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COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN POLITICAL INTERVIEWS (BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE BIDEN)

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Abstract. The study considers the use of communication strategies in political interviews based on the material of the interview of the United States President Joe Biden. The use of communication strategies by Joe Biden was considered in order to correctly react to journalist criticism and assert the position of official authorities on the situation with the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. The aim of the research is to analyze the strategies and tactics used by the interviewee, the language means of their implementation. The article considers that the common reaction of politicians to criticism from a journalist is avoiding an answer with the help of certain communication tactics.

Scientific and practical significance of the research can be a contribution to the study of communication strategies and tactics in political communication and the development of the methodology to the mechanism for implementing communication strategies study. The methods of contextual analysis and pragmalinguistic analysis were used to analyze certain language means on the certain context and to find out interrelation of linguistic forms and pragmatic factors.

The analysis found that the President skillfully used three set of communication tactics of avoiding an answer strategy including justification and contesting, tactics of shifting the emphasis, softening the categoricalness of the answer, generalization, appeal to the emotions of the addressee and indicating a solution to the problem tactics as an instrument for reaction to criticism to avoid answering and establish cooperation as well as facilitate communication with the interlocutor. The practical value implies the use of its main conclusions for research in the field of political discourse and in the practice of university discipline such as Political linguistics.

Keywords: political interview, speech influence, communication, communication strategies, tactics, political position, reaction to criticism, avoiding an answer

Basic provisions

Nowadays political interview is considered to be a sufficient aspect for the society's involvement in political life. Journalists try to find out all the hidden intentions in politicians' responses with the help of various questions, while politicians use certain communication strategies and tactics to react them in an appropriate way. In order to express their reaction in the correct way, politicians have to apply to certain communication tactics. The use of communication strategies and tactics allows politicians not only to maintain their political image and correspond to their position, but also to prevent discussion and criticism of the actions of the authorities.

Introduction

Today it is difficult to deny that there is a demand for content and dialogue of a socio-political nature, which makes the research of such a form of speech as a political interview relevant. An interview differs from other formats of dialogue – talk shows, discussions, round tables in that opinions are voiced pointwise and superficially in them, while in the process of interviewing a politician covers his position in detail, mainly using communication strategies and tactics, including (implicitly and explicitly) assessments, confrontation, agreement, demonstration of the model of the world of the recipient and the addressee [1, p. 106]. However, the mechanism of communication strategies in such a variety of speech communication as political communication has not been sufficiently studied against the background of the growing interest of researchers in the language of politics.

The peculiarity of such official interviews with politicians is that they reflect not an individual opinion, but the view of an official government, a political party, or an entire state [2, p. 331]. The interviewer's goal is often to catch, embarrass, anger and even compromise and provoke a high-ranking political figure. Therefore, a politician should assert the position of the state in situations of political crises and conflicts, and this, in turn, directly depends on effective strategies.

Speech influence is exerted by the participants in two directions: on the conversational partner and the audience. At the same time, in a political interview for both participants, the focus on the audience is a priority, and the dialogue with the interlocutor can be a tool. Both the interviewer and the respondent realize their strategic task in general communication. Accordingly, if the attitudes of the interviewer and the respondent to influence the audience coincide, then their communication strategies will strive for cooperation, symbiosis and assistance [3, p. 28]. If the attitudes of the communication participants in relation to the audience differ, then the choice of communication strategies will be made in favor of opposition and even confrontation with each other. The interlocutors will choose their individual strategy, which will lead to a clash of opinions and positions. Thus, the objectives that participants want to reach in a political interview are a significant factor as it directly influences the choice of communicative strategies. And communication strategies play the role of a *steering wheel* in it, which can collide opinions and positions, or lead them in parallel.

The study was based on the following *hypothesis*: in a political interview, politicians resort to communicative strategies and tactics in order to respond to journalists' questions and confirm the correctness of their political position. In many cases, politicians react to journalists' questions containing criticism and provocation with the help of a certain set of communication strategies and tactics.

In a political interview, the use of provocative questions by journalists containing criticism usually leads to confrontation. According to O. S. Issers, verbal provocation is a purposeful, motivated, predominantly controlled communicative behavior aimed at getting information that the interlocutor does not wish to communicate voluntarily, or at destabilizing his emotional state. Thus, provocation induces the partner to such verbal reactions that may lead to undesirable consequences for him [4, p 93-94]. The most common speech reaction of a politician to journalist criticism with the help of provocative questions is to avoid answering.

Sheigal E.I. notes that politicians, like no one else, know how to say a lot and at the same time say nothing [5]. By avoiding an answer, Li Tsing understands the reaction of the responder to the question, which does not contain either a literal refusal to answer (including gestures that indicate the unwillingness of the addressee to provide an answer), or the required information [6]. So, the speaker says something, but does not signal that he is going to refuse to answer, and at the same time does not answer the journalist appropriately. The tools to avoid answering are the use of certain communication strategies and tactics. . Therefore, *the aim of this study* is to consider strategies and tactics used by the interviewee as a speech reaction to criticism of a journalist, the language means of their implementation (based on the interview with Joe Biden). Thus, *research objectives* involve: 1) to determine the concepts of *communicative strategies, tactics*; 2) to characterize the main communication strategies and tactics as a way of the politician's reaction to questions containing criticism; 3) to describe typical means of implementing these strategies and tactics.

The concept of *communication strategies* has been studied for many years. Researchers were actively writing about communication strategies in the 70s (Varadi 1973; Tarone, Fraunfelder and Selinker 1976; Tarone 1978, etc.) [1, p. 150]. However, communicative strategies have been considered in the context of political discourse, when the very concept of critical discourse analysis has been actively developed in the research of linguists.

O.I. Issers writes that speech communication is a strategic process; the basis for it is the choice of appropriate linguistic resources. She also defines a speech strategy as a plan for a complex speech impact that a speaker performs to process a partner, a specific way of speech behavior, a set of speech actions aimed at solving the general communicative task of the speaker. A speech tactic is considered to be as one or more actions that help to implement the strategy [1, p. 10].

According to A.M. Kurkimbayeva, communication strategies are considered to be communicators' ability of solving communication problems. Communicative strategy is the certain way of acting in order to implement general objectives in the course of communication or accomplish particular tasks. Communicative tactics are course of actions to implement a communicative strategy, which is based on the intended goal, the situation of conversation as well as the recipient's reaction [7].

Researchers identify a wide range of communication strategies of political discourse. T. van Dijk in his study of strategies divides them into strategies of positive self-presentation and negative presentation of the opponent [8, pp. 238-246].

O.L. Mikhaleva distinguishes three main groups according to principles similar to T. van Dijk's idea: strategies to increase, strategies to decrease, and strategies of theatricality [9]. B.B. Ermanova considers two strategies such as cooperation and confrontation strategies, which are based on the fundamental attitudes that underlie any communicative interaction. Each strategy is explicated by a set of certain communication tactics for maintaining speech communication [10].

In our study, we adhere to the classification of O.N. Parshina, since the strategies are allocated according to the desired goal of the speaker and the linguist

takes into account the possibility of implementing strategies by a set of tactics. The classification was based on the ultimate goal, which is considered as a predictable desired, as an idea of the result that should be achieved in relation to the addressee:

1) strategy of self-presentation: tactics of identification, solidarity and opposition;

2) power struggle strategies:

- strategy of discredit and attack: tactics of accusation and insult;

- manipulative strategy: manipulative tactics and demagogic techniques;

- self-defense strategy: tactics of justification, contesting and criticism;

3) Strategies of maintaining power, which include tactics of realizing the issue, highlighting positive information, clarifying, commenting, considering the problem from a new angle and indicating the way to solve the problem; tactics of unity, appeal to the emotions of the addressee and tactics considering the value orientations of the addressee;

4) persuasion strategies:

- argumentative strategy: tactics of reasonable assessments, contrastive analysis, indications of the future and tactics of illustration;

- propaganda strategy: appeal tactics, tactics of promising [11].

It is important to highlight another strategy that is most frequently used to avoid answering as a speech reaction to criticism- the strategy of avoiding a direct answer. L.B. Golovash finds that the strategy of avoiding a direct answer is a chain of the speaker's decisions, communicative choices of speech actions and language means that allow him to veil, hide the true intentions, or even avoid a direct answer [12]. The researcher lists the following tactics: repetitions and re-questions; delay in responding; softening the categoricalness of the answer; generalization; assent; the actual implicit refusal; ignoring; irony; hint; imposing conditions.

Thus, a speech reaction to criticism from media representatives is to avoid uncomfortable topics and veil the required information. The proper use of communication strategies and tactics ensures the implementation of such a reaction to criticism as avoidance of an answer.

Research methods and materials

The research material was the full transcript of President Joe Biden's interview with George Stephanopoulos from an open electronic source – the ABC News website [13]. The main topic of the interview was devoted to the Taliban, President Joe Biden was firm in his defense of the United States' withdrawal. Biden's decision to withdraw the troops has caused the pandemonium in Afghanistan, with as many as 11,000 Americans and tens of thousands of endangered Afghans scrambling to evacuate the country. Despite the scenes that happened in Afghanistan, in the interview Biden was adamant in defending his decision and reacted to the criticism of the journalist avoiding an answer through the skillful use of communicative tactics.

The unit of analysis is a *dialogical unity*, consisting of an initiating replica of the journalist, containing criticism, and a reacting replica of the president. The study was conducted using the *methods* of contextual analysis and pragmalinguistic

analysis. The research method of contextual analysis was used in the analysis of the text (text fragment, sentence). Certain language means of the president's replica were analyzed, as well as the analysis the meaning of the word on the certain context. Pragmalinguistic analysis provided an opportunity to study the speech, taking into account the context of the situation of communication in the interdependence between linguistic forms and pragmatic factors.

Results and discussion

In the interview under review about the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, the primary task of the journalist George Stephanopoulos is to convey to the American viewer that this is Biden's political mistake, which affected the prestige of the United States in the international arena, and causes the presence of sharp and categorical questions and even negatively tinged questions that express criticism. The journalist uses a wide range of linguistic means with the semes of negative evaluation, direct questions as well pointing to the President and his decision, which influence the situation in Afghanistan and even led to bad consequences. Critical statements, or criticism, in relation to a political interview, can be considered an explicitly negative assessment of the actions of the president and the government as a whole. A negative assessment is explicated in the replica of a journalist using various linguistic means. The negative connotation is expressed in accordance with the pragmatic strategy of politeness and diplomacy. As a rule, the professional etiquette of a journalist and the difference in the social status of the interlocutors imply keeping the distance. Therefore, president himself is not the object of a negative assessment, but his actions or the position he takes regarding the events taking place in the country.

In the example, the journalist asks provocative question, which strongly expresses his criticism with the words of negative semantics (*wrong, downplay*):

Biden: I think -- there was no consensus. If you go back and look at the intelligence reports, they said that it's more likely to be sometime by the end of the year. The idea that the tal -- and then it goes further on, even as late as August. I think you're gonna see -- the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others speaking about this later today [13].

The main strategy used by the President to react to criticism is **self-defense strategy** carried out through **justification tactics**. He uses opposition of text connectors (others - me, me - they) in order to justify himself. Using so-called anonymized constructions such as *they said, others speaking*, allows the interviewee to avoid personal identification with the producer of the action, *depersonalizes* the statement in order to disclaim responsibility for certain events. Moreover, the main English verb *to think*, which has an epistemic meaning and an epistemic adverb *to be likely* reduce the degree of responsibility. Thus, using these lexical-semantic means Biden does not speak categorically about the Taliban takeover and only expresses his assumptions shifting responsibility from him to *the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and intelligence*.

In addition, to implement the **shifting the emphasis tactics**, he also made some inaccurate claims about the time of Taliban takeover, which can be the

example of *shifting time*. First, he mentions *sometime by the end of the year*, the adverb *sometime* also denotes some indefinite point in time when something can happen. Then he changes his claim saying *as late as August*. Moreover, it is worth paying attention to numerous pauses of hesitation he made as well as using additional constructions *the idea that, if you go back* that do not have the main information and help to avoid answering as a reaction to criticism. Also, he often starts the sentence or the phrase and does not finish it, which also show his hesitation and attempt to avoid a direct answer. In this answer, Joe Biden tried to make it clear to the audience that neither he nor intelligence is responsible for what happened.

Obviously, such an answer does not satisfy the journalist and he shifts the emphasis in the question. The interviewer expresses his direct disapproval by pointing to an inaccurate statement of the president he made earlier. In this example, the journalist shows his criticism using the negative sentence in the past with the second person pronoun (*you didn't...*) [13].

Joe Biden has to answer through a combination of two tactics of **avoiding a direct answer strategy**: tactics of softening the categoricalness of the answer and shifting the emphasis tactics. He implements **tactics of softening the categoricalness of the answer** through introductory constructions such as *well, the idea that, the question was* which allow to soften the categoricalness of the response. Through implementing **shifting the emphasis tactics**, Biden shifts the emphasis to the idea about *300,000 troops we had trained and equipped*. Therefore, the response is uninformative and cannot be considered as an answer to the specific question.

Another example also shows his reaction with the help of the **generalization tactics of avoiding a direct answer strategy**. He uses several tactics to avoid the answer. The interviewer expresses his criticism and even blames his actions using the lexical marker of negative evaluation: *failure*. So, in his response, he uses **tactics of softening the categoricalness of the answer**, which is realized through the *introductory sentence (I don't think)* and *introductory constructions (you know, put it another way)*[13]. These linguistic means included in the response, do not contribute any significant information and do not affect the general meaning of the statement, but they allow to reduce, soften the directness and categoricalness of the response. Also, when implementing this strategy, the speaker may deliberately use the name of the interlocutor as a means of softening. In this example, Joe Biden addresses his interlocutor by his first name *George*. Along with tactics of softening the categoricalness, he uses the **tactics of generalization**. Generalization is implemented by lexical means with general meaning. To Stephanopoulos's question, he replies with the extremely general phrase *that's what happened*. The impersonal construction *it happens* is a lexical mean with diffuse semantics and general meaning. So, Biden didn't give exact answer to the direct question, but only tried to justify that no one expected that and no one is to blame. Accordingly, his answer is considered uninformative.

In the excerpt below, Joe Biden uses another tactics of **self-defense strategy** carried out through **contesting tactics**:

Biden: No, they didn't. It was split. Tha-- that wasn't true. That wasn't true.

Biden: No. Not at -- not in terms of whether we were going to get out in a timeframe all troops. They didn't argue against that [13].

Further, Joe Biden categorically denies the interviewer's words through the word *No*, negative particle *not* as well as negative sentences *they didn't*, *that wasn't true*. Also, the repetition of a negative sentence *Tha--that wasn't true. That wasn't true.* to strengthen the denial. Even after repeating the question by the journalist, the President confidently denies this statement in order to defend his claim. In this situation, he uses the **contesting tactics**, which indicates that he is convinced of the rightness of his actions. At the same time, he does not blame anyone, but only refutes the negative assessment and indicates his position.

Next, the journalist indirectly shows his criticism asking *sharp* question, and the President has to follow an information and interpretation strategy.

Stephanopoulos: What did you think when you first saw those pictures? (We've seen those hundreds of people packed into a C-17. You've seen Afghans falling--) [13].

In his response to the horrific deaths of Afghans, Joe Biden implements the **tactics of indicating a solution to the problem** using the modal verb **have to** (*We ha-- we have to gain control... We have to move this... We have to move in*). The President stressed that the United States has taken steps to stop the chaos and disorder at the airport. So, he pointed out the actions taken by him and the government to prevent this and the need to take forced measures and compromise in order to achieve common goals.

One more answer of Joe Biden shows his reaction to criticism by implementing **appeal to the emotions of the addressee tactics**. All of Joe Biden's answers are mostly exculpatory. The withdrawal of American troops led to the takeover of the country by the Taliban, which means that the whole world is in danger now. However, in his defense, Joe Biden refers to the interviewer and thus to all viewers *am I gonna send your sons and your daughters to war in Afghanistan in perpetuity?* [13]. Biden implicitly compares the degree of threat that comes from the Taliban in the current conditions of the takeover of the country, and if the troops had not been withdrawn. Saying that he chose between the withdrawal of troops and sending the *sons and daughters* of the Americans to the *in perpetuity*, Joe Biden at the same time evokes empathy among the people, implicitly indicating that he chooses the *peaceful life* of the Americans and the young generation.

Conclusion

Having analyzed Stephanopoulos' interview with Joe Biden we concluded that the interview was confrontational. The interview expresses criticism from the interviewer to the actions of the President. Criticism refers to a poorly planned evacuation operation, the failure of a program to expedite the issuance of visas to thousands of Afghans, and a missed opportunity to evacuate Americans early. The study revealed that the majority of the journalist's questions were provocative. In total, during the interview 20 questions were asked, 15 of them were provocative. The analysis of the text of the interview suggests that most of the answers were provided using an avoiding an answer strategy. In order to avoid answering as a

reaction to criticism of the journalist, Joe Biden had to refer to a wide range of avoiding an answer strategy tactics. Thus, three main ways to avoid provocations of a journalist were identified that the President of the United States used in the interview to avoid answering as a respond to the criticism.

The first way of avoiding provocations is implemented in the discourse of Joe Biden by speech tactics of justification and contesting. Justification tactics is implemented by opposition of text connectors, anonymized constructions, epistemic adverbs and verbs, additional constructions, which disclaim responsibility for the situation happened in Afghanistan. In terms of contesting tactics, it helps to convince the rightness of the actions and refute the negative assessment through categorical deny using negative particles and negative sentences.

The next set of tactics such as tactics of shifting the emphasis, softening the categoricalness of the answer, generalization tactics is implemented through impersonal constructions, introductory constructions, switching to another topic, lexical units with general meaning and pauses.

The last set of tactics, which implement avoiding an answer strategy in the discourse of Joe Biden, is appeal to the emotions of the addressee and indicating a solution to the problem tactics. In response to criticism and disapproval, Biden appeals to the emotions of the mass addressee, causing sympathy and implicitly indicating that he chooses the peaceful life of the Americans. Using the tactics of indicating a solution to the problem, the politician forms an idea of himself as a knowledgeable, strategically thinking and active leader. Thus, the combination of these strategies in his speech helped the President to avoid answering while reacting to journalist criticism.

Therefore, avoidance of provocative questions in a public interview allowed the President to prevent discussion of the legitimacy of the actions of the authorities and his possible personal responsibility for the scenes happened in Afghanistan.

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САЯСИ СҰХБАТТАРДАҒЫ КОММУНИКАТИВТІК СТРАТЕГИЯЛАР (ДЖО БАЙДЕНМЕН СҰХБАТ МАТЕРИАЛЫ БОЙЫНША)

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада АҚШ президенті Джо Байденнің сұхбаты негізінде саяси сұхбаттарда коммуникативтік стратегияларды қолдану қарастырылады. Журналистің сынына дұрыс жауап беру және американдық әскерді Ауғанстаннан шығаруға қатысты үкімет шенеуніктерінің ұстанымын бекіту үшін Джо Байденнің қолданған коммуникативтік стратегиялары анықталды. Зерттеудің мақсаты респондент қолданатын стратегиялар мен тактикаларды, оларды жүзеге асырудың тілдік құралдарын талдау болып табылады. Мақалада саясаткерлердің журналист сынына жалпы реакциясы белгілі бір коммуникация тактикаларының көмегімен жауаптан жалтару деп қарастырылады.

Зерттеудің ғылыми және практикалық маңыздылығы оның саяси коммуникациядағы коммуникативті стратегиялар мен тактикаларды зерттеуге және коммуникативті стратегияларды жүзеге асыру механизмін зерттеу әдістемесін жасауға қосқан үлесіне байланысты. Контекстік және прагмалингвистикалық талдау әдістері белгілі бір мәнмәтінде тілдік құралдарды талдап, тілдік формалар мен прагматикалық факторлар арасындағы байланысты анықтау үшін қолданылды.

Мақала барысында президент жауаптан жалтарудың коммуникативтік тактикасының үш жиынтығын, яғни, ақталу және дауласу стратегиясын, екпінді ауыстыру тактикасын, жауаптың категориялылығын жұмсарту, жалпылау тактикасы, адресаттың эмоцияларына сүйену және мәселені шешуге нұсқау тактикасы жауап беруден жалтаруға және ынтымақтастық орнатуға мүмкіндік беретін құрал ретінде, сонымен қатар әңгімелесушімен қарым-қатынасты құру жолы болып табылады әрі қарым-қатынасты жеңілдету амалы болып саналатыны анықталды. Практикалық маңыздылығы оның негізгі тұжырымдарын саяси дискурс саласындағы зерттеулер үшін, сондай-ақ Саяси лингвистика сияқты университеттік пәннің тәжірибесінде пайдалануды қамтиды.

Тірек сөздер: саяси сұхбат, сөйлеу әсері, коммуникация, коммуникативтік стратегиялары, тактика, саяси ұстаным, сынға реакция, жауаптан жалтару

КОММУНИКАТИВНЫЕ СТРАТЕГИИ В ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ ИНТЕРВЬЮ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ ИНТЕРВЬЮ С ДЖО БАЙДЕНОМ)

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается использование коммуникативных стратегий в политических интервью на материале интервью президента США Джо Байдена. Рассмотрено использование Джо Байденом коммуникативных стратегий для того, чтобы правильно реагировать на критику журналиста, утвердить позицию представителей власти по поводу вывода американских войск из Афганистана. Цель исследования – проанализировать стратегии и тактики, используемые опрашиваемым, языковые средства их реализации. В статье отмечается, что распространенной реакцией политиков на критику со стороны журналиста является уход от ответа с помощью определенных коммуникативных тактик.

Научно-практическая значимость исследования заключается во вкладе в изучение коммуникативных стратегий и тактик в политической коммуникации и разработке методологии изучения механизма реализации коммуникативных стратегий. Методы контекстуального анализа и прагмалингвистического анализа использовались для анализа языковых средств в определенном контексте и выявления взаимосвязи языковых форм и прагматических факторов.

В ходе анализа было установлено, что президент умело использовал три набора коммуникативных тактик ухода от ответа, стратегию оправдания и оспаривания, тактику смещения акцента, смягчения категоричности ответа, обобщения, обращения к эмоциям адресата и тактику указания на решение проблемы как инструмент реакции на критику, позволяющие уйти от ответа и установить сотрудничество, а также облегчить общение с собеседником. Практическое значение предполагает использование основных выводов статьи для исследований в области политического дискурса, а также в практике вузовской дисциплины, такой как политическая лингвистика.

Ключевые слова: политическое интервью, речевое воздействие, коммуникация, коммуникативные стратегии, тактика, политическая позиция, реакция на критику, уход от ответа

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