The Conversational Art of Talk Show Hosts Under the Constraint of Politeness Principles - A Case Study of High-End Interviews

Duoyi Zhang

Broadcasting and Hosting Art, Communication University of Zhejiang, Hangzhou, China, 310000
2010767624@qq.com

Abstract:

In the current media communication landscape, high-end interview programs are key platforms for delivering in-depth information and promoting cultural exchange, while the host's conversational art directly affects program flow, audience experience, and information dissemination effectiveness. Therefore, studying the conversational art of talk show hosts under the constraint of politeness principles is of great significance for maintaining a harmonious communication atmosphere, respecting interviewees, and gaining the trust of the audience. This paper examines the high-end interview programs broadcast on CCTV and hosted by Zou Yun and Wang Guan, focusing on exploring the hosts' conversational art under the constraint of politeness principles. The study adopts literature analysis method and case analysis method. Through literature analysis, it systematically reviews theories related to politeness principles and conversational art. With case analysis, it analyzes specific clips of the programs. The study finds that the two hosts flexibly use conversational skills in three aspects: appropriateness of language expression, listening and responding, and balance of conversation. These skills align with the requirements of politeness principles and effectively improve the program quality. This study enriches the research on the conversational art of talk show hosts and provides practical insights for the development of the profession.

Keywords: Talk show hosts; Politeness principles; Conversational art; High-end interviews; CCTV programs

1. Introduction

In recent years, the media industry has undergone rapid development. Talk shows have become an important part of people's daily life and cultural consumption. Among them, high-end interview programs have received wide attention due to their in-depth topics, high-quality guests and professional hosting style. As the link connecting the program,

guests and audience, the host's conversational art is crucial to the success of the program. Meanwhile, hosts need to follow politeness principles to maintain effective communication relations and establish a positive image. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the conversational art of high-end interview program hosts under the constraint of politeness principles. In previous studies, Wei and Gao pointed out that the host use politeness principles in The Art of Life Program can help hosts improve the viewing effect of programs [1]. Li summarized conversational skills for talk show hosts, such as topic guidance and Theoretical Basis of the Principles of Cooperation [2]. The face theory proposed by Shi provides a theoretical basis for the study of politeness principles [3]. However, there is still a lack of in-depth research on the conversational art of specific high-end interview program hosts under the constraint of politeness principles. This paper conducts research around three aspects. The first is to analyze the basic characteristics of the high-end interview programs hosted by Zou Yun and Wang Guan on CCTV, including the hosts' backgrounds, the range of interviewees and the program's purpose. The second is to analyze the specific conversational skills of the two hosts in three aspects - appropriateness of language expression, listening and responding, and balance of conversation - under the constraint of politeness principles. The third is to explore the specific embodiment and value of politeness principles in high-end interview programs, and clarify their role in program quality, media image and social communication. This paper adopts the research methods of literature analysis and case analysis.. On a theoretical level, this study combines the politeness principle with the conversational skills of high-end talk show hosts, expanding research on the application of the politeness principle in the media field and providing new perspectives and empirical support for related theories. On a practical level, the excellent conversational skills summarized can directly provide professional reference for hosts, helping them better apply the politeness principle to improve the quality and influence of their programs. It also provides a reference for media platforms to develop high-end talk shows.

2. Introduction to High-End Interview Programs

2.1 Host Background

Zou Yun and Wang Guan are both prominent hosts on CCTV. They possess exceptional professional abilities and extensive industry experience. Zou Yun has long been engaged in international news reporting and hosting work. She possesses a broad international perspective and demonstrates proficiency in multilingual communication. Her hosting style is calm and wise. She is good at exploring the depth of topics from a global perspective.

When communicating with international guests, she can accurately grasp the communication rhythm. Wang Guan possesses a professional background in journalism and communication. He demonstrates strong sensitivity and mastery over topics. He is good at activating the program atmosphere in a flexible and humorous way. At the same time, he can quickly capture key information in the guests' views and guide the conversation to a deeper level [4].

2.2 Scope of Interviewees

The interviewees of this high-end interview program cover authoritative figures from various fields at home and abroad. In the political field, the program features senior government officials and diplomats from various countries who engage in discussions on topics such as national policy-making and international relations. In the economic field, it covers well-known economists, founders and senior executives of large enterprises. They discuss global economic trends, industry development strategies and corporate management experience. In the cultural field, it invites cultural celebrities, writers and artists. They share creative concepts, cultural inheritance and innovation ideas. In addition, leading scientific researchers in the field of science and technology, experts and scholars in the field of education, and well-known athletes and coaches in the field of sports also participate in the program. They show the cutting-edge trends and development achievements in various fields.

2.3 Program Purpose

The core purpose of the program is to "establish a high-level dialogue platform and deliver valuable in-depth information". It is committed to exploring the nature of events and industry development laws through professional communication between hosts and guests. It provides in-depth and thought-provoking content for the audience. At the same time, the program focuses on conveying positive values, promoting excellent culture and promoting cultural exchange and ideological collision between different fields and countries. It enables the audience to broaden their cognitive horizons, enhance their understanding of pressing social topics and global trends, and contributes to the harmonious development of society and intercultural communication.

3. Hosting Skills Under the Constraint of Politeness Principles

3.1 Appropriateness of Language Expression

The appropriateness of language expression is a direct manifestation of politeness principles in hosting, encompassing three key aspects: tone, wording, and body language.[4] In terms of tone, Zou Yun and Wang Guan always use a gentle and respectful tone to communicate

with guests. They avoid rigid and aggressive expressions. For example, when asking guests about their views on controversial topics, they will use euphemistic expressions such as "How do you view this current phenomenon? Can you share your opinions?" This approach alleviates the pressure on guests to respond. When guests make mistakes or have expression deviations, they will guide and correct them in a tolerant tone instead of directly denying them.

In terms of wording, hosts pay attention to using respectful titles. They use "Mr.", "Ms.", "Professor" and "Dean" according to the guests' identities. They avoid using casual words that may cause discomfort. At the same time, considering the diversity of the audience, they try to avoid professional terms and rare words. If professional content is involved, they will first give a simple explanation. For example, when interviewing guests in the field of science and technology, Wang Guan will turn "artificial intelligence algorithm optimization" into "how artificial intelligence becomes more efficient in the operation process" to ensure that the audience can understand.

As a complement to verbal expression, body language also demonstrates appropriateness. Both hosts consistently maintain an upright sitting posture during the program. They lean forward slightly and maintain appropriate eye contact with guests. They convey attention and recognition through actions such as nodding and smiling. When guests talk about touching experiences, Zou Yun will respond with gentle eyes and slight nodding to express empathy. When guests explain professional views, Wang Guan will use gestures to assist understanding. At the same time, he avoids excessive body movements that distract the audience's attention.

3.2 Listening and Responding

Listening and responding are key links to reflect politeness principles and promote in-depth conversation [5]. Regarding listening, Zou Yun and Wang Guan demonstrate exceptional concentration and patience. They maintain focus on guests' remarks throughout the conversation and refrain from interrupting unnecessarily. Even if the guests' speeches are long or deviate from the topic, they will wait until the guests finish speaking. Then they use expressions such as "The point you just mentioned is very valuable. Next, we can focus on the aspect of XX to discuss further" to naturally guide the conversation back to the theme. This avoids making the guests feel ignored. At the same time, they convey the importance they attach to the guests' views through subtle changes in body posture and expressions, such as frowning in thought and smiling in approval. This makes the guests feel respected.

In the responding link, hosts will give timely and appropriate feedback according to the content of the guests' speeches. For the guests' high-quality views, they will clearly affirm them. For example, "This view of yours provides us with a new perspective for thinking. It is very inspiring." This enhances the guests' enthusiasm for expression. For the ambiguous parts in the guests' expressions, they will ask questions in a gentle way. For example, "Can you explain the implementation details of the XX measure you just mentioned?" This helps the audience better understand. In addition, hosts also pay attention to emotional response. When guests express emotions such as joy, regret and emotion, hosts will respond with corresponding emotional attitudes. For example, when guests share their experiences of career success, hosts will congratulate them in an excited tone. When guests talk about setbacks, hosts will express understanding and encouragement. This shortens the psychological distance between hosts and guests.

3.3 The Art of Balance

Conversational balance is a crucial skill that ensures the orderly progression of the program while reflecting politeness principles. It mainly includes role balance, topic balance and balance between depth and breadth. In terms of role balance, hosts clearly define their positions as "guides" and "listeners". They avoid dominating the conversation and give guests sufficient space for expression. For example, when interviewing cultural celebrities, Zou Yun will design questions around the celebrities' creative experiences. This makes the guests the core of the conversation. She only supplements and guides when necessary. This ensures that the audience can fully understand the guests' thoughts and experiences and reflects respect for the guests. Zhou once took Zou Yun's specific performance in high-end interviews as an example to explore and summarize the importance of a professional international host in a talk show.

In terms of topic balance, hosts will reasonably plan the order and duration of different topics. They avoid over-extending or ignoring a certain topic. In a program discussing "cultural inheritance and innovation", the host first arranges the discussion on the topic of "current situation of traditional culture" (about 12 minutes). Then it transitions to "innovative inheritance methods" (about 15 minutes). Finally, it discusses "the role of the younger generation in cultural inheritance" (about 13 minutes). Each topic has a similar duration and the logic is connected naturally. This ensures that the audience obtains comprehensive information.

Regarding the balance between depth and breadth, hosts consider breadth while ensuring topic depth. For professional topics, hosts first guide guests to interpret core content in depth, then extend the discussion to application cases in related fields. For example, when interviewing economists, Zou Yun will first let the guests analyze "the core logic of current economic policies" (depth). Then she discusses the impact of policies on small and medium-sized enterprises and the lives of ordinary people (breadth). This approach not only satisfies the in-depth needs of professional audiences but also enables ordinary

audiences to understand the topic's relevance to their lives.

4. The Value of Politeness Principles in High-End Interview Programs

4.1 Improving Program Quality

Adhering to politeness principles encourages guests to share genuine views and in-depth information in a relaxed and respectful atmosphere. This prevents guests from withholding key content due to tension or discomfort. For example, an entrepreneur took the initiative to share the difficulties and solutions in the process of enterprise transformation under the polite guidance of the host. This provided valuable practical experience for the audience. At the same time, the appropriate language expression, focused listening and balanced conversation make the program rhythm smoother. The content becomes more logically structured and in-depth. This improves the audience's viewing experience and enhances the program's attractiveness and reputation.

4.2 Maintaining Media Image

As the "face" of the media, hosts' performance that aligns with politeness principles directly reflects the media's professional standards and humanistic values. As a national media, CCTV conveys the values of respect and tolerance to the audience through the polite words and deeds of the hosts in such high-end interview programs. This strengthens the media's authority and credibility, establishes a responsible and warm media image, and improves the audience's trust and recognition of the media.

4.3 Promoting Social Communication

As a public communication platform, high-end interview programs allow hosts to guide guests to express their views rationally under the guidance of politeness principles. At the same time, they provide diverse perspectives for the audience. The collision of views from guests in different fields in a polite atmosphere helps break information barriers and promote understanding and communication between different groups. For example, in the program, the dialogue between economists and representatives of ordinary people, under polite guidance, made both sides better understand each other's positions. This provided additional perspectives for addressing social problems and contributed to building a harmonious social communication environment.

5. Conclusion

This paper examines the high-end interview programs hosted by Zou Yun and Wang Guan on CCTV. It explores the conversational art of hosts within the framework of politeness principles. The following conclusions are drawn. First, this type of high-end interview program has the characteristics of solid professional background of hosts, wide coverage of interviewees and focus on delivering in-depth information. Second, under the constraint of politeness principles, the hosts have formed systematic conversational skills in three aspects: appropriateness of language expression, listening and responding, and the art of balance. These skills effectively promote the smooth progress of the conversation and the improvement of program quality. Third, politeness principles have important values in improving program quality, maintaining media image and promoting social communication in the program.

From a practical perspective, the conversational art of the two hosts provides reference for talk show hosts. Hosts need to integrate politeness principles into the whole process of hosting. They should take into account both professional quality and humanistic care. While respecting guests and audience, they should deliver high-quality information. This study has two limitations: the narrow sample scope limited to CCTV programs hosted by Zou Yun and Wang Guan, and insufficient exploration of deep conversational logic due to reliance on public clips without first-hand data. Future research should expand samples across platforms, collect multi-dimensional data through interviews and surveys, and extend the politeness principle analysis to other program types to enhance universality and provide broader practical references.

References

[1] Gao, R. (2023). A Conversational Analysis of Supportive Verbal Feedback by Talk Show Hosts (Master's Thesis, Henan University). Master. https://doi.org/10.27114/d.cnki.ghnau.2023.000223.

[2] Li, N. (2016). The Application of the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle in Talk Shows. Modern Communication, (12), 70-71. https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:XKJJ.0.2016-12-035.

[3] Shi YL. (2024). Maintenance, Damage, and Repair: A Study on Contemporary Youth Persona Interaction Based on Face Theory. Journalism Knowledge, (06), 76-82+96. https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:XWZS.0.2024-06-012.

[4] Zhou, J. (2024). An Analysis of the Discourse Practice of Hosts in International Communication under the Background of International Communication: Taking Zou Yun, Host of the Program "High-End Interview", as an Example. Voice & Screen World, (06), 34-35+39. https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:SPSJ.0.2024-06-010.

[5] Zhou XQ. (2025). Analysis of the Application and Value of Politeness Principle in Intercultural Communication under the Background of a New Civilization Perspective. Overseas English, (14), 206-208. https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:HWYY.0.2025-14-064.