



Faculty of Arts, Master's Thesis

Thesis Supervisor's report

Thesis Title: Politicians in Late-Night Celebrity Talk Shows
Field of Study: FF N-FI AJ [sem 5, cyk 2]
Department: Department of English and American Studies
Author: Bc. Šárka Havelková
Supervisor: doc. Mgr. Jan Chovanec, Ph.D.
Reviewer: Mgr. Jana Pelclová, Ph.D.

Supervisor's recommendation for overall mark: B

- 1. Evaluation of central idea, thesis, focus and purpose:** A
- 2. Evaluation of organization, logic and arrangement:** B
- 3. Evaluation of topic development, support and evidence:** B
- 4. Evaluation of language, style, standard usage, citation and bibliographic standards:** B

Comments and/or topics and questions for the thesis defence:

This is an interesting thesis that sets out to analyse how politicians present themselves on late night talk shows, focusing on how the genre of the talk show adopts the formal features of both institutional talk and ordinary conversation. The theoretical framework is well chosen; the approach grounded in conversation analysis allows the author to deal with the mechanics of the conversational interaction, while the sociopragmatic approach allows her to investigate the speakers' goals and interactional achievements. The thesis is based on an extensive transcription of data and based on a well-designed set of talk show interviews with politicians. While the thesis is quite well written, there are several issues that would deserve some more attention. It would help the analysis if generalizations about the data were founded on some more tangible evidence (rather than what appears a somewhat impressionistic treatment of some of the examples). Quantification might be difficult but it would help by adding validity in many cases (e.g. on p. 40 'the most common political topics'). Some examples would deserve a more in-depth discussion: for instance, the section on political rhetoric is rather descriptive (it would help if the relevant phenomena were identified in the extracts and briefly discussed either in the lead-in or in the subsequent discussion).

Some more specific observations and questions:

1. In extract 4 (page 28), why does the interviewee NOT answer the question? Also, it might be better to call the speech performed by him not as an 'indirect refusal' (it is a pretty direct refusal!) but, perhaps, an 'implicit refusal' (to contrast with what is clearly an 'explicit performative' in extract 5, cf. also the specification of the illocutionary force indicating device ('I refuse')).
2. Why are 'personally-oriented topics' considered as 'the main subject of the late night talk show/interview' (38)?
3. The list of conversation-like devices (50) seems to be quite obvious; are there any grounds for why these should be more common in ordinary conversation? I have doubts we can summarily call the phenomena 'a highly informal language'. Some more in-depth engagement with the literature would be welcome here.
4. I like the observation about the nature of audience response as gross display of (dis)affiliation (47).
5. Extract 35 makes a good point about what is known as self-denigrating humour; this begs the question: why does Trump use it? Are there any benefits/disadvantages to behaving in this way?
6. Chapter 5 seems to be less incorporated into the overall design of the thesis. That is a pity because I think it is here that the author actually touches on some really significant

issues, related to such concepts as commodification, personalization and congeniality, and ordinariness. Once again, the examples in this section would deserve a more thorough discussion. I wonder if the messing of Trump's hair in Extract 39 can be really read as a display of his ordinariness; maybe - rather (or also) - as his willingness to tolerate norm transgression by the host... Messing one's hair can also be a sign of dominance, which Trump appears to be aware of and he does the same to the host (male bonding?), whereby they become even (a mutual transgression through physical contact)). In any case, the material is quite fascinating and rich, even though different analysts might find different issues in it. :]

There are some minor language mistakes (such as missing articles and wrong concord; misspelling of Aijmer) but otherwise the language of the thesis is on a high level and the arguments are presented in a sophisticated manner.

Brno 04th June 2019

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doc. Mgr. Jan Chovanec, Ph.D.