more participants deviate from their predetermined role. Due to the informal nature of the talk show interviews, it is acceptable for the respondent to ask questions, get acquainted with the topics and even adjust the role of the interviewer. Nevertheless, after an interval of violations, the interviewer corrects the interaction in order to follow the general rules. So to some extent, they always follow the principles of a formal interview. The informal nature of the talk show interview gives it a flexible general structure.

A talk show interview is defined in a narrow sense as a personal type of interview aimed at serving a dual purpose of providing information and entertainment. The entertainment component is structurally revealed in violation of the general format of traditional interviews.

In talk shows, guests are asked for professional opinions on a selected issue; in addition, they are invited to discuss additional areas of public interest, such as personal life and current activities. As already mentioned, the interview on the talk show is more informal and entertaining. In many cases, talk show guests are familiar with the entertainment world. Most of them are actors, directors, comedians, presenters, musicians, athletes and etc.

A talk show is a show that has a host who, for each episode, hosts different celebrities and interviews them or interacts with them. They talk about existing projects or future plans, play games, and have short comedy segments as well. Various forms of communication occur in talk shows, for instance, natural conversations. Moreover, some talk shows include games and activities, so the conversation style is more similar to an interview. The host should ask questions and continue the conversation. New episodes of regular talk shows are also aired weekly or daily at different times of the day. The talk shows in question are mostly aired overnight, designed for relaxation, so they are easily added to the viewers’ routine.

3. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GEORGIAN AND AMERICAN ENTERTAINMENT TALK SHOW INTERVIEWS

The talk show formats are more or less common all over the world. It means that famous people from different fields come to visit the studio with

the host. They discuss interesting issues with the host, like new movie or music, or just talk about personal issues. But still, all such TV shows differ from each other in environment and script. American and Georgian talk shows taken as empirical material of the research are uniquely spectacular and entertaining. America as a pioneer country in the production of talk shows is famous for many TV shows. Here are just a few: “Ellen: The Ellen DeGeneres Show” (2003), “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” (USA 2003), “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon” (USA 2014).

Most Georgian talk shows are analogous to the American ones: similarities are observed in terms of the studio, special music, music band and talk show structure. For example, in the *Uruskesi show*, we have not only similarities in terms of extra linguistic factors, but also the title of the talk show contains the English lexical unit ‘show’, indicating the genre. This is used to enhance the attention effect, in order to make the show more attractive to the viewer by introducing a different style, i.e. an English loanword (Leladze 2017: 44).

The common feature of non-political talk shows: “ურუსკესი Show” (lit. “Uruskesi show”), “გიორგი გაბუნიაშ შოუ” (lit. “Georgi Gabunia Show”), “მხოლოდ ლელასთან” (lit. “Only with Lela”) and others is the many guests invited to the studio. The principle of selecting themes involves topics that are relevant and beneficial to the community, which ensures a high rating of the show. Almost all talk shows mostly choose one topic in each program (Beridze 2020: 34). However, there are cases when several topics are discussed in the program.

The names of American and Georgian talk shows tend to contain the names of the presenters. For example: “Ellen DeGeneres show”, “Jimmy Kummel’s live”, “The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon”, “Georgi Gabunia Show”, “Only with Lela” and the “Uruskesi show”. Ruska Makashvili is the host of the *Uruskesi show* and here her name *Ruska* is presented in the superlative form – *Uruskesi*.

Each talk show, despite its genre diversity, is structurally the same: it consists of three parts: an introduction, an interview, and a conclusion. The main part is built on questions and answers. Each show has a guest or guests who tell us a story by answering questions; The conversation is mostly in the present tense, be it live or a rerun. A talk show is a product that competes with other products in the television space (Nebieridze 2011: 202–205). These features are universal and are typical of talk shows in all countries.

Opening talk shows is quite personal. Talk shows start with an introduction aimed at the audience. Opening a talk show to the studio audience is aimed only at the first component. For the entertainment purposes of the genre, addressing the audience will change to addressing the guest directly, as soon as the interaction between the host and the guest begins. The host, after a monologue, addresses the audience to greet the guests. The talk show hosts present their honored guests and shake hands. Instead of saying 'goodbye' the talk show host thanks his guest.

Participants in talk shows shake hands and almost never say *hello* or *hi*. However, it also occurs that they are greeted informally, which is illustrated by the excerpts provided below:

- Host: Hi.
 Guest: Hi.
 Host: Was it different kind of way getting you here?
 Guest: Also you had me follow Oprah?
 Host: Yeah. ("Ellen Degeneres" – 24/05/22)

The initial elements are: *good to have you here* or *you look great rather than how are you*, which is attested by the examples given below:

- Host: You look great.
 Guest: Thank you. ("Ellen Degeneres" – 09/02/22)
 Host: Its so great to meet you. ("Jimmy Fallon" – 07/05/22)
 Guest: Wow. Im so happy to be here. Thanks for having me on the show.
 Host: Oh, we love having you. ("Jimmy Fallon" – 12/04/18)

In the Georgian show "Uruskesi show", the guest greets the host and says: *How are you?* The host also says: *It's good to have you here*, which can be seen below:

- Guest: How are you?... I like the show, the name...
 Host: How good it is to have you here, how beautiful you are, how glamorous you are, how glamorous you are always. ("Uruskesi show" – 31/01/22)

In the Georgian show "Giorgi Gabunia Show", the host greets the guests, thanks them for coming to the studio and then goes on to interview them. He also utters the pragmatism *How are you?* Several illustrative examples are presented below:

- Host: Hello gentlemen, first of all thank you very much for coming, I am always glad to meet you, how are you?
- Guest: Thank you. ("Georgi Gabunia show" – 20/05/22)
- Host: Hello, first of all I should mention, Ms. Manana you look great as usual.
- Guest: Thank you.
- Host: How are you?
- Guest: Like Everyone. ("Georgi Gabunia Show" – 21/05/22)

Georgian talk shows tend to be copied from American analogues, but still there are cultural differences. In Georgian, the possible answer to 'How are you?' might have been '*so-so*', but as it is media discourse, the guest chose a neutral form '*like everyone*'. In this case, the guest preferred to answer with a neutral answer. It is a kind of modesty, maybe, or the history of the country could influence them to feel like everybody, i.e. struggling against invaders since time immemorial, when nobody was fine. The structural characteristics of American and Georgian entertaining talk shows are more or less identical. The difference is felt only in the linguacultural aspect, which is well seen in the example above. Based on the discussed examples, it can be concluded that in non-political talk shows, the presenter and the guest are well-wishing to each other and do not hesitate to say positive words to each other and to express praise of their interlocutors in the introductory and farewell part of the show.

Talk show interview topics are also pre-defined, but this pre-definition is not seen in the opening structure of the event, as in political interviews or debates. The talk show opening does not explicitly state the main topic in the opening section, although to some extent it is latent (hidden) in the guest selection component. This feature corresponds to spontaneous conversation where any topic can arise. Unlike political interviews and debates, it portrays an important listener-centered or interactive character.

Ordinary conversations are closed by exchanging ritualized farewells, such as *Goodbye Now* or *Our Show Is Near the End, Goodbye – goodbye* or its equivalents. The American talk shows close mostly in much the same way. The hosts in the pre-closing phases always thank the audience, the guests and the TV viewers. Informal register is often used when thanking. Sometimes they offer viewers to follow the show through various social networks, after which they utter neutral and familiar phrases of farewell. The following closing signals were used in Georgian entertainment talk shows:

- thank the guest for coming to the talk show,
- say goodbye to the guest,
- say goodbye to the audience after giving thanks.

The verbal closing of the show is accompanied by non-verbal signals as well, the host shakes hands with guests as farewell and also waves to the audience. The closing of the show is also indicated by special music that is heard at the end of the show, followed by subtitles.

The observations of interviews on the entertainment talk shows reveal that the host uses many verbal tactics necessary to organize the interaction. Initiating and terminating communication, giving up and maintaining speech initiative are the most popular and widespread. The choice of speech tactics depends on the type of discourse, the interpersonal relationships of the communicators, and the stage of the interaction.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to investigate the peculiarities of the talk show interview as a speech genre in two radically different language settings, American and Georgian. American and Georgian entertainment talk shows were taken as research material. A study was conducted to find out the similarities and differences between these two languages. Observation of the empirical material revealed that, despite the fact that Georgian talk shows are basically analogues of American talk shows and their format is taken from American talk shows, there are cultural differences.

As a conclusion, we can say that in the interviews of American and Georgian entertainment talk shows, the host and guests are very kind to each other, they do not spare each other words of praise, they have a positive attitude towards each other throughout the dialogue, which is expressed by positive words. Based on the fact that I tried to put the existing research into a narrow context, I will try to deepen the research in this regard in the future.

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Abstract

The present paper discusses the talk show interview as a speech genre. With this view, the study employs contrastive analysis. The focus is on interviews conducted in non-political talk shows, which had not been studied in this regard so far. The article outlines talk shows in America and Georgia, characterizes their structure, style, lexical-grammatical characteristics, and presents the interview as a speech genre.

Keywords: talk shows, speech genres, talk show interviews

WYWIAD W PROGRAMIE TALK SHOW JAKO GATUNEK MOWY: PERSPEKTYWA GRUZIŃSKO-AMERYKAŃSKA

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest wywiadowi w amerykańskich i gruzińskich programach talk show jako gatunkowi mowy. W badaniu wykorzystano metodę komparatystyczną. Materiał badawczy stanowią wywiady z programów talk show o tematyce rozrywkowej, które nie były dotąd badane pod tym względem.

Słowa kluczowe: talk show, gatunki mowy, wywiady w programie talk show