

HEDGING AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN AMERICAN TELEVISION DISCOURSE

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Abstract. The article examines the use of linguistic hedging as a communication strategy in American television discourse. The scripts of “The Ellen DeGeneres Show”, one of the most popular talk shows in the United States, were taken as the material for this research. The show is based on interviews, which are about real communication between interlocutors, asking questions, giving answers, avoiding categorical statements, being indirect and thus using hedges in speech to achieve communicative goals. The purpose of this research is to identify common representatives of hedges used in American television discourse for successful and effective interaction.

The article has scientific significance as it explores hedging as one of the most common communicative strategies used in American television discourse, considers definitions of the concept of hedging, pragmatic features and functions and offers an analytical approach to understanding the role of hedging in this context.

The authors analyze examples from the television program, demonstrating how hedging is used to achieve various communicative goals. The method of linguistic observation and description, the method of interpretation, and the method of contextual analysis were employed in this study.

The results of data analysis indicate that the linguistic hedges commonly used in American television discourse are “you know”, “like”, “I mean”, “just”, “I think”, “kind of” and “well”. The frequency of their use ranged from 5% to 27% depending on the hedge.

This research on linguistic hedging has practical significance in various areas related to communication, language learning, psychology and public speaking. The results obtained can help improve communication skills, increase the effectiveness of learning and teaching languages, and improve professional skills in various fields.

Keywords: linguistic hedging, communication, communication strategy, television discourse, hedges, media discourse, American talk shows, fuzzy language

Basic provisions

In linguistics, the term *hedging* was introduced by George Philip Lakoff, an American cognitive linguist and philosopher. In 1973, G. Lakoff first defined this phenomenon in his study “Hedges: a study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts” as “words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” [1, p. 471]. Lakoff’s work opened up new avenues for research on the role of hedging in linguistics and provided a framework for understanding the use of hedges in communication. It continues to be widely cited and is considered to be a classic in the field of linguistics.

According to Bruce Fraser, a linguist and professor of Boston University, hedging is a rhetorical strategy [2, p. 22]. Hedging refers to the use of linguistic expressions that reduce the strength of a statement that is being said, making it more

indirect or vague. This is used to minimize the risk of being wrong or to indicate uncertainty, doubt, or hesitation in the speaker's statement. With the help of hedges, it is possible to make the illocutionary force of the utterance weaker, avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Without the use of linguistic hedging, the interlocutor might speak directly, too emotionally, impolitely or even aggressively.

Communication participants may use hedges unconsciously and automatically in their speech, or specifically for certain purposes, using various linguistic hedging means. Typical representatives of hedges are such words and phrases as *I think, you know, a kind of, you see, I mean, a sort of, like, a bit of, I believe, something like, about, I assume, well, maybe, could be*, etc.

Examples of linguistic hedging include these sentences:

Well, I believe this is the happiest day of my life.

I suppose you're very experienced at that *kind of* thing.

He's *about* to lose everything [4, p. 622].

Linguistic hedging can be used as a communication strategy to achieve a variety of goals in different social and professional contexts.

Introduction

In modern society, indirect real-life communication plays an important role in social interactions and relationships. And nowadays this role is increasing in different types of discourse. People from diverse backgrounds interact in various social and professional fields, so the ability to use linguistic hedges effectively can be a valuable communication skill. In the process of interaction, it can help to achieve mutual understanding, avoid directness and "save face", build better relationships, facilitate more effective conversations, and promote a more respectful social environment. By and large, this communicative strategy is insufficiently studied by Kazakhstani scientists, which determines *the relevance* of our research.

In general, the hedging process is more common in colloquial discourse. This type of discourse refers to informal and casual language use in conversation and everyday communication. So, for instance, hedges are widespread in an informal environment such as dialogues, interviews, conversations, and so forth. And therefore, *the talk show discourse* was chosen by us as *a linguistic hedging research area*.

These days, talk shows are going to be the most popular and relevant genre on television not only in the United States, but also all over the world. The talk show discourse is based on conversations between a host and invited guests (usually they are famous people, celebrities, singers, actors, and so on). During the interviews, talk show hosts tend to use hedging means to express their opinions and ask questions in a less direct manner. Guests may also use hedges to express uncertainty about their own opinions or to avoid making definitive statements about sensitive topics, make their interaction fuzzier, be indirect and more polite as well.

In addition, linguistic hedging can also be used in American talk show discourse to create a more respectful communication environment, where multiple perspectives are acknowledged and respected. Thus, this research aims to identify the most frequently used linguistic hedges in the American talk show discourse.

Materials and methods

“The Ellen DeGeneres Show” is one of the most popular daytime American talk shows hosted by Ellen DeGeneres that features celebrity interviews, comedy segments, and various other forms of entertainment. For this research the scripts of the show were chosen as the materials. A qualitative analysis of transcribed episodes of this American talk show was conducted to identify instances of hedging markers used by the participants, including hosts and guests. The episodes of this talk show are posted on their official YouTube channel [3].

On the whole, 10 episodes of the talk show were analyzed: the episodes with famous guests such as Heidi Klum, Steve Harvey, Sofia Vergara, Jennifer Aniston, Jessica Alba, Michelle Obama, Lisa Kudrow, Adam Levine, Channing Tatum and Jennifer Lopez. For this study, we chose the last nineteenth season of this show to analyze the most relevant hedges. The total duration of the sound was 1 hour 39 minutes 32 seconds.

Within the framework of this scientific article, the method of linguistic observation and description, the method of interpretation, and the method of contextual analysis were used. The quantitative method was employed to define the most frequent linguistic hedges used in the American talk show discourse as well.

Results

During the analysis of the first episode with a supermodel and a popular TV host Heidi Klum, the following hedges were identified, such as *I think, you know, I mean, like, I assume, just, you see*, etc. For instance, these examples of sentences in which hedges were used:

And then I'm *like* okey, it's too short;
I think it's a great idea;
I assume every holiday is good for you;
He didn't try, *you know*;
New Year's *must be* crazy;
I don't know, I *just* thought, and so forth.

In the second episode with a famous TV host Steve Harvey the hedges *well, you know, just, I mean, like, about, kind of* were discovered in these examples:

Yeah, you know, a lot of things can happen along the way;
Well, you know, I've decided to be a judge;
They *just* made me cry;
I mean, push-ups are impressive;
I can do *about* 35, and so one.

As for the third episode of the talk show, one of the popular actresses Sofia Vergara and the host Ellen DeGeneres used the hedging means in their speech quite often. Among them were hedges that we have already met earlier in previous episodes as *I think, well, like, you know, kind of, I mean*, etc., but also were some new linguistic hedges as *probably, maybe, something, could* and *I guess*:

It was *like* three years ago;
It looks *like* it's *some kind of* teddy bear;

Oh, so you *must be* worse than me;
I think I'm pretty good to them;
 I do things, *you know*;
 You are welcome any time, *you know*;
 She was *like 50 something*;
Yeah, well, I posted recently this picture;
I mean, what are you doing?;
I must have been *like 22? 23?*;
 Somebody would text me, *I think*, or Instagram me, *or something*;
 If he has to go away for work *or something*;
 I was thinking then *maybe* I need to get another dog;
 It was *more like* a spokesperson *kind of* thing;
 You are probably selling one big shoe;
 It's a chair, *I think*, *so maybe...* I don't know;
I guess it *could* be, but why do I need that?
 As you can see, this episode was quite rich in the use of hedges.

The next episode which was considered is the episode with Jennifer Aniston, a celebrity and an outstanding actress of the United States. The analysis showed that several linguistic hedges were used in the TV show episode:

This is not *supposed to be* emotional;
You know, I haven't been out in a long time, *like maybe* two years;
 I'm *almost* not kidding;
Oh, well, thank you for your honesty;
 That's *just like*, *you know*, what?;
 Yeah, that's why you *just* have the one bag. *I mean*, right?;
 We had *about* 8 shows outlined;
 By the way, I love the show, *you know*;
 And it's *like* now I understand it's *sort of* the aftermath.

In subsequent episodes of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show", the same types of linguistic hedging were revealed as in the previous ones. After analyzing the talk show scripts for the presence of hedges, it was calculated how many times a particular hedge was used and its percentage relative to all hedges. The total number of linguistic hedges found in these 10 talk show episodes is 460. The results of the research analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Linguistic hedging means commonly used in American television discourse (The Ellen DeGeneres Show)

Nº	A linguistic hedge	How many times the hedge has been used	Percentage of the hedge usage relative to the total number of hedges
1	You know	124	26,96%
2	Like	94	20,43%
3	I mean	55	11,96%

4	Just	40	8,7%
5	I think	30	6,52%
6	Kind of	22	4,78%
7	Well	22	4,78%
8	Must	12	2,61%
9	Maybe	10	2,17%
10	I guess	7	1,52%
11	Something	7	1,52%
12	Feel like	6	1,3%
13	Sort of	5	1,09%
14	About	5	1,09%
15	Suppose	3	0,65%
16	Almost	3	0,65%
17	Could	3	0,65%
18	Bit of	3	0,65%
19	I assume	2	0,43%
20	Probably	2	0,43%
21	It seems	2	0,43%
22	Might	1	0,22%
23	Would	1	0,22%
24	You see	1	0,22%
	Total	460	

Discussion

Based on the results, some common hedges were identified in American talk show discourse: “*you know*”, “*like*”, “*I mean*”, “*just*”, “*I think*”, “*kind of*” and “*well*”. The frequency of usage ranged from 5% to 27% depending on the hedge. The hedge “*you know*” occurs 124 times in 10 episodes (almost 27%) and is the most frequently used hedge in this study. The hedge “*like*” occurs 94 times (more than 20%), the hedge “*I mean*” – 55 times (almost 12%), “*just*” – 40 times (about 9%), “*I think*” – 30 times (more than 6%). The hedges “*kind of*” and “*well*” both occur 22 times, which is about 5% in relation to all hedges.

According to the results of data analysis, these linguistic hedges can serve various *pragmatic functions* in conversation:

The hedge “*you know*” can help to indicate that the speaker is about to say something the listener should already know or to seek agreement or confirmation from the listener, to soften the impact of a statement or, sometimes, to fill pauses in conversation.

The linguistic hedge “*like*” is commonly used as a filler or a pause. It can be used to indicate hesitation or uncertainty, or as a way to buy time while the interlocutor formulates their thoughts. Moreover, “*like*” can be used to approximate or estimate, as in “It was, *like*, three years ago”. This hedge serves as a flexible tool for the speaker to manage the flow and impact of their speech.

The hedge “*I mean*” is used in conversation to clarify or emphasize a point made previously. It is typically used to signal that the speaker is about to rephrase or further explain a statement they just made. “*I mean*” can be thought of as a way to provide additional context or nuance to what has been said, or to make sure the listener fully understands what the speaker is trying to convey.

The linguistic hedge “*just*” is a hedge that is frequently used to downplay or soften the impact of a statement. It can be used to make a statement seem less harsh or to indicate that the speaker is not trying to be confrontational. Additionally, “*just*” can be used to express urgency or a desire for quick action. But, in general, it serves as a way for the speaker to modify the tone or meaning of their statement.

The hedge “*I think*” is used to indicate that the speaker is expressing their opinion, rather than stating a fact. It is a way to signal to the listener that the following statement is subjective and open to interpretation. “*I think*” can be used to soften the impact of a statement, making it seem less direct as well. By using this hedge the speaker can express their perspective while also acknowledging that other viewpoints may exist.

“*Kind of*” is a hedge that can be used in conversation to express a degree of uncertainty or approximation, to indicate that the speaker is not fully confident in the accuracy of their statement, or that they are struggling to find the right words to express their meaning. In addition, “*kind of*” occurs when the speaker needs to soften the impact of a statement, making it seem less definitive.

The hedge “*well*” is used to indicate that the interlocutor is about to introduce a new topic or to move the conversation in a different direction. Furthermore, “*well*” can be used to soften the impact of a statement or to give the speaker time to collect their thoughts to facilitate effective communication.

In general, these linguistic hedges can serve a variety of functions in conversation, including providing time for the speaker to think, indicating approximation or uncertainty, softening statements, clarifying or elaborating on previous statements, seeking agreement or confirmation, and shifting topics. Their pragmatic functions will depend on the context and the intentions of the interlocutors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, linguistic hedging plays an important role in American television discourse. The host and guests in talk shows use a variety of hedging markers, including “*like*”, “*kind of*”, “*I think*”, “*just*”, “*you know*”, “*I mean*”, and “*well*” to

express uncertainty or approximation, and soften the impact of their statements. They also use hedging as a communicative strategy to manage the tone of the conversation, creating a more respectful communication environment. It helps to foster a more open and tolerant discourse, where people from diverse backgrounds can engage in productive and successful conversations.

Hedging is a linguistic phenomenon and communication strategy which allows talk show interlocutors to sound less direct, minimize conflicts and awkward situations. The use of linguistic hedging in American talk show discourse serves as an important tool for promoting politeness and effective communication in this context.

The research on linguistic hedging has great prospects for further study, as it carries great practical significance in various areas: foreign philology, linguistics, daily life and professional communication, psychology, language learning and teaching, public speaking, etc.

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АМЕРИКАНДЫҚ ТЕЛЕДИДАРЛЫҚ ДИСКУРСТАҒЫ КОММУНИКАТИВТІ СТРАТЕГИЯ РЕТІНДЕ ХЕДЖИРЛЕУ

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада лингвистикалық хеджирлеуді американдық теледидарлық дискурста коммуникативті стратегия ретінде қолдану қарастырылады. Зерттеу материалы ретінде АҚШ-тағы ең танымал ток-шоулардың бірі “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” скрипттері алынды. Бұл ток-шоу сұхбат форматында өтеді, онда сұхбаттасушылар арасында нақты қарым-қатынас жүзеге асырылады, олар сұрақтар қояды және оларға жауап береді, категориялық мәлімдемелерден, түзуліктен аулақ болады және осылайша коммуникативті мақсаттарға жету үшін сөйлеуде лингвистикалық хеджирлеу құралдарын қолданады. Бұл зерттеудің мақсаты – табысты және тиімді өзара әрекеттесу үшін американдық теледидарлық дискурста қолданылатын лингвистикалық хеджирлеуді анықтау.

Мақаланың ғылыми маңызы бар, өйткені мақалада хеджирлеу американдық теледидарлық дискурста қолданылатын ең көп таралған коммуникациялық стратегиялардың бірі ретінде қарастырылады, хеджирлеудің анықтамасы, оның прагматикалық ерекшеліктері мен функциялары қарастырылады және осы контексте хеджирлеудің рөлін түсінуге талдамдық тәсіл ұсынылады.

Мақала авторлары әртүрлі коммуникативті мақсаттарға жету үшін хеджирлеудің қалай қолданылатынын көрсете отырып, ток-шоудан лингвистикалық хеджирлеу

мысалдарын талдайды. Бұл зерттеуде лингвистикалық бақылау және сипаттау әдістері, түсіндіру әдісі және контекстік талдау әдісі қолданылды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері американдық теледидарлық дискурста әдетте “you know”, “like”, “I mean”, “just”, “I think”, “kind of” және “well” сияқты лингвистикалық хеджирлеулер қолданылатынын көрсетеді. Оларды пайдалану жиілігі хеджирлеуге байланысты 5%-дан 27%-ға дейін өзгереді.

Лингвистикалық хеджирлеу саласындағы бұл зерттеу коммуникацияға, тілдерді үйренуге, психологияға және көпшілік алдында сөйлеуге байланысты әртүрлі салаларда практикалық маңызы бар. Нәтижелер қарым-қатынас дағдыларын жақсартуға, тілдерді оқыту мен оқытудың тиімділігін арттыруға, әртүрлі салалардағы кәсіби дағдыларды жақсартуға көмектеседі.

Тірек сөздер: лингвистикалық хеджирлеу, коммуникация, коммуникативтік стратегия, теледидарлық дискурс, хеджирлеу, медиадискурс, американдық ток-шоулар, бұлыңғыр тіл

ХЕДЖИРОВАНИЕ КАК КОММУНИКАТИВНАЯ СТРАТЕГИЯ В АМЕРИКАНСКОМ ТЕЛЕВИЗИОННОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается использование лингвистического хеджирования как коммуникативной стратегии в американском телевизионном дискурсе. В качестве материала исследования были взяты скрипты “The Ellen DeGeneres Show”, одного из самых популярных ток-шоу в США. Данное ток-шоу проходит в формате интервью, где осуществляется реальное общение между собеседниками, которые задают вопросы и отвечают на них, избегают категоричных утверждений, прямолинейности и, таким образом, используют средства лингвистического хеджирования в речи для достижения коммуникативных целей. Цель данного исследования – выявить лингвистические хеджи, используемые в американском телевизионном дискурсе для успешного и эффективного взаимодействия.

Статья имеет научную значимость, так как исследует хеджирование как одну из наиболее распространенных коммуникативных стратегий, используемых в американском телевизионном дискурсе, рассматривает определения понятия хеджирования, прагматические особенности и функции, и предлагает аналитический подход к пониманию роли хеджирования в данном контексте.

Авторы статьи анализируют примеры лингвистических хеджей из телепередачи, демонстрируя, как хеджирование используется для достижения различных коммуникативных целей. В данном исследовании использовались метод лингвистического наблюдения и описания, метод интерпретации и метод контекстуального анализа.

Результаты исследования свидетельствуют о том, что в американском телевизионном дискурсе обычно используются такие лингвистические хеджи, как “you know”, “like”, “I mean”, “just”, “I think”, “kind of” и “well”. Частота их использования варьируется от 5% до 27% в зависимости от хеджа.

Данное исследование в области лингвистического хеджирования имеет практическое значение в различных областях, связанных с коммуникацией, изучением языков, психологией и публичными выступлениями. Полученные результаты могут помочь улучшить коммуникативные навыки, повысить эффективность изучения и преподавания языков, улучшить профессиональные навыки в различных областях.

Ключевые слова: лингвистическое хеджирование, коммуникация, коммуникативная стратегия, телевизионный дискурс, хеджи, медиадискурс, американские ток-шоу, нечеткий язык

Статья поступила 05.03.2023