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JCL

Journal of the College of Languages
An Open Free Access, Peer Reviewed Research Journal
<https://jcolang.uobaghdad.edu.iq>

P-ISSN: 2074-9279
E-ISSN: 2520-3517
No. (50)2024
PP.125-138

A Phono-stylistic Analysis of Utterance Stress in Steve Harvey's Shows

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(Received on 13/5/2024 - Accepted on 26/5/2024- Published on 1/6/2024)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36586/jcl.2.2024.0.50.0125>



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Abstract

Patterns of utterance stress in discourse direct attention to specific themes and reactions, controlling the flow and coherence of conversation. This study examines the utterance stress in Steve Harvey's selected episodes from a phono-stylistic perspective. This study is hoped to improve understanding of linguistic mechanisms in talk show communication, highlighting the importance of phonetic features in transmitting meaning and increasing broadcast conversation participation.

The researcher concentrates on the types of focus functions of utterance stress of some episodes available on YouTube. To conduct the analysis, the researcher adopts (Carr, 2013; Davenport& Hannahs, 2005) to analyse utterance stress and Leech and Short (2007) to examine the stylistic features of the data selected. Based on the model adopted, the study concludes: The study utilizes utterance stress, focus, and content, while stylistic features include syntax, vocabulary, narrative viewpoint, politeness, impoliteness, and cultural references.

Keywords: Phono-stylistics, Stylistics, Phonology, Steve Harvey, Talk shows

1. Introduction

Talk shows serve as structured broadcasts where hosts convey their perspectives to guests, often engaging in discussions about personal anecdotes or career trajectories. Audiences actively participate through inquiries, enjoyment, and laughter. The benefit of talk shows lies in connecting with beloved celebrities and gaining deeper insights into their lives. Language is pivotal in these interactions, as hosts and guests use distinct linguistic elements to convey themes. Language encompasses not only words but also the modulation and articulation of vocalisations. Prosodic elements are frequently employed in talk shows to influence viewers, conveying individual traits and shaping the atmosphere. This study aims to examine these characteristics and their varied utilisation methods. The project seeks to analyse popular American talk shows from YouTube, transcribing them into written texts for analysis. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the functions of utterance stress used by the presenters and the guests in the data selected?
2. What are the stylistic features adopted by the presenter and the guest?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Phono-stylistics

Scholars such as Widdowson, Leech, and Verdonk define stylistics as studying literary discourse via linguistic lenses. This entails critically analysing each linguistic level and applying linguistic theories and methods to understand language differences in various settings. Verdonk emphasises the investigation of distinctive language expressions and the clarification of their purpose and effect. Stylisticians seek to reveal the hidden meanings underlying linguistic terms, as nothing is employed randomly in language. The ultimate goal of stylistics is to determine the purpose of both literary and non-literary works while acknowledging language's critical role in persuasion (Hussein & Al-Saidi, 2024). As a result, using a variety of levels, patterns, and forms of language is critical to achieve this goal.

The area of linguistics which deals with sounds is called phonology. It focuses on sounds' function, behaviour, and organisation as linguistic items (Hayes, 2009; Lass, 1984). Stylisticians are curious about how writers may

purposefully alter speech sounds to achieve specific aesthetic effects. In stylistics, phonological analysis examines how texts' acoustic characteristics influence the reader's literary experience. Phonology aims to understand the implicit system rules that the speaker employs to recognise and manipulate the sounds of his language (Roach, 2009; Gibbons & Whitely, 2018).

Phonetic stylistics is a discipline that examines the use of sounds, expressive range, and prosodic elements in different forms of communication. The study centres on phonological processes influenced by different formal, informal, and casual styles. The phono stylistic mechanisms differ among languages, and they contribute to the analysis of literary speech by addressing conventional problems and studying intonation patterns. It has been incorporated back into second language programmes. Presently, the linkages between phono stylistics and neighbouring disciplines remain feeble. Nevertheless, the domain has broadened to encompass pragmatics, semantics, discourse analysis, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics, signifying a more robust correlation between grammar, phonology, and style analysis (Dvorzhetska, 2005, p. 12). The current study, then, examines the prosodic and stylistic features. Accordingly, prosody and stylistic features are elaborated in the following sections.

2.2 Prosody

Phonology deals not only with segments (phonemes) but with a deeper level, which is called suprasegmental or prosodic phonology. Prosody can be rightly defined as the linguistic use of pitch, loudness, tempo, and rhythm. Measuring prosody depends on syllables because they bear a large amount of sound. Single sounds cannot carry prosodic features (Crystal, 2010). Prosody, which encompasses timing, melody, and intensity, is crucial in communicating different language functions and organising information in speech, encoding semantic-pragmatic meaning (Prieto & Esteve-Gibert, 2018).

2.2.1 Utterance Stress

Stress is a word's strong prominence or a specific syllable used instead of others. It usually requires a stronger physical effort. Any position within a word is determined by its prominence. The symbol (') designates the beginning, penultimate, and end of words. Stress can be examined from two angles: production and perception. The speaker's effort in uttering the syllable

and the force with which his lungs expel air to create subglottal pressure determine the production of stress. Saliency is the determining factor in stress perception; stressed syllables are distinguished from unstressed syllables by having a greater saliency (Cruttenden,1997).

According to Collins and Mees (2013) stress is identified as the primary syllable of a word. There are two levels of classification: word stress and utterance stress. Word stress refers to the deliberate placement of emphasis on a particular syllable to highlight its significance. The stress intensity on syllables can be categorised as primary, secondary, or unstressed. In addition, stress can occur in both monosyllabic and polysyllabic words.

In the case of utterance stress, during long stretches of syllables, such as phrases and utterances, one syllable will always be more prominent. The stress position is not as fixed as individual words (Davenport& Hannahs: 2005). The overall trend is that phrases prone to losing stress entirely offer relatively minimal information. The words crucial for the utterance's structure are function words, including articles, auxiliary verbs, verb be, prepositions, pronouns, and conjunctions. Content words, including nouns, primary verbs, adjectives, and most adverbs, typically bear the stress as they convey significant information. The presence of stress signifies the focus on information, which is found in contrast, emphasis and content. The information that is focused depends on mutual knowledge and the context (Carr, 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1 Approach of the Study

This study conducts a mixed research method to investigate the prosodic features of American talk shows. For this purpose, one extract is selected from the American talk show, i.e. "**Steve TV Show.**"

3.2 Data Collection

The study examines American talk shows, which might evoke negative or positive emotional responses, from both a phonological and stylistic standpoint. Participants vary their vocalisations to change the meaning of uttered words.

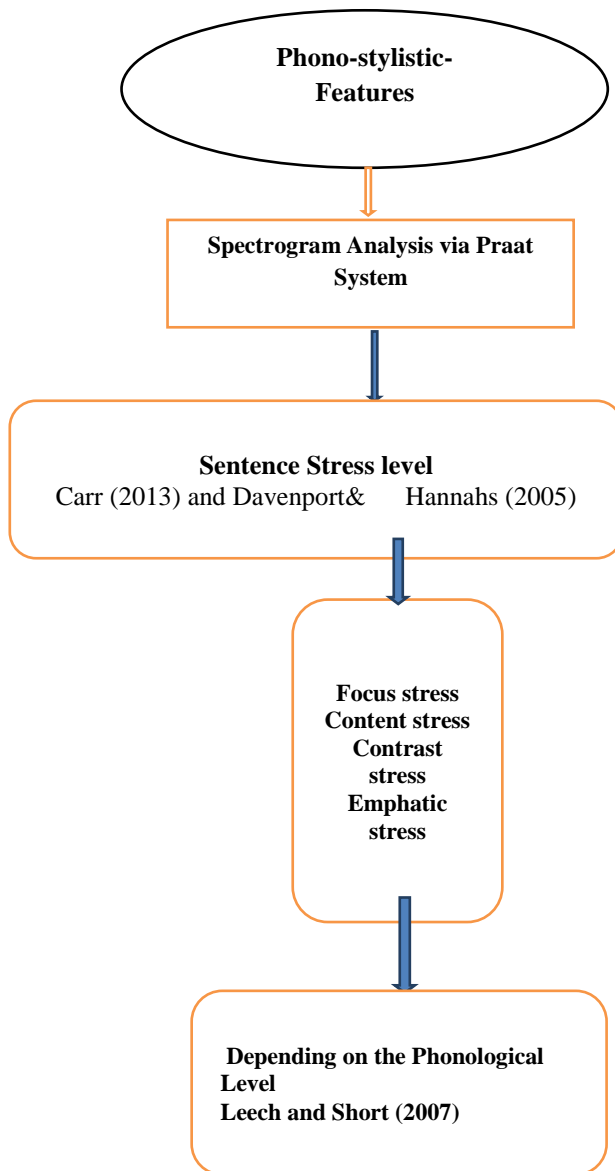
3.3 Rationale for Data Selection

The rationale for data selection from a phono-stylistic perspective is to identify segments of the "Steve Harvey's Show" that provides rich examples of prosodic features and speech variation, allowing for a detailed analysis of how phonetic elements contribute to the show's stylistic qualities. Steve Harvey is well-known for his ability to bring people joy through spontaneous conversations and influence their opinions through his considerable expertise. The current study will analyse an Extract from Steve Harvey's show in terms of prosody (i.e., sentence stress and intonation patterns). The analysis includes several steps, which are as follow:

1. Identifying the episodes of the shows selected.
2. Downloading the episodes and the scripts of each one of them from Youtube. Cutting up the clips that contain the main ideas of discussion of the topic of these episodes.
3. Transcribing the selected scripts by using the online website (PHONTRANSEEDIT) <http://www.photransedit.com/>.
4. Converting the forms of the clips from (MP4) to (WAV) using the online website (ZAMZAR) <https://www.zamzar.com/converters/video>.
5. After that using the Praat Microsoft to open and analyse the converted clips.

3.4 Model for Analysis

The researcher employs Carr (2013) and (Davenport& Hannahs, 2005) for utterance stress and Leech and Short (2007) for Stylistics. The figure below shows the adopted model:



4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Analysis of Steve Harvey's Show

Excerpt 1: Matt Leblanc

0:43 [Steve] “Do you still get people coming up to you, man?” about this show?

.....

0:51 [Matt] God, it's like it plays in, I think, everywhere they have electricity

...

1:01 I think maybe one of the reasons

1:03 that it is still so relevant is we never dealt

1:05 with, like, anything topical, you know?

1:07 like nothing political, no current events.

1:10 it was always themes like love, trust, and betrayal

1:14, friendship, and family...

1:18 –[Steve] That is good, man. Let me ask you something.

1:22[Steve] with all these reboots of iconic TV shows, man,

1:26 you think you will ever see "Friends" as a remake?

1:29- What, like "Old Friends"?

1:33 You know, I don't, me, personally, I don't think so,...

1:38 You know, that show was about

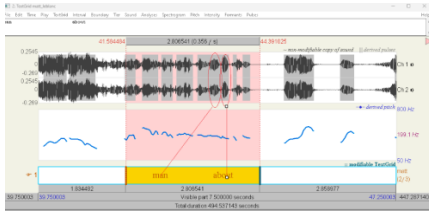
1:40 a very finite period in your life, ...

1:54 and when that period is over, it is over

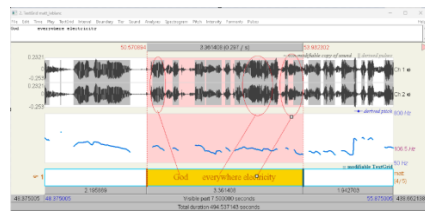
Table (4.1)
Utterance stress in Extract 1

Utterance	Transcription	Stressed Words	Function
1. Do you still get people coming up to you, man?" about this show?	du: ju 'stɪl 'get 'pi:p.l 'kʌm.ɪŋ 'ʌp tu ju, mæn? ə, baʊt ðɪs ʃəʊ?	Man About	Focus
2. God, it's like, it plays in, I think, everywhere they have electricity,	'gɔ:d, 'ɪts 'laɪk, 'ɪt 'pleɪz ɪn, 'aɪ 'θɪŋk, 'ev.rɪ., weɪ 'ðeɪ həv ə, 'lek. 'trɪ.sə.tɪ,	God Everywhere Electricity	Emphatic Content Content
3. I think maybe one of the reasons that it's still so relevant is we never dealt with, like, anything topical Like, nothing political, no current events	'aɪ 'θɪŋk 'meɪ.bɪ: wʌn əv ðə 'ri:zənz ðæt 'ɪts 'stɪl 'səʊ 're.lə.vənt s wi 'ne.və delt wɪð, 'laɪk, 'e.ni.θɪŋ 'tʊ.pɪk.l, 'laɪk, 'nʌ.θɪŋpə.'lɪ.tɪk.l, 'nəʊ 'kʌ.rənt ɪ.'vents.	Still Relevant Political	Content
4. It was always themes like love and trust and betrayal and friendship and family.	'ɪt wəz 'ɔ:l.weɪz 'θi:mz laɪk 'ʌv ənd 'trəst ənd bə.'treɪəl ənd 'frend.ʃɪp ənd 'fæm.li.	Themes Love Trust Betrayal Friendship Family	Content
5. That's good man	ðæts gʊd mæn	Good	Focus
6. With all these reboots of iconic TV shows, man, you think you'll ever see "Friends" as a remake?	Wɪθ ɔ: l ði:z 'ri:'bu:t əv aɪ'kɒ.nɪk 'ti:.'vi: ʃəʊz, mæn, ju 'θɪŋk ju'l ev.ɪ 'si: 'frendz əz ə 'ri:.'merk?	All Reboots	Focus
7. What, like "Old Friends"?	'hwʌt, laɪk ɔ:l 'frendz?	Old Friends	Emphatic
8. me, personally, I don't think so.	mi:, 'pɜ:.'sə.nə.li, 'aɪ daʊnt 'θɪŋk 'səʊ.	Personally	
9. You know, that show was about a very finite period in your life	ju 'nəʊ, ðæt 'ʃəʊ wəz ə.'baʊtə 'ver.i 'faɪ.'naɪt 'pɪ.rɪəd ɪn jəɪ laɪf	Very	Emphatic
10. And when that period is over, it's over.	ənd hwɛn ðæt 'pɪ.rɪəd z 'əʊv.ɪ, 'ɪts 'əʊv.ɪ.	Over	Focus

The interview commences with an enthusiastic welcome to the guest, Matt LeBlanc, an esteemed American actor. The presenter, Steve Harvey, greets the guest and initiates the conversation by inquiring about the renowned series "Friends," aired approximately 24 years ago.



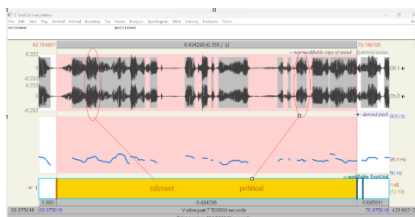
Format (4.1)



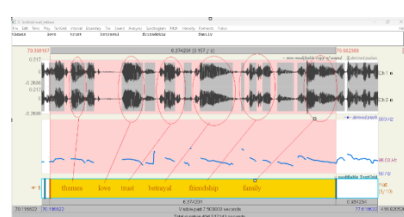
format (4.2)

In the first utterance, the presenter emphasises "man" to establish a friendly rapport with the guest, Matt LeBlanc. By emphasising "about," Steve Harvey also signals to Matt that he wants him to share details and insights about the iconic series, "Friends." The second utterance accentuates three stressed words. The guest emphasises the term "God," suggesting a sense of incredulity. Furthermore, there is an apparent desire to attract the attention of both the presenter and the audience to the series' widespread consumption, emphasising its profound impact on individuals.

By likening its significance to that of electricity, the speaker underscores its essentiality and pertinence to people's daily existence. Furthermore, the phrase implies that each series episode provokes genuine excitement from its fans.



Format (4.3)

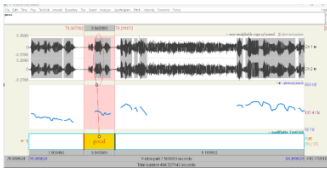


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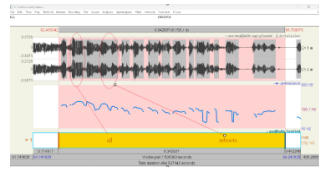
In the third utterance, Matt discusses the show's trajectory, noting that its popularity stems from its avoidance of political or controversial themes. He further elaborates on the thematic elements, highlighting their focus on

positive emotions and the conveyance of uplifting energy. Furthermore, Matt emphasises the connection of these issues with audiences, admitting that they reflect typical frustrations such as betrayal experienced in everyday life.

In the fourth, the guest delves into the series' thematic content, emphasising core motifs such as love, trust, family, and friendship. These themes receive heightened emphasis, surpassing others in significance. The speaker explains the reasoning behind the inclusion of these subjects, as well as their critical roles in the series' success, with lively articulation.

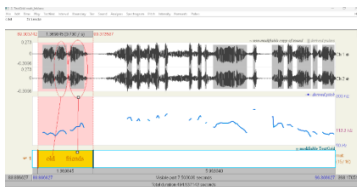


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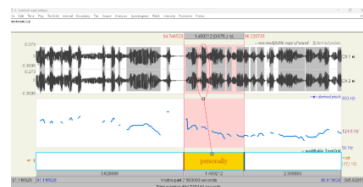


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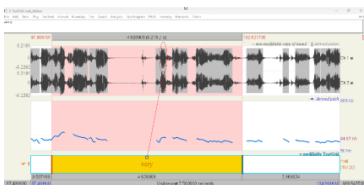
In the fifth statement, Steve agrees with Matt's remarks. Subsequently, in the sixth utterance, Steve directs attention to the terms "all" and "reboots," underscoring the substantial viewership percentages. In the seventh statement, the speaker emphasizes words such as "old" and "friends." The implication conveyed is that despite the series' previous success, the actors cannot recreate a version similar to the one they previously produced.



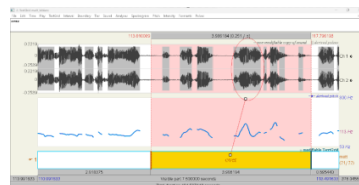
Format (4.7)



format (4.8)



Format (4.9)



format (4.10)

In the eighth and ninth utterances, Matt offers his perspective on the prospect of creating a new version of the series. He argues that such an endeavor may not be advisable, considering the finite nature of relevance in people's lives and the diminishing vitality associated with ageing.

Matt suggests that the routines of life are inherently tied to individuals' ages and the particular time in which they exist. In the final utterance, the speaker emphasises the word "over" to emphasise the end of a phase in which individuals achieve their desired goals, such as obtaining certifications, earning wealthy employment, meeting their life partners, or marrying. This period concludes, paving the way for the start of a new chapter.

Table (4.2)

Utterance stress in the selected talk show

Functions of utterance stress	Fr.	Pr.
Focus stress	4	36.36%
Contrast stress	0	0%
Emphatic stress	3	27.27%
Content stress	4	36.36%
Total	11	100%

The table above reveals that focus and content stress have the largest percentage, with four occurrences totaling 36.36%, indicating their importance in influencing communication and meaning within spoken discourse.

Conclusions

Through a detailed investigation of stress patterns in the, focus and content stress emerge as critical aspects in forming discourse's stylistic features. The findings of this study show that:

1. The functions of utterance stress are focus, content and emphatic, which are used by both the presenter and his guest. The most prominent functions are focus stress and content stress. They have a role in determining spoken

discourse's structure, meaning, and efficacy, providing vital insights into the dynamics of phono-stylistic variation and communicative strategies in language use. Harvey and LeBlanc may employ focal stress to highlight crucial ideas, humorous phrases, or stories, increasing the clarity and impact of their message and to engage the audience's attention. On the other hand, Harvey and LeBlanc employ content stress to highlight important details or convey emotional resonance, allowing them to connect more effectively with the audience and deepen their engagement with the interview.

2. The stylistic features adopted by the presenter and the guest are grammar and vocabulary, narrative perspective, politeness, impoliteness, cultural references and intertextuality. The use of grammar and vocabulary, colloquial language, and narrative perspectives by Harvey and LeBlanc significantly influence the tone, style, and emotional resonance of their conversations, thereby affecting audience engagement. In addition, Harvey and LeBlanc utilise linguistic markers like tone and words to convey politeness and humor, while also incorporating cultural references to enhance the conversation's depth and resonance, drawing from shared knowledge.

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تحليل اسلوبي- صوتي للنبر في العبارة في حلقات ستيف هارفي

¹طالبة الماجستير براق عبد الكريم مجيد، ²عبد علي حمود السعيد
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المستخلص

توجّه أنماط النبر على الكلام في الخطاب الانتباه إلى مواضيع وردود أفعال محددة، وتحكم في تدفق وتماسك المحادثة. هذه الدراسة تبحث في النبر في العبارة في حلقات (ستيف هارفي) المختارة من منظور اسلوبي-صوتي. ومن المؤمل أن تؤدي هذه الدراسة إلى تحسين فهم الآليات اللغوية في مجال التواصل الحوارية، وإبراز أهمية الملامح الصوتية في نقل المعنى وزيادة المشاركة في المحادثات التلفازية. ويركز البحث على أنواع وظائف التركيز على النبر الصوتي الناجم عن الكلام في بعض الحلقات المتاحة على قناة يوتيوب. لإجراء التحليل، يتبنى الباحث (Carr, 2013; Davenport& Hannahs, 2005) لتحليل النبر في الكلام ويتبنى كذلك (Leech and Short (2007) لفحص السمات الاسلوبية للبيانات المختارة.

الكلمات الدالة: الأسلوب الصوتي، الاسلوبية، النبر في العبارة، ستيف هارفي، برامج الحوار