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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN INTERVIEWER – INTERVIEWEE COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION IN ENGLISH RADIO INTERVIEWS

Стаття присвячена проблемі дослідження гендерних особливостей комунікативної взаємодії учасників сучасного англійського радіоінтерв'ю. У статті розглянуто вплив гендерного аспекту на функціонування системи комунікативних ходів в радіоінтерв'ю, визначено гендерні відмінності вживання мовленнєвого переривання та накладання реплік на мовлення спірозмовника, а також вживання мовцями нелексичних одиниць та маркерів порушення плавності мовлення.

Ключові слова: *радіоінтерв'ю, гендерні відмінності, система комунікативних ходів, нелексичні одиниці, маркери порушення плавності мовлення.*

The article investigates gender peculiarities of communicative interaction of participants of modern English radio interviews. It examines the influence of gender aspect on turn-taking system functioning in radio interviews. Gender differences in the usage of interruptions, overlaps, non-lexical items and disfluencies are defined in the article.

Key words: *radio interview, gender differences, turn-taking system, non-lexical items, disfluencies.*

The increasing interest to the study of language as a social phenomenon is a prominent feature of modern linguistics. The inclusion of a social measurement into a linguistic analysis gives the possibility of penetrating deeper into the nature of language, the conditions of its functioning and dynamics of its development. Sociolinguists have given much attention to the question of gender differentiation in language. R. Lakoff [4] suggests that a separate “woman’s speech” exists, characterized by a greater predominance of such forms as tag questions, tag-orders, apologizing, and questioning intonation patterns offered in the context of otherwise declarative answers. Analysing linguistic politeness in terms of gender, previous researchers (N. Henley [2], J. Holmes [3], D. Zimmerman and C. West [10]) have found that females are more linguistically polite than males, since they are cooperative in conversation, while males prefer competitive discourse strategies.

Most of scholars investigating the difference between male and female speech patterns have focused on casual conversation, while little attention has been paid to the gender distinctions in the language of mass media. Our decision to concentrate on media discourse is also motivated by the importance of the mass media as a social institution, since the language of the media has a great influence on shaping public opinions, attitudes and behaviour. Radio interview

texts have been previously studied by a Russian researcher N. Leontyeva [1] who investigated their semantic and prosodic organization without regard to sociolinguistic aspect. The turn-taking system of broadcasted interviews and gender peculiarities of its functioning are under-investigated.

The **aim** of this article is to analyze the role of gender aspect in functioning of turn-taking system in English radio interview texts and define gender differences in the usage of destructive elements and disfluency markers by interviewers and interviewees.

Radio interview texts are distinguished from casual conversation by pre-allocation of turns. A turn consists of the right (and obligation) to speak which is allocated to a particular speaker and of the temporal duration of an utterance. It is constructed out of ““unit-types” which can consist of single words, phrases, clauses or sentences” [10, p. 107]. In radio interviews the interviewer is responsible for the turn-taking system asking the question and the interviewee is supposed to answer. So, the turn-taking system of radio interviews is restricted. But interviewer – interviewee conversation can not go on without disruptive elements such as interruptions and overlaps. There distinguish three types of interruptions: simple, silent and butting-in interruptions [7].

Having analyzed twenty English radio interviews, we have got the following results. Among three types of interruptions mentioned above female participants mostly use silent interruptions. Silent interruptions occur when the current speaker displays turn-keeping signals such as intonation contour, filled pauses etc., showing the intention of continuing with the turn and at this point he is interrupted. The first speaker’s utterance appears incomplete and there is an exchange of turns, but there is no simultaneous speech.

The male interactants tend to use simple interruptions which involve simultaneous speech. They interrupt the female participant while she is speaking and her turn is incomplete. Such interruption is successful, since the female doesn’t try to finish her turn and the male manages to gain the floor.

When the female speaker attempts to interrupt the male participant, the interruption proves to be unsuccessful, since the male continues talking and finishes his turn. In such a case an overlap occurs. In a case of overlap, although the male participant manages to complete his floor, there is an exchange of turns. But in a few cases found in the investigated radio interviews, females, attempting to interrupt the male participant, do not get the floor; their utterance is very brief and is stopped by the current male speaker. Such interruptions are cases of butting-in interruption.

The fact that women allow male interactants to continue speaking and complete their turn proves that females tend to be co-operative in conversation, while men want to hold communicative initiative and dominate in verbal interaction. Women’s cooperation in radio interview speech is also proved by

their usage of parenthetical remarks. Parenthetical remarks are short supportive exclamations or short comments on aspects of the current speaker's discourse, such as "*Lovely*", "*Exactly*", etc. Such remarks do not signal any desire to take the floor and cause no speech disruptions on the part of the ongoing speaker. The floor is shared by the two participants and both speakers' utterances are complete.

Frequently before interrupting and taking the turn, radio interview participants produce utterances which are not composed of words, but are non-lexical items, such as *er*, *hmm*, *yea*, etc. Non-lexical utterances rely heavily on prosody to perform their functions, which include turn-taking control, negotiating agreement, signaling comprehension, expressing emotions and attitudes. A very salient prosodic feature of non-lexical items is syllabification. This prosodic feature is even reflected in the conventional spellings, as in *mm-mm* vs. *mm*, *uh-huh* vs. *uh* and *yeah-yeah* vs. *yeah*. Two-syllable items often signal the intention to take a listening role, to indicate that the person who produces them intends to say no more, while single-syllable forms function overwhelmingly as fillers. The speaker may produce four-syllable items such as *uhn-hm-uh-hm* and *um-hm-uh-hm* which signal a posture of continued listening [8].

In the investigated radio interview texts both male and female speakers make heavy use of non-lexical items. One-syllable forms such as *er*, *um* and *uh* are often used to fill pauses when the speaker is trying to decide what to say or intends to restart his explanation. Two-syllable tokens *uh-huh* and *um-hmm* and one-syllable form *yea* are often produced by radio interview participants while the other person has the turn and is talking. But such items do not interrupt the current speaker and "serve to do "support work", functioning as indicators that the listener is carefully attending to the stream of talk" [10, p. 108]. It is interesting to note that "parties to talk are likely to time these nonverbal signals to coincide with pauses in a current speaker's utterance. Thus, items like "um-hmm", "uh-huh" and "yea" may be viewed as a kind of positive reinforcement for continued talk where the provider of such cues must do active listening work to determine proper placement" [10, p. 109]. So, we may conclude that using non-lexical items, both males and females display interest to the topic of the radio interview and thus cooperate in topic development.

Non-lexical items are referred to disfluencies. Disfluencies (or disfluency markers) are defined as parts of speech which do not seem to add to the main content of the dialogue [9]. Disfluences include hesitations and pauses in speech (filled and unfilled), word and phrase repetitions, units of ritualized speech, false starts (or restarts), self-corrections and nonsense words.

Our study has shown that male and female participants of broadcasted interviews heavily use units of ritualized speech, nonsense words, repetitions

and self-corrections. Units of ritualized speech are words and phrases that are repeated often, such as *you know, you see, I mean*. Speakers tend to use these units in the middle of their turn. They use them when they feel insecure or when they need to know that the listener is following the message before they continue. These expressions may also be used out of habit or as a way of filling space as the speaker gathers his or her thoughts. *I see* is often used at the beginning of the speaker's turn either to express comprehension or to interrupt the current speaker.

When radio interview participants are uncertain of their message or when they are nervous, they use nonsense words and repetitions. Nonsense words, word and phrase repetitions and self-corrections are often accompanied by unfilled or less frequently filled pauses. It is worth noting that the use of repetition as disfluency should not be confused with its usage as a stylistic device.

Hesitations, which are defined as words taking more than a natural amount of time to produce [9], are minimal in interviewer-interviewee communication as well as false starts.

In general, disfluencies occur within phrases. The only case where disfluencies do not precede a phrase (a noun phrase, a verb phrase, prepositional phrase etc) is when the speaker is interrupted. It is also worth mentioning that disfluency markers are more frequently found in male and female interviewees' utterances as their speech is unprepared.

Conclusion: Our analyzes of English radio interview texts allows us to conclude that in interviewer-interviewee communicative interaction male speakers follow a strategy of dominance using the tactic of simple interruption and overlapping of speech. This result of our research supports the earlier works devoted to gender peculiarities of casual conversation. But we have also found out that male participants of radio interviews, as well as female speakers, frequently use in their speech non-lexical items which function in the investigated interviews as cooperative elements of conversation. Thus, we can not state that men are always competitive in radio interview communication. As for the usage of disfluency markers, both males and females have a tendency to use them.

As for further sociolinguistic research of English radio interview texts, a challenging task for us is to study the influence of such factors as age and status of speakers on turn-taking system functioning in broadcasted interviews.

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