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Galyna TSAPRO
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Gender Aspect of Image Creating Strategy

Summary
Gender Aspect of Image Creating Strategy

The article deals with gender peculiarities of image creating strategy used by interviewees in television talk show Larry King Live on CNN. The strategy comprises tactics of image support and tactics of image change. Both tactics are implicit and explicit. The research shows that male and female interviewees have used different combinations of tactics and language units to create, support, or/and defend their positive image, to present themselves in the right or desired way to the television audience. The gender variation is presented by heterogender, homogender female and homogender male set of tactics. The heterogender model consists of both implicit and explicit tactics of image support, whereas homogender female is represented by explicit tactics of image change and homogender male is represented by implicit tactics of image change.

Key words: *image creating strategy, tactics of image support, tactics of image change, gender, interview*

Резюме
Гендерный аспект имиджеобразующей стратегии

В статье представлена имиджеобразующая стратегия респондентов в англоязычном телевизионном интервью программы Larry King Live с позиции гендерной лингвистики. Выделяются и анализируются тактики поддержки имиджа и тактики изменения имиджа, реализованные респондентами-мужчинами и респондентами-женщинами. Обе тактики являются имплицитными и эксплицитными. Исследование показывает, что респонденты-мужчины и женщины используют различные комбинации коммуникативных тактик и языковых средств для создания, поддержания и/или защиты своего позитивного имиджа, чтобы представить себя правильным или желаемым образом для телевизионной аудитории. Гетерогендерная модель представлена эксплицитными и имплицитными тактиками поддержки имиджа. Гомогендерная маскулинная – имплицитной тактикой изменения имиджа, а гомогендерная фемининная – эксплицитной тактикой изменения имиджа имиджеобразующей стратегии.

Ключевые слова: *имиджеобразующая стратегия, тактика изменения имиджа, тактика поддержки имиджа, гендер, интервью*

*

The aim of the present article is to perform gender analysis of image creating strategy and its tactics used by male and female interviewees in English television interview. The material of the study is televisions interviews by Larry King in his program Larry King Live on CNN, 2005–2010.

The growth of research on gender and language over the past forty years is both massive and remarkable [Цапро 2009: 89–90]. Gender specification of discourse strategies and gender discourse markers have been the main topic of recent linguistic researches. In linguistics gender is seen more as a variable and contingent phenomenon, rather

than a pre-defined set of traits and characteristics [Uchida 1992: 547]. In other words, gender may be defined as the blending, mixture, or cooperation of sex and social status of a personality.

Image is a certain picture of a person that is created in a certain situation with a certain goal. And this picture is intentionally formed, created, and programmed. So we may define image as a complex formation which is associated with such notions as prestige and reputation. Image as a cognitive model lies in the viewers' consciousness, and during television interview this picture is being activated, its content becomes more concrete, so one may see that image is consciously formed by the interview as certain ideas about himself/herself which he/she wants to share with the audience.

Creating a positive image is rather important for famous figures. Women and men create their images specifically [Мельник 2005: 131]. Agreeing to participate in television talk shows interviewees who are mostly celebrities or well-known politicians first of all take into consideration the fact that their particular image will be offered to viewers and they will have a great deal of publicity.

The image creating strategy is realized by the interviewee with the aim to create a certain image in the way in which he/she would like to be seen by the television audience. Such an image is based mostly on the categories that are close, clear, and interesting to the audience, that is why the interviewee attempts to create a positive image of his/her personality, models his/her behaviour and his/her speech in accordance with the audience's expectation, social stereotypes as well as with social communication norms.

During the first stage of the interview the interviewer's task is to study the existing image of the interviewee, his/her current activities, interests, look through the interviewee's previous interviews, articles in the press, biographies published in books, etc. The second stage is actual cooperation between the interviewer and the interviewee at the talk show. While preparing for the interview the host takes into account the audience's possible interest in certain events related to the particular guest of the programme, so the interviewer beforehand outlines the range of questions that will be asked. Whereas in his/her turn the guest of the program may outline a possible angle in which the interviewer will lead the conversation and accordingly the interviewee may plan his/her communicative behaviour.

Image creating strategy may be defined as a combination of several components: manners, appearance, behaviour, and deliberately chosen speech strategies [Иссерс 2003: 198]. The formation of image involves several stages: identifying the already existing ideas about the subject; defining expectations, preferences and demands of the audience; making up the image creating strategy; placing the constructed model in the real context (visual and verbal).

According to G. Pocheptsov, there are several types of images such as mirror, current, desired, cooperative, and combined [Pocheptsov 1999: 36–39]. For our research the strategy of combining mirror and desired images used by interviewees in order to create "an ideal self-image" for the audience has been crucial. The interviewer imposes his vision of the interviewee's image to the guest of the programme, but for him/her it is essential to preserve "his/her face" [Минаева 2010: 25], supporting or creating a positive image, avoiding negative colouring that can harm or destroy the "right image" of the interviewee.

The second main factor that we have examined is the gender of the interviewees. As the interviewer – Larry King – has always been the same we mostly concentrated on strategies used by interviewees. Though we studied the tactics used by the interviewees, we must admit that the interviewer (Larry King) plays an important role in creating a certain image of the interviewee and the latter either agrees with the image or tries to change it in some way.

The use of image creating strategy by the interviewee greatly depends on the information the interviewee desires to share with the audience. Such information may comprise the professional sphere, family matters, personal traits. The guest deliberately stresses those facts that help him/her to emphasize the right aspects of his/her image.

Image creating strategy comprises two tactics: the tactics of image support and the tactics of image change. Both tactics may be explicit and implicit. The tactics of image support are used when the interviewee agrees with the image offered by the interview, he/she supports the topic offered, dwells on it at length while tactics of image change can also arouse the speaker's eloquence but in this case the guest of the program does not support the offered topic and tries to disprove the given information.

The semantic category of the familiar and the alien is of vital importance for creating image [Иссерс 2003: 202–205]. Being familiar to the audience it is easier for the interviewee to support the desired image. In order to be within this category the interviewee gives famous or powerful, or influential names emphasizing that he/she also belongs to this particular circle of celebrities. This semantic category, the familiar, describes implicitly the rating and position of the interviewee, implying being successful and at the peak of fame. While creating their positive images interviewees offer the audience their perception of themselves but they take into consideration how the audience would like to see them and accordingly choose the best ways to reach the aim.

Tactics of image support. This tactics is used when the interviewee agrees and accepts the image offered by the interviewer, then the guest gladly supports the topic offered and continues dwelling on it.

> *KING: What do you do with GCAP in Georgia? Don't you work with young girls?*
> *FONDA: GCAP, yes. And boys. Girls and boys. We have been around 12 1/2 years now. And what we learned is if you want young people to not engage in risky behavior, you have to give them hope. Hope is the best contraceptive. They have to see a future for themselves that will be compromised by risky behavior, whether it's getting pregnant, having babies too soon, drugs, whatever.*
> *And so we do programs that give them hope in the future. We kind of wrap our arms around them and show them that there's health care in the future, that there's a bank account in their future, that there's jobs, that there's self-expression. Things like that* (09.05.07. F).

The interviewer asks Jane Fonda about her work with young people, he offers the topic that describes her as a person who supports social and charity programmes. Thus, by asking such a question and predicting possible answers to it Larry King

depicts the actress positively and as a result J. Fonda picks up the topic and develops it addressing to the audience and invoking people to pay more attention to their children.

KING: That's with Rock Hudson in "Giant." We'll talk about co-stars later. Your family, you have four children, ten grandchildren, three great grandchildren.
TAYLOR: And more coming
KING: Do you get to see the flock?
TAYLOR: Always. Thanksgiving, everyone.
KING: You're the dame grandmother. How do you get to be a dame?
TAYLOR: You couldn't. I'll call you sir.
KING: I can't even be a sir.
TAYLOR: Because you're not English. I don't know, they just are meretricious.
KING: The British. Did you have to go there? Do they dub you dame?
TAYLOR: Yes.
KING: It must be quite an honor to stand there.
TAYLOR: It is (30.05.06 F).

Another example of using explicit tactics of image support demonstrates acceptance by Elizabeth Taylor the image of a happy woman, a traditionally happy woman, with children and grandchildren. The interviewer also stresses the honour of getting the title and the actress in her turn explicitly supports it as it adds to her positive image.

KING: Yet you've always written and told that a lot of men cheated on you.
HAWN: Well, men cheat.
KING: How could someone cheat on you?
HAWN: It doesn't matter. Men – men – men cheat. Men are different than women and men live with – with some very difficult obstacles. I mean a man basically in his true nature is to spread his seed and a woman is a gatherer and that's kind of the way we're – our limbic system is set up, you know. I mean I like cooking and being with my kids and, you know, all of this stuff and taking care of the home and, you know, men like to go do other things. It's normal. It's natural. But we're evolving. We're an evolving group of humans hopefully and it's very difficult because men don't necessarily have any emotional connection to that physiological need and, you know, you and I both know that, don't you? (24.02.06 F)

This time Larry King offers not a very pleasant image of a woman who was cheated by men. Though the actress explicitly supports this image she – addressing other women and speaking more about children as the most important part of every woman's life – manages to state that many men cheat and she was not the only one who had to deal with it.

The research has shown that the tactics of image support are heterogender used by both male and female interviewees, as the positive depiction given by the interviewer coincides with the social stereotypes, with the desired image the interviewees would like to offer to the audience.

Tactics of image change. This tactics is used by interviewees aiming not to accept the image offered by the interviewer and to change the given picture in front of the audience.

KING: For what were you addicted?
WILLIAMS: I wasn't – oh, I had a little problem with alcohol. It wasn't really a problem. Everybody had it. But it was the idea of –
KING: You were –
WILLIAMS: Yes, I was an alcoholic, a drunk.
KING: You were a drunk?
WILLIAMS: Well, that's nice of you to say that.
KING: You said it first (03.07.07 M).

The interviewer provokes his guest, actor Robert Williams forcing him to talk about his alcohol addiction. The actor tries to avoid the unpleasant topic but realizing that Larry King insists he admits it but he implicitly creates an image of a strong person who can cope with difficulties.

KING: Why do you enter these things?
CONNER: For me, it's the competitive nature to it. You know, it's the – it's a bit of competition between girls and it gives you a chance to dress up and look like a princess for a day. You know, it's every girl's fun, fun time to do. And for me, it was just a great experience all the way around.
KING: And what were your career goals?
CONNER: I wanted to get into hosting and acting.
KING: What went wrong in New York? By the way, were you having problems before Miss. USA?
CONNER: Yes. I would never say that, you know, it happened while in New York. I would say – I started having dependency issues with alcoholism and addiction when I was 14 years old so...
KING: "Why didn't you resign? You should have done the honorable thing and resigned to seek treatment and move on with your life instead of tarnishing the reputation of the Miss. USA pageant."
CONNER: I didn't resign from the title only because – I didn't resign from the title to go get treatment. If it wasn't for having the title and if it wasn't for Donald Trump making me go, basically, it was either that or just go on my own. I would still be using right now, you know? (05.02.07 F).

The interviewer tries to find out the real reason why Tara Conner participated in the beauty contest. The image of the winner is often negatively accepted by the audience due to a social stereotype that the girls want to gain fame without working hard. The guest tries to disprove that emphasizing that her aim was to become a host or an actress. The interviewee does not accept the negative image of a person addictive to drugs and alcohol offered by the interviewer trying to explain her behaviour by the fact that she was too young. The guest tries implicitly to find support and understanding from the audience sharing her story. Still T. Conner fights for her right to be Miss USA despite what has been done and said.

The research shows that the tactics of image change are explicit and implicit. Gender variation is based on homogender female explicit tactics of image change and on homogender male implicit tactics of image change.

Female participants of the talk show disagreeing with the negative characteristics given to them by the interviewer change their image explicitly, demonstrating it openly and creating the image they would like to present to the audience, sometimes even not cooperating with the host. Male guests – according to the social rules of covert prestige (for men being bad means being good) – are limited to change the offered negative image. So they have to change it using different tactics such as avoiding the topic or introducing another one. As negative picturing deals mostly with personal characteristics and with details of private life interviewees choose those strategies and tactics which allow them to present themselves successfully to the audience.

Further research of image creating strategy and its tactics may be performed taking into consideration the gender of the interviewer as well as using comparative analysis with corresponding Ukrainian interviews.

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