

Linguocultural Variations in Speech Etiquette in English Media

Olimjanova Sarvinoz Tohirjon qizi
saravilland@gmail.com

1st year Master's degree student
Uzbekistan State University of World Languages

Annotation: This study investigates linguocultural variations in speech etiquette within English-language media, examining how linguistic practices mirror cultural norms and social values across television, radio, print, and internet platforms. By means of politeness theory and pragmatics, the article identifies key techniques like modal verbs (could, would), indirect speech acts, irony, euphemisms and humor to navigate politeness, formality, and social hierarchy. Differences between British and American media demonstrate variable cultural priorities: British content prefers indirect and formal language, whereas American media uses direct and informal language. Euphemisms, honorifics, and nonverbal cues further reveal how speech etiquette balances social harmony with truthfulness. Results show that these language decisions not only influence audience involvement but also reveal deeper cultural values including respect, face-saving, and social peace. The study emphasizes the importance of speech etiquette in fostering cross-cultural communication and media literacy as English media becomes more globalized. By elucidating the interaction between language, culture, and speech etiquette, this study makes contribution to cross-cultural proficiency and pinpoints the dynamic role of speech norms in maintaining polite behaviour and identity within media discourse.

Keywords : Speech Etiquette, English Media, Linguocultural Variation, Language and Culture, Politeness, Pragmatics, Cross-cultural Communication

Лингвокультурные различия в речевом этикете в англоязычных СМИ

Олимжанова Сарвиноз Тохиржон кизи
saravilland@gmail.com

Магистрант 1 ого курса
Узбекский государственный университет мировых языках

Аннотация: Настоящее исследование изучает лингвокультурные вариации речевого этикета в англоязычных медиа, анализируя, как языковые практики отражают культурные нормы и социальные ценности на платформах телевидения, радио, печатных и интернет-СМИ. Посредством теории вежливости и прагматики в статье выявлены ключевые приемы, такие как использование модальных глаголов (could, would), косвенных речевых актов, иронии, эвфемизмов и юмора для регулирования вежливости, формальности и социальной иерархии. Сопоставление британских и американских медиа демонстрирует различия в культурных приоритетах: британский контент тяготеет к косвенной и формальной речи, тогда как американские медиа используют прямую и неформальную коммуникацию. Эвфемизмы, почтительные обращения и невербальные сигналы дополнительно раскрывают, как речевой этикет балансирует между социальной гармонией и правдивостью. Результаты показывают, что данные языковые решения не только влияют на вовлеченность аудитории, но и эксплицируют глубинные культурные ценности, включая уважение, сохранение лица и социальное спокойствие. Исследование подчеркивает значимость речевого этикета для развития межкультурной коммуникации и медийной грамотности в условиях глобализации англоязычных медиа. Перерисовывая взаимодействие языка, культуры и речевого этикета, работа вносит вклад в развитие межкультурной компетенции и выделяет динамическую роль речевых норм в поддержании вежливого поведения и идентичности в медиадискурсе.

Ключевые слова: речевой этикет, англоязычные медиа, лингвокультурная вариативность, язык и культура, вежливость, прагматика, межкультурная коммуникация.

Ingliz ommaviy axborot vositalarida nutq odobidagi lingvomadaniy o'zgarishlar

Olimjanova Sarvinoz Tohirjon qizi
saravilland@gmail.com

Magistr 1-kurs talabasi

O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz tilidagi ommaviy axborot vositalarida nutq odobining lingvomadaniy o'zgarishlarini o'rganadi, til amaliyotlari qanday qilib madaniy normalar va ijtimoiy qadriyatlarini televideniye, radio, bosma va internet platformalarida aks ettirayotganini tahlil qiladi. Xushmuomalalik nazariyasi va pragmatika vositalari orqali maqolada xushmuomalalik, rasmiylik va ijtimoiy ierarxiyani boshqarish uchun modal fe'llar (could, would), bilvosita nutq aktlari, ironiya, evfemizmlar va yumor kabi asosiy usullar aniqlangan. Britaniya va Amerika ommaviy axborot vositalari orasidagi farqlar madaniy ustuvorliklarning xilma-xilligini ko'rsatadi: Britaniya kontenti bilvosita va rasmiy tilni afzal ko'rsa, Amerika mediiasi to'g'ri va norasmiy muloqotdan foydalanadi. Evfemizmlar, hurmat bildiruvchi ifodalar va so'zga nisbatan bo'lmagan belgilar nutq odobining ijtimoiy hamjihatlik va haqiqatni aytish o'rtasidagi muvozanatini ochib beradi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, bu til qarorlari nafaqat auditoriya ishtirokiga ta'sir qiladi, balki hurmat, obro'ni saqlash va ijtimoiy tinchlik kabi chuqur madaniy qadriyatlarini anglatadi. Tadqiqot ingliz tilidagi ommaviy axborot vositalarining globalizatsiyasi sharoitida nutq odobining madaniyatlararo muloqat va mediata'lim rivojidagi ahamiyatini ta'kidlaydi. Til, madaniyat va nutq odobi o'rtasidagi o'zaro ta'sirni yoritish orqali ish madaniyatlararo kompetensiyani rivojlantirishga hissa qo'shadi hamda mediadiskursda xushmuomalalik va o'ziga xoslikni saqlashda nutq me'yorlarining dinamik rolini belgilab beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: Nutq odobi, ingliz tilidagi ommaviy axborot vositalari, lingvomadaniy o'zgarishlar, til va madaniyat, xushmuomalalik, pragmatika, madaniyatlararo muloqat.

Speech etiquette is of great importance in any culture. It consists of a complex system of communicative formulas accepted in a particular linguoculture determined by standards of social behavior norms and rules (Ashurova & Galiyeva, 2019). An examination of the linguocultural aspects of speech etiquette is vital for grasping how language encodes and influences cultural standards, particularly in mass media that engages varied audiences. English media, which includes formats such as television, radio, print, and online platforms, is a key area to investigate how speech etiquette evolves in line with cultural norms and social environments. This article delves into the unique characteristics of speech etiquette found in English media, emphasizing the interaction between language, culture, and etiquette, complemented by relevant examples.

In English media, the norms that dictate speech etiquette are shaped by cultural factors defining politeness, formality, and acceptable language use. These norms are deeply ingrained in linguistic practices and echo the societal values and frameworks of English-speaking communities.

One notable aspect is the common use of modal verbs like could, would, and might to soften requests or suggestions. As Politeness is a fundamental aspect of speech etiquette, According to Brown and Levinson, this universal phenomenon is based on two fundamental social needs : positive face and negative face. Speakers use different language strategies to reduce the impact of face-threatening acts, which can challenge these needs. These strategies range from direct and potentially impolite statements to more indirect and polite expressions, with varying levels of politeness in between (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For instance, a television host might phrase a question as, "Could you please send in your questions?" rather than issuing a direct order, thus fostering a sense

of politeness and inclusivity (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson's framework suggests that speakers use negative politeness to show respect for independence, for example, using cautious language: "Maybe we could think about..." or positive politeness to build connection, such as using "we" language: "Let's work on this as a team" that can be helpful to protect the "face" of those they address. As they state that positive politeness involves seeking connection by using compliments, while negative politeness mitigates imposition by using indirect requests. This subtle linguistic softening plays a crucial role in maintaining harmonious interactions and respecting the audience's autonomy.

In addition to this, Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Principle complements Brown and Levinson's universal theory by offering specific conversational guidelines rather than focusing solely on managing face-threatening acts. Leech's theory expands on Grice's principle of maxims that guide polite communication and he says that politeness helps maintain social harmony by minimizing conflict and promoting positive relationships between speakers. He proposes six maxims but emphasizes only tact, approbation, and modesty as key maxims that influence politeness in conversation. Leech's maxims offer an overview for understanding how honorifics and forms of address influence various politeness dimensions. The tact maxim is demonstrated by the careful selection of address terms to minimize the level of offence or imposition based on the listener's social status. According to the "minimise cost" element of this maxim, while addressing someone of higher academic level, using formal titles such as "Professor Andrew" indicates respect and appreciation. Moreover, referring to a respected person as "Your honor" is one of the examples of implementing honorifics to show high regard and positive evaluation, aligning with the principle of maximizing praise of others. In contrast, when individuals prefer less formal forms of address in certain contexts, the modesty maxim can be observed in order to minimize self-praise. When it comes to interviews and talk shows, the use of honorifics and forms of address reveals culturally specific strategies for politeness. Hosts often address their guests using respectful titles such as "Mr. Smith" or "Dr. Brown," indicating an acknowledgment of social hierarchy and courtesy (Leech, 1983). This form of address helps define social roles and sets a respectful tone, particularly in formal or professional contexts. Conversely, in programs targeting younger audiences or casual formats, slang, colloquialisms, and first-name basis interactions are prevalent, encouraging a relaxed atmosphere and a sense of community between hosts and viewers.

Another characteristic is the use of indirect speech acts to minimize potential conflict or offense. News presenters frequently resort to euphemisms when addressing sensitive issues, employing phrases like "passed away" instead of "died" or "downsizing" in place of "letting go of employees" (Lakoff, 1973). Robin Lakoff's work emphasizes the pivotal role of using euphemisms in order to achieve politeness in communication. According to her observation, people in some social contexts tend to employ gentle and indirect phrases to avoid some unpleasant and taboo topics. To maintain this tendency, Lakoff's "Politeness principle" suggests three fundamental maxims. These maxims are: "Don't impose," which is used to lessen the intrusion on the listener; second one is "Give options," which encourages to give the receiver chance to make their own choices; and the last one is "Make the receiver feel good (be friendly)," which is mainly about showing positive regard. The use of euphemisms is directly supportive of the third maxim as it softens potentially stressful information, making the receiver feel more comfortable. So according to Lakoff, implementing proper linguistic choices, such as using euphemisms can influence polite and effective communication. Beyond euphemism, the strategic avoidance of explicit negative language helps to cushion potentially distressing information, reflecting an ingrained cultural preference for protecting face and promoting social harmony.

While Lakoff's politeness strategies prioritize euphemisms and indirect sentences to minimize conflict, Culpeper suggests impoliteness as a main communicative tactic in media interactions. Sarcasm, rhetorical questions, and interruptions - often perceived as breaches of decorum - serve strategic functions in contexts where confrontation or entertainment is prioritized over harmony

(Culpeper, 2011). He identifies sarcasm as a type of verbal irony, for example, a host's remark "That is an awesome plan - if you want a problem" which seemingly supports Lakoff's principles of politeness but contradicts them functionally to show up an idea. This contradiction makes disapproval more humorous without appearing openly aggressive. Sarcasm reframes stressful interaction into entertaining displays with audience enjoyment. Rhetorical questions (e.g., "What were you thinking?") function as implicit accusations, pressuring targets to justify their actions while denying them a genuine opportunity to respond (Culpeper, 2011). In political interviews, hosts may frame such questions to encourage the audience to agree with the implied judgment. In the media, rhetorical questions illustrate how the media intentionally manipulates language to keep a balance between critique and engagement.

Another interesting feature is the role of humor and irony as politeness devices in English media. Often, speakers use self-deprecating humor or light sarcasm to soften criticism or controversial opinions, thereby mitigating face-threatening acts. This technique helps to balance truthfulness with social sensitivity, enabling critical discourse without offending the audience.

Additionally, language in English media often reflects differing cultural attitudes toward nonverbal communication and paralinguistic features. For example, in televised debates or interviews, controlled tone of voice, strategic pauses, and polite laughter are employed to reinforce respectful interaction. Such subtle cues underline the importance of maintaining decorum and audience engagement in English-speaking media.

Lastly, the language used in media illustrates varying cultural attitudes towards formality. For example, British media often adheres to more formal and organized speech styles, while American media favors more direct and informal approach, reflecting the cultural distinctions between the two nations (Cruse, 2000). This divergence can be seen not only in vocabulary choice but also in sentence structure, humor style, and interaction rituals – elements that together paint a rich portrait of how speech etiquette intertwines with cultural identity in English media.

By analyzing these multifaceted features, it becomes clear that speech etiquette in English media is not merely a set of linguistic conventions but a reflection of deeper cultural values and social expectations. It plays an important role in all cultures, spheres of life and different communicative situations and reflects cultural mentality, lifestyle and the national world picture (Ashurova & Galiyeva, 2019). Understanding these nuances aids in better cross-cultural communication, particularly in the globalized media environment.

Examples:

- A BBC news presenter uses indirect and formal language: "We might consider the implications of..." contrasting with a CNN host who might say, "Let's look at the impact..." demonstrating the formal vs. Informal media speech etiquette difference.

- In entertainment shows, British hosts often moderate humor to avoid offense ("That was quite amusing, wasn't it?"), while American hosts might use more direct and bold humor that challenges boundaries, highlighting different cultural tolerances for speech (Tannen, 1994).

- When famous boxer Muhammad Ali was asked about his lack of modesty, he responded with "It's hard to be humble when you are as great as I am." That's an irony because he is saying something sound like a complaint but is actually a self-praise, meaning the opposite of explaining difficulty with humility.

The intricacies of speech etiquette within English-language media are deeply interwoven with a broad spectrum of linguocultural elements, as they reflect fundamental cultural ideals such as politeness, formality, social hierarchy, and national identity. When examined closely, these values reveal themselves through a range of linguistic practices - for instance, the strategic use of modal verbs, indirect speech acts, euphemisms, humor, and varied modes of address. Not only does gaining insight into these features deepen our understanding of English media discourse, but it also substantially strengthens our ability to engage in cross-cultural communication and to interpret media

with greater literacy - capabilities that are becoming increasingly essential in today's interconnected world.

Moreover, the subtle yet significant distinctions between British and American media further highlight the necessity of cultural awareness in communication. Recognizing and appreciating these differences is key to avoiding misinterpretations and fostering more precise and contextually appropriate exchanges. At the same time, as English-language media continues to extend its global reach, it is imperative to consider how audiences from different cultural backgrounds perceive, adapt, or even redefine these conventions of speech etiquette.

Therefore, acknowledging and, where appropriate, adapting these norms is crucial – not only for ensuring more inclusive and respectful discourse, but also for building mutual trust and promoting deeper intercultural understanding. In light of the ongoing evolution of media, especially with the growing influence of social media and user-generated content, future studies should also investigate how digital spaces are reshaping traditional forms of speech etiquette. Likewise, the role of globalization warrants further exploration, particularly in terms of whether it leads to a homogenization of communicative standards or encourages a richer diversity of linguistic expression.

In conclusion, cultivating a nuanced awareness of these linguocultural dynamics is indispensable for both media creators and consumers. Such awareness enables individuals to more effectively and ethically navigate the complexities of global communication, fostering interactions that are not only more meaningful but also more aligned with principles of respect, authenticity, and cultural sensitivity.

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