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den Kulturen

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## Vorwort

Die heutige globalisierte Welt ist kein Produkt von internationalen Konzernen. Der Prozess einer langen Annäherung der Menschen und der Länder zu einander erfolgt wie vieles in unserem Leben - nicht dank bestimmten Bemühungen und Ereignissen, sondern trotz der meisten Bemühungen und Ereignisse. Was halt die Welt und schafft unsere ewige Zuversicht, dass Kriege und Krisen ihr Ende haben? Die Antwort auf diese Frage gibt uns die Geschichte jeder nationalen Kultur: der Dialog mit anderen Kulturen ist die Grundlage ihrer Entwicklung. Die Geisteswissenschaften gewinnen an existentieller Bedeutung für die Gesellschaft, und die Leute, deren Beruf mit den ideellen Dingen verbunden ist und dadurch geehrt, aber bescheiden honoriert wird, erfüllen viele wichtige Aufgaben, und eine davon finde ich absolut primär und eminent. Das ist die Volkerverständigung in ihrer konkretisierten Version - durch Fremdsprachenkenntnisse die Welt und das Leben ein bisschen verständlicher und zugänglicher machen.

Dieser Band gibt einige Antworten von Gleichgesinnten auf die Herausforderungen der globalen Moderne. Die vorliegenden Beiträge geben eine Möglichkeit, die Logik der gegenwertigen soziokulturellen Situation in Russland zu verstehen und zu begreifen, wie zwei Jahrzehnte der posttotalitären Entwicklung Schwerpunkte unserer linguistischen und fremdsprachdidaktischen Forschung geändert haben. Die Autorinnen und Autoren des Bandes vereinigt etwas, was zwanzig Jahre früher nur als Ausnahme möglich war - Forschungs- und Studienaufenthalte im westlichen Ausland. Ihre Sicht auf die Beziehungen von Sprache, Kultur, Person, dem Fremden und dem Eigenen ist durch ständige Reflexionen über eine erfolgreiche sprachkulturelle Kompetenz geprägt.

Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft hat eine lange Tradition, die viele gegenwertige Konzepte der interkulturellen Forschung vorbereitet hat und wichtige Richtungen der Übersetzungswissenschaft bestimmt hat. Von den Autoren des Bandes wird die ganze Palette der modernen komparativen und translationstheoretischen Linguistik geboten. Interkulturelle und vergleichende Studien des Instituts für Philologie und interkulturelle Kommunikation der Staatlichen Universität Wolgograd sind in einem hohen Maße von der Forschung seines Direktors Nikolaj Schamne initiiert. In seinem Beitrag wird die Spezifik der Verbalisierung der Raumorientierungen



## Ecolinguistic Issues in Mass Media Discourse<sup>1</sup>

*Elena Ilyinova, Volgograd*

Im vorliegenden Artikel wird das Wertschätzungsproblem eines Nachrichteneignisses behandelt, sowie auch Besonderheiten seiner Okomarkierung im Medienraum einer einzelnen Region. Informationsrelevanz, Wiedergabezielkurs, Häufigkeit von Stilmittelgebrauch im Text werden als linguistische Ökologiemarker eines solchen Ereignisses deklariert.

The article deals with an ecolinguistic modus in assessment of information flow which reflects a newly encountered approach to message exchange in media discourse. It offers several steps to keep track of the way information is delivered to the community, as well as the impact it has on public opinion.

Information is considered to be among the most valuable items that may exert strong influence over international and cross-personal relations in modern world. The frightful Wikileaks scandal that has broken out lately is a glaring proof of this, as information may be used with either decent or wicked intentions, for good or bad. Fast information delivery is thought to be in great demand these days, as due-notice and well-timed messages help people assess facts and set plans for further activity. However, the community has dramatically multiplied requirements to the quality and quantity of information provided. It is believed that the flow of events should not only assist people in finding bearings in a changeable and challenging environment but advance the way they comprehend socio-cultural experience in contemporary world. It is evident that messages could produce strong effect (either positive, or negative) on psychological state of a person or community in general. Consequently, modern media face new claims - to be not only means of information but to build bridges between

<sup>1</sup> The article represents some initial findings of the studies that are held at Volgograd State University (Institute of Philology and Cross-cultural Communication) in accordance with the Federal Special Program «2009-2013 Scientific and Academic Fellows for Innovative Universities of Russia" (financial support of state contract No. 02.740.11.0367).

various groups of people with different social and professional status retaining moral and ethical balance in society. All written above implies the necessity to propose some provisions that might be useful in the process of monitoring the impact mass media can make on the public. This aspect of media communication we associate with the ecolinguistic paradigm that is being under development in some Russian schools of linguistics.

Considering this particular aspect some researchers put forward the following issue: studies on ecology of communication should take into consideration an emotional-and-ethical assertion that emphasizes an insistent need of positive coloring dominating in the way the information is presented for the public in mass media. Some of our colleagues state that an evoking-anger-or-despair style of language and exasperating tone of media texts can undoubtedly summon negative reaction to the news thus causing (directly or indirectly) deterioration in the psychological state of society. Accordingly, they offer a strategy of glorification as an ideal condition in providing an ecological environment for media discourse, and state that the information about current events of the day delivered by media should stimulate an increase in self-appraisal of citizens rather than deprave their feeling with the information<sup>2</sup>. Developing the item about glorification, that is viewed as verbalized representation of human ecology (respect, tolerance, benevolence by means of lexis) several researchers proceed it in their investigations on media discourse in Russia, notifying that in modern media texts on social and political matters the negative tone of vocabulary prevails<sup>3</sup> thus causing feeling of despair and defaming in society.

Thereupon the progressing issue on ecology of media discourse sounds well-timed. Receiving the opinion cited with all regard, we would like to offer our objection to a rather exaggerated attention to glorification and disregard to some other communicative factors, that influence public contentment with the information provided in media, for instance, an ethical angle of communicative-textual environment of human activity which deals with many and varied factors of language impact on society's comfort. In our opinion, the analysis of the way information is presented in media texts and its impact on society's well-being should be placed in the focus of attention. It is not only the emotional coloring of the lexis in the text but

<sup>2</sup> Шаховский, 2008, 290

<sup>3</sup> Солодовникова, 2010

the strategies of information delivery (in particular general tone of media discourse) that may influence the ethical aspect of human environment. As it has been stated in<sup>4</sup>, any text-building activity is substantiated by a number of cognitive and psychological factors. Cognitive framing and thematic development of the message are defined by its social setting, motivation for speech activity (i.e., goals and personal intentions of the author, etc.) is connected with his/her emotional state multiplied by mastery of communicative skills and command on ethics in communication. The combination of various factors determines the final choice on the text composition, including its informative structure and the technique of verbalization.

Social well-being and mutual respect are thought to be connected with implementation of the people's right for truthful and complete information, provided adequately and on-time, which testify the necessity of public control over the information flow and the ways it is provided. An ecolinguistic monitoring on the quality and quantity of information delivery with mass media discourse should be held by the public on regular basis. With this item in mind a group of researchers from Volgograd State University (Russia) offered some criteria for ecolinguistic monitoring of national and regional mass media text corpus<sup>5</sup>.

In the centre of attention the phenomenon of '*current event*' is placed and the way this selected information is presented in mass media, we offer to consider it as an information focusing' technique. An event (or fact), that is traditionally viewed as '*a significant occurrence or happening*', gets the status of the news-of-the-day when it is considered to have social importance for the mass audience and worth of being printed, telexed or broadcasted through media. Ideally the news content is thought to correspond to a „Five-Ws" model<sup>6</sup>, it unites information blocks which are to answer the questions like 'who', 'what', 'where', 'why', and 'how' mainly. But newspeople are known for structuring the news as a hard story in „inverted pyramid style" adjusting its content to the needs of busy or curious readers. As a result some details are put at the beginning, some are dropped; more than that, some news may be intentionally sacrificed, thought by journalists or editors to be less important stories than others. The consideration like that

<sup>4</sup> Ионовa, 2010a, 91

<sup>5</sup> Ионовa, 2010b; Ильинова, 2010; Шамне, Шовгенин, 2010

<sup>6</sup> Broderick, 2007

has urged our interest to the study of techniques the event may be conceptualized in media discourse. In connection with the written above let's consider the cognitive technique (*Denkstil*) of information focusing and the language tools that may be used to present news in media discourse.

The term „cognitive style" is employed in this context as a relatively stable mechanism of mental apprehension and thought verbalization in a form of a text<sup>7</sup>. In other words, it means the modus of information presentation that reflects peculiar ways of allocating information in the text, the phenomenon is associated with an intentional choice of cognitive operations in text structuring mechanism<sup>8</sup>. Cognitive styles represent people's ability to implement activities targeted at text construction, in particular, to build it in accordance with the commonly accepted genres model (text types), or norms for the narration, description, argumentation presentations.

Due to coordination between the notions of cognitive style and information focus one and the same event may be presented in various ways. The analysis of three brief news stories all based on one event given below will be a proof for the assertion.

The event reported in the media is as following: the case of Miss Janet Withey, a former flight attendant and ex-Miss Beauty of the UK, was heard in the court; she claimed unfair dismissal denying accusation in incongruous fulfilling of her duties on board. The story is presented as viewed from different standpoints - in the first story the news is reported with a rational cognitive technique predominantly which contrasts dramatically against two others based on affectation techniques.

In text A the author chooses a placid style in presenting all the details of the event on board referring to neutral lexis and rationalized details:

*A. Former air stewardess and beauty queen who was sacked for allegedly leaving her post „to indulge in horseplay" has settled her claim for unfair dismissal. Miss Janet Withey, 26, had brought the claim against Air Europe. She was dismissed last January after an incident when her aircraft was refueling in Portugal. A Manchester industrial tribunal was told yesterday that terms had been agreed between the parties whereby Miss Withey, of Parsonage Gardens, Handforth, Cheshire, would withdraw her claim on payment of the undisclosed sum. Earlier*

<sup>7</sup> Психология, 1990,166

<sup>8</sup> Кубрякова, 1996, 80

she had told the tribunal of her „embarrassment" when **cabin steward Mr. Andrew Hawrylyszyn** had made a joking announcement to the passengers that she had been elected „**Miss Lovely Legs Air Europe**".

The key message may be summarized in the following way: „a stewardess felt discomforted when a cabin steward joked publicly about her being an ex-Beauty". As it follows from the news the concept ‚respect to human rights' is put in the focus of attention.

The tone of two other stories differs as the author is trying to make an «infotainment' strengthening importance of the fact about stewardess misbehavior, expending on details about financial compensation, and overshadowing the reason of the matter (cf. *to leave one's post* in text A and *to crush cream crackers* in text B that is played with in the phrase *to go crackers* = *to go mad*, *to show anger*).

**B. The airgirl** who „went crackers" on a crowded jet was smiling again yesterday after winning compensation from the airline who sacked her.

**Ex-beauty queen Janet Withey**, fired for crushing cream crackers over a steward's head, withdrew her claim for unfair dismissal after Air Europe offered an out-of-court settlement. Janet said: „Under the terms of the settlement! am not allowed to tell how much I received - but I am very happy." Earlier an industrial tribunal heard why **Janet**, 26, gave **steward Andrew Hawrylyszyn** the cracker treatment. **The ex-miss Blackpool** and **Miss UK runner-up** said she was annoyed because he pulled her leg about her beauty queen past over the public address system of a holiday jet.

The focus to emotional state is marked with the phrase *to blow one's top*' in text C:

C. Any publicity was good publicity for **beauty queen Janet Withey**.

**The former Miss Britain** even shaved her head for promotional work. But after she quit the beauty circuit to become **an air hostess**, **Miss Withey** shunned the limelight. And when, **a colleague** reminded passengers of her past, **the 26-year-old blonde** blew her top. She showered **male steward Andrew Hawrylyszyn** with broken cream crackers after he joked about her lovely legs on the aircraft's public address system. However, her bosses didn't see the funny side and sacked 26-year-old **Miss Withey** for ‚gross misconduct'.

Both text B and text C are rich in phrasal expressions that should be referred to diminished lexis and colloquialisms. Their domination causes

growth of emotional component of the story content nullifying its factual part (cf.: play on words in *to pull one's leg*, *to blow one's top*; euphemism *to quit the beauty circuit*; irony in *to shun the limelight*, *cracker treatment*; *to shower smb with crackers*).

The comparison of techniques used in presenting one event in the three stories may be followed by pointing out to differences in the way two main participants of the event are nominated. Certain emotional intensification and evaluative connotation may be seen in the way Ms. Janet Withey is named - from neutral and precise to the situation *former air stewardess and beauty queen*, *an air hostess* to the playful *the airgirl*, *ex-beauty queen*, *ex-miss Blackpool*, *Miss UK runner-up*, *the former Miss Britain* and abusive *Miss Lovely Legs Air Europe*, *blonde*; whereas the steward is presented quite modestly - *cabin steward Mr. Andrew Hawrylyszyn* or *male steward Andrew Hawrylyszyn*. The latter may be considered as a shadowed sneer over a ‚blond-type' girl - „a colleague reminded passengers of her past", it crosses out the right of the flight attendant for self-respect and dignity.

It is evident from the analysis that conceptualization of the event in media discourse is considered to be interpretation of the facts about some happening in the format of the news. The presentation of the latter (as well as any other act of communication) is originally governed by extra-linguistic factors and motives, that may be defined as social relevance and theme reference, situational circumstances, personal intentions and motives, etc., that is why media people may use a variety of techniques in news presentation, briefing the news, changing rational or emotional focus in presenting information.

Consequently, the ecolinguistic frame of media texts is viewed as a structure that embraces sets of lexical, informative, ethical and axiological integrants that may be useful in considering a link between human discourse and human environment. While communicating people don't only exchange information but interpret it, trying to reveal sense which might become helpful in exerting either healing or damaging influence on others (like threatening public face<sup>9</sup>). By analogy the flow of current news of the day is thought to be able to exert not only soothing or stimulating but agitating or fearful effect on the public, which may cause growth of social discomforting feeling or loss of interest to social issues of the day. More than

<sup>9</sup> Brawn, Levinson, 1987

Е. Пуйнова

that, domination of negative coloring in mass media discourse could result in depression, collapse of public interest to the institute of civil society, rejection of civil ethics in general.

Ecolinguistic modus in monitoring information delivery by media discourse seems to be an imperative of the day as it is focused on the issue of information delivery strategies which will help to raise its efficiency and bring down the level of social tension caused by information.

Brawn P., Levinson S.C. Politeness: Some Universal\* in Language Usage. Cambridge, 1987. - 352 pp.  
Broderick James F., Miller Darren W. *^f^^^b*. -Guide to 100 Prominent News and Information bites on NY, 2007. - 457 pp.

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