

LINGUISTIC ATTRIBUTES OF THE SPEECH GENRE "TOAST" IN ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article explores the linguistic attributes of the "toast" speech genre in English-speaking cultures. It examines the genre's unique structure, including opening salutations, contextual set up, core messages, wishes, and closing gestures. The paper also analyzes the typical language used in toasts, highlighting features like figurative language, positive tone, second-person address, humor, formulaic expressions, and conciseness. Finally, it discusses the influence of cultural norms on toasts, including individualism, collectivism, and tradition. By understanding these linguistic and cultural influences, speakers can craft impactful and memorable toasts for various occasions.

Key words: toast, linguistic attribute, opening salutations, figurative language, cultural norms, contextual setup, core messages, wishes, and closing gestures

Introduction. The speech genre "toast" is a quintessential part of social interactions, celebrations, and formal occasions in English-speaking cultures. This genre is distinguished by its unique linguistic and structural features, which reflect the speaker's intention, the social context, and cultural norms. A toast combines elements of rhetoric, storytelling, and interpersonal communication, making it a fascinating subject for linguistic analysis.

Scientific articles exploring English toasts as a small speech genre often focus on their structure, cultural significance, and linguistic features. Notably, the work by T.V. Shmelyova examines toasts as an etiquette-based genre characterized by thematic content, style, and composition. These elements reflect their sociolinguistic role in fostering positive connections, adhering to cultural norms, and fulfilling ceremonial functions. Researchers like O.S. Issers and E.F. Tarasov have also analyzed the pragmatic aspects of toasts, including their social and regulatory functions in communication

Method. As a specific communication act, the toast falls under the category of interpersonal connections and can be thought of as the act that defines human interactions: "The communicative act has conventional character. The convention is understood as the forms of interaction accepted in a society – including speech interaction" [14]. According to the concept of the communicative act, communication between the speaker and the addressee — the "transferring" and "accepting" instances — is required. As a result, the toast is an act of communication between the addressee—the individual giving the speech and the individual or group to whom it is addressed — and the speaker.

Results. English toasts have their structural features which differ them from other speech genres. Toasts generally follow a predictable structure, which helps them fulfill their purpose of marking a special occasion. The typical structure includes:

Opening – Salutation: A toast often begins with a greeting or attention-getting phrase such as "Ladies and gentlemen," or "Here's to..." This signals the start of the toast and draws the audience's focus. eg: Wedding Toast: "Ladies and gentlemen, if I could have your attention for just a moment..."

Birthday Toast: "Friends, family, and loved ones, thank you for gathering here today to celebrate..."

Workplace Celebration Toast: "Team, let's take a moment to acknowledge something truly special..."

Graduation Toast: "To all the proud parents, teachers, and of course, the graduates themselves..."

Friendship or Casual Gathering Toast: "Alright everyone, let's raise a glass to what brings us together tonight..."

These examples are tailored to grab attention while setting a warm and inclusive tone.

Contextual Setup: The speaker introduces the reason for the toast, referencing the occasion or person being honored. For instance, "We are here to celebrate Sarah and John on their wedding day..."

Wedding Toast: "We've gathered here today to celebrate one of life's most beautiful journeys—the marriage of Sarah and David. Watching their love grow has been an inspiration to us all."

Birthday Toast: "Today, we celebrate not just another year in Emily's life, but all the laughter, kindness, and love she brings to everyone around her. It's a joy to share this day with her."

Retirement Toast: "This evening, we honor Mark's incredible career and his well-earned retirement. His dedication and leadership have left an indelible mark on all of us."

Graduation Toast: "We're here tonight to recognize Alex's hard work and perseverance, which have led to this incredible achievement—graduating at the top of his class!"

Anniversary Toast: "Today marks 25 years of love, partnership, and countless memories for John and Mary. It's a testament to their commitment and the example they've set for all of us."

Discussion. The toasts have their linguistic characteristics. They are as follows:

1. Figurative Language in toasts is used. Toasts often employ metaphors, similes, and other figurative expressions to convey emotions and create memorable imagery. For example, "May your journey together be like a fine wine, improving with age," uses metaphor to symbolize a long and rewarding marriage.
2. The tone of English toasts is lively and celebratory. The tone of a toast is overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the celebratory nature of the event. This is achieved through word choices like joy, happiness, love, and success, and through expressions of gratitude and admiration.
3. Usually toasts have addressee and addressee or second-person address. A hallmark of toasts is the direct address to the honoree(s) or audience. Phrases like "To you, John, for always being there when we need you," establish intimacy and inclusivity.
4. Usage of Humor and Wit is seen in toasts. Humor is a common feature in toasts, especially in informal settings. A well-timed joke or playful remark can enhance the toast's appeal, as long as it aligns with the occasion's mood.
5. English toasts have ritualistic and formulaic language. Certain phrases are almost formulaic in toasts, such as "Here's to...", "May you always...", or "Let us raise our glasses to..." These expressions reinforce the ritualistic nature of the genre.
6. We observed the economy of words in English toasts. Toasts are typically concise, ensuring they hold the audience's attention and maintain the celebratory atmosphere. The brevity also underscores the focus on the honoree rather than the speaker.
7. Interpersonal Pragmatics exists in toasts. The language of a toast often reflects sensitivity to social dynamics, using inclusive pronouns (we, us) and expressions that foster unity, such as "We are all here today because of..."

Besides these, cultural influences on toasts have great role in linguistics. Cultural norms significantly shape the content and style of toasts. In English-speaking cultures, where individualism is often valued, toasts may highlight personal achievements or unique traits of the honoree or adresat. At the same time, collectivist elements—such as shared memories and group well-wishes—are also present, reflecting the social nature of celebrations.

The influence of tradition is evident in ceremonial toasts, such as those at weddings or state functions, where formal language and established conventions take precedence. Conversely, informal toasts among friends may exhibit more casual language and improvisation.

Conclusion

The toast as a speech genre is a rich tapestry of linguistic, cultural, and social elements. Its structured format, coupled with expressive and inclusive language, makes it a powerful tool for fostering connections and celebrating shared milestones. Understanding its linguistic attributes not only enriches our appreciation of this genre but also equips speakers to craft impactful and memorable toasts for any occasion.

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