

# A Comparative Analysis of the Language of Chinese and Foreign Reality Show Hosts

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**Abstract:** *Knowing the particularity of things is the basis of our scientific understanding of things, and the study of the linguistic characteristics of programme hosts can reveal the theoretical basis for the formation of this characteristic, so as to deal with and solve problems in the right way. In this paper, we will compare and analyse the language of Chinese and foreign reality TV hosts in several aspects, so as to find the problems as well as the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign reality TV hosts.*

**Keywords:** *At home and abroad; Reality show; Host language*

## 1. Introduction

Television programmes are the main entertainment for people after dinner, and reality TV is gradually becoming a mainstream format with great popularity. At present, there are few studies on the language of the presenter, as a whole, in domestic and foreign studies, which are not holistic and historical enough. There is no unified, systematic theoretical study. For the initial research on the language of the presenter, the two main disciplines of language and radio and television are analysed to analyse the norms of the language of the presenter and the laws of discourse. Many scholars have analysed the language style of TV programme hosts from traditional linguistic and broadcasting perspectives. According to Wu Jing, there are lively and humorous language styles for presenters, which Xie Jing categorises as soft and truthful. After a careful classification of television programmes, scholars began to study the language styles of presenters of different types of television programmes. Chen Yiwen summarised the language performance characteristics of livelihood news presenters as populist, personalised and so on. Zhang Yanjun, on the other hand, feels that the language style of TV news presenters is characterised by communication and innovation. It was also suggested that male and female presenters have certain differences in their language styles and linguistic characteristics because of their gender. Xiao Yanhong used the relevant theories of communication science and linguistics to study the gender differences in the language of TV programme hosts in China, and compared their voice intonation and language style. Differences in gender roles, different ways of thinking and the social division of labour are the main reasons for this. Other scholars have analysed the language of TV presenters at the discourse level, for example, Zhao Xue in her work applied discourse theory to the analysis of TV talk shows.

Whether it's the domestic hits "Where's Daddy Going" and "The Wayward Life" or the foreign hits "American Idol" and "America's Got Talent". With the increasing popularity of reality TV programmes, major TV channels are scrambling to launch a variety of reality TV programmes, which viewers are happy to watch. In previous programmes in the traditional sense, the role of the presenter was to be the stringer of the programme. Nowadays, the presenter may need to be immersed in the programme as much as the participants, so there is no such thing as a "hand card" or a "line book" for you to read out, but more of a need for the presenter to be able to improvise on the basis of his/her own ideas. What the audience watches is not only the form and content of the programme, but also the linguistic characteristics of the presenter are very important in the process of direct perception and experience by the audience. In broadcasting, it is directly perceived by the listener, who receives the emotion of the content to be expressed by the presenter from the form of the audible language. In television, although programme hosts have a variety of paralinguistic communication methods such as expressions, costumes and actions, audible language can express the emotional colour and cognitive level of programme hosts in the most fulfilling and comprehensive way. It conveys what the presenter of the programme is trying to say more accurately and deeply than any other means of expression. The language characteristics of the host can reflect his personal style. Nowadays, the network is also often flooded with golden phrases of programme hosts, a single sentence can bring fire to a programme, but it can also spoil a programme, so it is evident

that the language of the host is very important.

## **2. Moderator language features**

### **2.1. Personalised**

Personalisation refers to the creative personality of the presenter. One presenter can be distinguished from another based on their creative personality. The most distinctive and prominent aspect of hosting a programme is still the language of the programme host. Personalised language is not personal. Successful presenter's language should drive audience recognition and appreciation with its unique artistry. Such as Ryan Seacrest, host of American Idol, and Hua Shao, host of The Voice of China. Although they are both musical programmes, they have completely different linguistic personalities. When it comes to Ryan Seacrest, witty, mellow and extremely relatable must be the words that represent him. He is able to keenly capture every move in the auditorium and adjust the atmosphere in time; he is always on the side of the contestants, cheering them on, and everyone says he is very approachable. And his language isn't too sharp or too cheesy, but drives the show with a subliminal rhythm. When it comes to Hua Shao, everyone's first reaction is that he is particularly smooth-talking. Indeed, after all, it is not possible for anyone to read out a 300-word jingle in 40 seconds in one breath. Hua Shao's hosting language style is very different from Ryan Seacrest's, Hua Shao is generally more serious, with some humour in a few cases. He is also known as "China's Good Tongue" because of the speed of his speech, and his hosting style is rather rapid, personalised and very individual, which is rare. He also became famous in World War I with his rapid broadcasting in "The Voice of China". Moreover, Chinese and American presenters are different in terms of language humour, with American presenters' humour leaning towards satirical and parodic language, while Chinese presenters' humour is illuminating and witty language.

### **2.2. Interactive**

For reality TV programmes, how to bring the audience closer to us so that the programme can achieve a better audio-visual effect requires the host to have interactivity in language. Interactivity is an important factor, as the saying goes, to have a sense of the object, always need to feel the presence of the object, in time to make adjustments to the content to be expressed.

### **2.3. Inventive**

According to the positioning of the programme, the presenter needs to add some fun and freshness to the content in order to better attract the interest of the audience. Usually when watching reality TV programmes, it is not difficult to find out that there are always unexpected things happen in the programme, in order to ensure the smooth recording of the programme, this is a very test of the host's on-the-spot play, the need for language creativity, so that the programme goes on smoothly and smoothly.

### **2.4. Liveliness**

Unlike news programmes, reality TV hosts generally use life-like language, which allows them to get closer to their guests and viewers. Living language can loosen up the atmosphere a bit and make it more natural.

## **3. Common features of the presenter's language**

### **3.1. Communicability**

The content of the programme is usually communicated to the listener or viewer by the presenter, by means of two main types of language: vocal and paralinguistic. In the process of communication, whatever the means used, it is the dissemination of linguistic symbols to the audience that is our aim. The presenter, as a direct communicator of information needs to communicate it accurately and vividly to the audience so that they can better understand and receive the content of the programme.

### **3.2. Aesthetic**

From the viewer's point of view, whether a programme looks good or not has become an important

criterion for judging a programme. As a communicator of programme content, the TV presenter's language style and image can largely influence the aesthetic value of this programme. This aesthetic perception is reflected not only in the audible language but also in the paralanguage such as body language and gesture language. The audible language aspect needs to be able to walk the talk and express yourself accurately. The sub-language aspect is to be more intimate and communicative, creating a good atmosphere and environment to better enhance the aesthetic value of the programme.

### **3.3. Objectiveness**

From the perspective of thinking, the language of the host should have depth; from the perspective of attitude, the language of the host should be objective and fair. The language of the host is an important part of the programme to respond to the reality of the world, the need for clarity and truthfulness in the characteristics of the language expressed in the objectivity and impartiality. But you can't take yourself too seriously on a reality TV show, and you need some relatable language as well.<sup>[1]</sup>

## **4. Similarities and differences in the language of presenters of the same programme**

We have chosen the same two programmes: the Chinese and Korean versions of Please Refrigerator to analyse. The Chinese version of "Please Refrigerator" is positioned as a variety show, with the show itself being more entertaining and the language of the show's hosts being more entertaining and interactive. The hosting duo of national host He Jiong and idol rookie Wang Jiaer is definitely called the God's duo. He Jiong's sophisticated hosting style coupled with the goofy Wang Jiaer make this show gimmicky, becoming cute and lively and full of variety. He Jiong is a veteran presenter with great verbal skills, always finding a suitable topic to bring out his humour. It can make people show what they normally don't see in life, and it can summarise other people's views and rise to a higher level. Whereas Wang Jiaer is not a professional host and is positioned as a celebrity host, his language is a bit juvenile in comparison.<sup>[2]</sup>

The Korean version of "Please Refrigerator" has veteran hosts, plus the show itself is positioned to be about food and not so entertaining. The language of the presenters is more grounded and approachable, with an emphasis on explaining and moving the programme along. At the beginning of the show there will be a dialogue, where the host's language is more witty and humorous, often flirting with the guests, but not deliberately digging up some stems or asking questions about the guests, it's more like a conversation between friends, with a relatively life-like nature.

## **5. Elements of moderator discourse variation**

### **5.1. The concept of pragmatics**

What is discourse? The speciality is called "Pragmatics". It is a language that is understood by placing a language in a specific context. Reality TV hosts have to be well integrated into the discipline when recording their shows. A presenter is not just about conveying static symbolic meaning, but also about listening to what the audience and guests are saying. Listen and think at the same time, and respond in a timely manner based on what the other person is saying. In turn, you can better express what you want to say.

### **5.2. Differences in cultural backgrounds between China and the West**

The reason why the hosts of Chinese and foreign reality TV programmes differ in their language expressions is, in the final analysis, most importantly, the difference in cultural background.

### **5.3. Differences in ways of thinking**

While most Western countries think in a rational way, the Chinese think in an emotional way. Being imbued with Confucianism, they are unable to achieve the goal of hitting the nail on the head and expressing their views in a straightforward manner when expressing their opinions, and instead, they express their views in a euphemistic manner. Whereas Westerners are linear thinkers and speak directly. Hosts on some reality shows have been known to express themselves in this way, but they get told, "Straighten up," "mean-speaking," and so on. One of the most crucial points in the Chinese way of

dealing with the world is to leave half of the words on the lips. But this approach is confusing to the West.

#### ***5.4. Differences in emotional expression***

Since childhood, Chinese people have been instilled with a "small intolerance, then chaos" thinking, although angry to the point of being very calm on the surface, especially the hosts can not freely show their bad mood. But the West is different. Westerners can express themselves boldly, say what they have to say and vent their anger.

#### ***5.5. Gender difference***

After analysing Chinese and American programme hosts, I noticed that the ratio of men to women among American television programme hosts is male-dominated. On the contrary, Chinese TV programme hosts are dominated by women in terms of gender composition. Women and men think differently by nature, and this is reflected in the language of the presenter.

#### ***5.6. Age difference***

Data shows that the average age of Chinese hosts is 38.6 years old, while the average age of American hosts is 59.1 years old, and the situation of American hosts being elderly is more prominent. These data show that Chinese presenters are younger, so they don't have the old-fashioned language of American presenters, they are more lively, and they are more likely to accept new language quickly and use it for themselves.

#### ***5.7. Differences in academic qualifications***

In recent years, there has been a "high degree fever" in China, with many presenters choosing to pursue a degree to further their education when their careers are in full swing. And American presenters aren't keen on that. Data shows that most Chinese programme hosts have a bachelor's degree or higher, and most hosts with high school and college diplomas choose to continue their education. Due to the difference between the Chinese and American school systems, there are no college or secondary school degrees among the American facilitators, and most of them have a bachelor's degree, but not a master's degree either. They also don't go on to pursue a degree and focus on their work.

#### ***5.8. Differences in specialities studied***

The data show that the majors studied by Chinese programme hosts are generally broadcasting and hosting, humanities and social sciences, and journalism and communication, with the largest proportion of majors being broadcasting and hosting. And the United States does not have the broadcasting host this major, the United States host most of the humanities and social sciences majors, this profession requires a wealth of humanities knowledge as a foundation. China appears to be slightly more homogeneous in this aspect, but it is gradually improving, for the broadcasting hosting profession is no longer only look at the appearance, on camera conditions, etc., and pay more attention to the cultivation of comprehensive talents. The Communication University of China, for example, has programmes in humanities and social sciences, journalism and communication, as well as related examinations.

#### ***5.9. Differences in employment experience***

Most of the American presenters have had other experiences in the field before making this career, and they have gone through many years of experience, and one of the distinguishing features of American presenters is that they have a wealth of work experience. Chinese hosts, on the other hand, rarely have any other experience in the field, and a number of them started working as hosts right out of school. American presenters are far ahead of their Chinese counterparts at this point in their experience. It is easier to grasp professional programmes, which are more "authoritative" and "opinion leader" in terms of communication.

### **6. Linguistic misconduct of moderators**

When we watch reality TV programmes, it is not difficult to find that many hosts, in order to make

the programme more relaxed and lively, will often focus their language on entertainment or programme effects, and there will be some word pronunciation problems, especially cross-border hosts, such phenomena are prevalent. There are also some grammatical problems with word usage, with buzzwords appearing more often than not. Internet buzzwords seem to facilitate communication, but they ignore the language norms of the presenter and give the audience a wrong language demonstration.

In addition to this, there is a great deal of mixing of Chinese and English in Chinese TV reality shows, and the mixing of Chinese and English words seems to be commonplace. This not only undermines the normality of the language, but also has negative consequences and creates false demonstrations.<sup>[3]</sup>

The occurrence of language misbehaviour is as much a problem for the presenters themselves as it is for the programme itself. In order to cater for the audience, some hosts have neglected the language norms, and in some programmes there are even mistakes in common sense, which is a sign of insufficient cultural literacy and insufficient preparation.

## 7. Conclusions

Through the above discussion, we can see that the language of the hosts of Chinese and foreign reality TV programmes is still different, and there are excellent and insufficient aspects. The language of the hosts of Chinese and foreign reality TV programmes seems to be only a difference in age, gender and profession on the surface, but it essentially reflects the difference in the perception of the host's function in each country. Reality TV programmes are now very popular, for the hosts, to continue to learn, to be innovative, with their own norms of hosting language to make the audience enjoy and learn, so that the programme better develop and improve the quality of the programme. Through the analysis of this paper, it is hoped that in the future the training and selection of presenters can be more practice-oriented. Instead of limiting ourselves to external features such as youthfulness and prettiness, we should pay more attention to the inner cultivation of the hosts and cultivate their qualities in humanities and social sciences. Cultivating all-round facilitators is a necessary step in team building. An overly homogeneous team composition is not conducive to long-term development, and a higher cultural standard does not necessarily present a higher level of facilitation business. Good looks can only temporarily hold the viewer's attention and do not keep the show's ratings for long.

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