

TILTM 2020**Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****LINGUOPRAGMATIC ISSUES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
USE IN ECONOMIC TEXTS**

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Abstract

The Russian Federal Educational Standard of higher vocational education in the field of study "Economics" stipulates that university graduates must acquire skills of using Russian and foreign sources of information and being active representatives of domestic companies in business dealings with their overseas partners. Such requirements stemmed from the entry of Russian specialists onto a new level in cross-cultural communication, from the necessity to master national and international cutting-edge technology and to deal with foreign specialists as business partners. However, this objective cannot be achieved without professionally oriented study of foreign languages, an integral part of which is constituted by reading and analyzing authentic texts. Such texts, for example, articles on economics, make it possible to learn about recent events in the field of finance and economics, to catch on the professional language and modern lexicon used by native speakers, to develop intellectually and professionally. One of the main challenges while working on authentic professional texts is the author's imagery, which is represented in the text through figurative linguistic devices. The paper deals with the most popular figurative devices used in journalistic job-oriented economic texts. Figurative language is an individual product, which at the same time reflects the peculiarity of native speakers' way of thinking and is of social and cultural importance to them. Figurative linguistic means play an important role in a text, but they are a stumbling block for learners in terms of understanding the meaning of a text and its professional translation.

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1. Introduction

It seems to be logical to start the investigation of professionally oriented texts with the definition of a text itself. Traditionally, a text is defined as a written or spoken passage from something as simple as a few words to something as complex as a novel that form a unified whole. However, the notion of a text has expanded over time, and texts are no longer thought as something fixed and stable. Under the influence of technology and modern mass media, texts are becoming more “fluid”, multimodal and interactive (Barton & Carmen, 2013). Nowadays traditional language can be combined with graphic symbols, emoticons, and emojis.

Nevertheless, from the linguistic point of view a text is represented as a communicative unit which is “characterized by finality, exists in a written form, meets the requirements of a literary form of a certain type of a document, represents a unity of supraphrasal units connected by lexical, grammatical, logical, and stylistic links and carries out a specific purpose and pragmatic function” (Galperin, 2019, p. 20).

Professionally oriented texts have all the features of a text as a special unit: they are informative, coherent, self-consistent and created for communicative purposes. A few words must be said about the term used to characterize texts aimed at specialists is certain fields of knowledge. Russian linguists make use of a wide range of notions when they analyze texts of this kind: specialized text (R.K.Minyar-Beloruhev, A.L.Semenov, A.V.Fedorov), professionally oriented text (V.V.Alimov, O.V.Kulikova), text in specialty (T.A.Lubomudrova, M.A.Marinin). Such texts contain theories, facts, information, specialists’ recommendations in a certain field of study (Budileva, 2008). Vlasenko (2006) indicates that a specialized text is a unit that contains domain knowledge in different fields of science, that necessitates recipients to possess professional and background knowledge that makes it difficult to understand if read by a non-specialist. Kondrashova (2002) defines a written job-oriented text as “a written message that deals with a certain field of study with its term base revealing professionally significant information” (p. 15).

It is interesting to mention that foreign linguists predominately use the term “specialized” and that is when they write about translation opposing specialized translation to literary one. A specialized text is regarded as a text that deals with a specific area of knowledge, for instance, law, finance, economy, marketing, medicine, etc.

Before translating such texts, Rosa Rabadan and Purificacion Fernandez Nistal advise to analyze them from the point of view of their intentionality (the sender’s approach towards the purpose of the text, the overall meaning of the text, its pragmatic aspect), acceptability (the reception by readers/audience, the adaptation of norms, the text format, the socio-historical situation of the text, language variants), situationality (the identification of possible contextual differences and their solutions, the correlation of linguistic textual and contextual aspects of the text, the analysis of terminology and the level of formality), intertextuality (the possible dependence of the original on other texts or cultural aspects closely linked to the recipients’ specific knowledge to understand the text), informativeness (new information and its distribution in relation to the text type and its functions), coherence (the textual meaning and its relevance in relation to the recipient) (as cited in Hradcerka, 2010). This approach has a lot in common with modern linguistic and linguo-didactic studies conducted in Russia that have acquired a new way according to which texts are investigated with regard to extralinguistic parameters as special types of discourse. Such Russian linguists as Gavrilenko (2004) and Drozdova (2003) urge researchers to regard specialized texts from the

point of view of a communicative situation taking into consideration social and extralinguistic factors that influence the creation and perception of a text (Gavrilenko, 2004). Drozdova (2003) singled out the following extralinguistic features of job-oriented texts: source/author and recipient/addressee of a text; their communicative and social roles, norms and values, social and cultural environment, background knowledge, etc.

The current study of economic articles as those of specialized texts is conducted with respect to discourse and pragmatic analysis. Account must be taken of the fact that their stylistic and pragmatic peculiarities can be diverse; they may belong to official, publicist and scientific style and represent their different genres. Moreover, they perform the main two functions, namely, communicative and cognitive (informative). Being an object of professional communication, economic texts perform a communicative function. Its cognitive function lies in the ability to render information which is considered to be objective, abstract, and compressive.

2. Problem Statement

The first issue that comes up when we begin the analysis of economic texts published in English newspapers is to define what style the articles under analysis belong to. Strictly speaking, professionally oriented texts belong to a scientific style, which is in turn divided into scientific proper and popular scientific. On the other hand, being published in periodicals, they acquire the features of the publicist style. Representing a combination of two styles, such texts thereby gain the features of both of them and must be analyzed as scientific-journalistic texts (a term widely used in the Russian language).

The language of science proper is governed by the aim of the functional style of scientific prose, which is to prove a hypothesis, to create new concepts, to disclose the internal laws of existence, development, relations between different phenomena, etc. The language means used, therefore, tend to be objective, precise, unemotional, devoid of any individuality; therefore, there is a striving for the most generalized form of expression (Galperin, 2020). These are the characteristics of textbooks, theses, and scientific papers of this type. They cover purely scientific topics and are confined to certain professional circles. However, stylistic peculiarities of economic articles make it possible to refer them to popular scientific texts. Specifying popular scientific texts Razinkina (1989) singled out their following distinctive features: selective information, a lower frequency of terms, comprehensibility, emotional and evaluative type of narration, use of figurative language.

Texts of publicist style cover a wide range of social issues: political, economic, cultural, etc. Mass media texts are aimed at a large audience, thus the information must be presented in a brief, concise way in order to inform the readers and make a certain influence on them. According to Grigoryeva (2008), such information is never rendered in an impartial, objective way. All linguistic means used in publicist texts are applied to have an effect on people. Grigoryeva asserts that this appealing function of publicist style is manifested in the linguistic means used by journalists, which are emotional, figurative, expressive, and often even shocking. This point of view correlates with the one expressed by Galperin (2020) who stated that the general aim of publicist style is to exert a constant and deep influence on public opinion..., to cause the reader to accept the point of view expressed in the article not merely through logical argumentation but

through emotional appeal as well. Its emotional appeal is generally achieved by the use of words with emotive meaning, the use of imagery and other stylistic devices.

It is logical to deduce that economic articles published in English newspapers and magazines representing a combination of scientific popular and publicist text features are characterized by an extensive use of imagery and figurative language. And though Galperin (2020) asserted that “the stylistic devices used in the publicist style are not fresh or genuine” (p. 47), most of contemporary studies of expressive linguistic units applied by journalists demonstrate that they abound in highly sophisticated and very rich linguistic choices.

While it is supposed to be an easy task for a competent reader to grasp the meaning of words and phrases that stand behind figurative units, it turns out to be an enormous challenge for students of non-linguistic universities. As their educational programme does not include such academic disciplines as Lexicology or Stylistics, they have a vague idea of metaphors or phraseological units, to say nothing of metonymy, allusion, hyperbole, and other stylistic means frequently used in economic texts. We come now to the case of rather uncultivated or insensitive readers who, even if their curiosity is rather extensive, cannot understand the true meaning of a text; they perceive matter-of-fact information which is simplified by the use of economic terms and common language, but do not grasp the connotations or undertones of expressively charged words. The matter turns out to be even worse if the article is based on irony, when the message of the text is opposite to what is being said; unprepared students usually understand such articles literally and the work with such texts turns out to be a waste of time and a communicative failure.

3. Research Questions

Figurative language is to some extent inherent to any type of discourse. The problem of automatically detecting figurative language presupposes perfect knowledge of every aspect of the phonetic, lexical, and grammatical systems. The frequency of figurative linguistic units in scientific texts relies on national and cultural traditions, Russian scientific works, for instance, are more formal and termed. The use of figurative language in economic texts depends on the personality of addressers, on their potential readers, on the communicative purpose of an article, which in case of scientific-journalistic texts involves providing people with information and producing a certain impact on them. Among the different genres of scientific texts scientific-journalistic texts are characterized by a higher density of using figurative means. The task to identify and analyze figurative linguistic units appears to be unfeasible for Russian-speaking students of non-linguistic universities. However, investigations in this field (e.g. Bulycheva, 2011) indicate that authors of specialized texts on economics published in English periodicals (such as *The Economist*) make use of a range of figurative devices, which serve a specific role in rendering the meaning of the article as well as the author’s point of view. Thus, the objective of the study is to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the most popular figurative devices used in *The Economist* articles and how to identify them?
2. What is the purpose of their implementation in economic texts and their role in revealing the meaning of some aspects of the texts or an article in general?

4. Purpose of the Study

The link between figurative language and specialized discourse has been thoroughly investigated in recent years. In this respect, the domain of business and economics appears to be a particularly rich field of research, which has been proved by a number of studies concerning the role of metaphors in understanding business and economic texts (Boers, Charteris-Black, Henderson, etc.) (as cited in Miller & Monti, 2014). However, journalists use a wider range of figurative means, the implementation of which is determined by the communicative situation and purpose of the text, beliefs, background knowledge, intentions, and expectations of the author. These are the issues covered by pragmatics which were defined by Mey (2004) as "...the conditions that enable the users to employ linguistic techniques and materials effectively and appropriately" (p. 32). The figurative language that acquires certain meaning in a context serves the purpose of revealing the text sender's intentions in the best way. When the communication act is successful, these meanings coincide, the text is understood, the effect is achieved. However, the transmission of such meaning is problematic even in one language. It becomes a real challenge when the meaning must be understood by non-native readers who may not possess background knowledge, may be unaware of some cultural issues, moreover, lack skills of identifying and interpreting linguistic units they come across in the text.

Figurative language is one of the most complicated topics that natural language processing has to face, as figurative units project more complex meanings because they require certain cognitive capabilities to interpret the meaning beyond literal words. If such information is not correctly unveiled, then the real meaning is not achieved and the figurative effect is lost. Apart from conveying information, figurative linguistic units are used to make an impression on recipients, to adopt a certain point of view, to share the author's opinion. Thus, the words are given more power to capture readers' attention, to create imagery.

Imagery is defined as the writer's or speaker's use of words or figures of speech to create a vivid mental picture or physical sensation. Imagery appeals to human senses and deepens reader's understanding of the work; some of them (in particular metaphor and metonymy) have been recognized as central mechanisms of cognition.

Thus, the purpose of the study is to cover figures of speech which are most frequently used in *The Economist* and describe their functions. As various research works indicate figures of speech are now far from being restricted to literary discourse, they have stylistic and cognitive functions in different types of discourse, including the economic one.

5. Research Methods

The methodological framework of the study is formed by general scientific and special methods of investigation into linguistic phenomena such as systematic and structural analysis, formal logical and comparative methods. The research was conducted with the use of such methods as correlation, generalization, and traditional linguostylistic analysis. It is based on the investigation in the fields of methodological, linguistic, stylistic, discourse and pragmatics study conducted by scientists in Russia and abroad. The goal of the figurative language study in economic texts was achieved through the application of the following methods and approaches to conducting research: 1) lexical and semantic analysis of the

units comprising figurative devices; 2) contextual analysis of figurative means for proper understanding of semantic links between the context of an economic text and figurative devices used in it to complement the meaning of the text and produce a desired effect on the reader; 3) pragmatic approach aimed at defining the peculiarities and purpose of figurative units implementation into mass media articles for economists.

6. Findings

The Economist newspaper has had a long story. It was established in 1843 by James Wilson and offers insight and opinion on international news, politics, business, finance, science, and technology. Since its establishment, The Economist has covered domestic and international news and has had readers not only in Britain, but in Europe and the United States. Nowadays it is printed in six countries and is available in most of the world's main cities. There are several guidelines The Economist observes. One of them is that the articles are anonymous, as the editors stick to a belief that what is written is more important than who writes it. The other is the style of the paper. Walter Bagehot, the 19th-century editor declared it to be conversational, to put things in the most direct and picturesque manner, as people would talk to each other in common speech, to remember and use expressive colloquialism. And the editors still stick to this rule to write in plain language (About us/The Economist).

This commitment to the plain language principle explains a wide range of pragmatic means that The Economist engages, and the fact that, apart from being informative, their articles turn out to be evaluative, too. The informativity of The Economist's texts is achieved by means of terminology, digital information, company names, and description of their activity in a certain industry. Evaluation presupposes the expression of a positive or negative attitude towards the matter of discussion. It must be noted that this evaluation is not a subjective one; it is of a social matter, expressed by a certain part of the society and supported by editors.

This judgement and evaluation is achieved through the use of figurative means. Imagery of figurative language targeting readers' emotions and senses helps to attract attention, get expected response to the material, generate positive or negative attitude.

As any article starts with the headline, a skilfully turned out headline, while being short and catching, tells a story or arouses readers' curiosity. Headline creation is a manifestation of a linguo-creative activity of a person. Linguo-creative activity has a dual nature: on the one hand, it serves the purpose of discovering the world around us; on the other hand, it is employed in the creation of language units and enrichment of the language itself. New phenomena and relationships between them are expressed with the help of language units, which are to a certain extent transformed or have acquired a new meaning (e.g. Fear of the Dragon (the dragon symbolizes China), Faulty First Steps (comparing a governing party with a baby), Covid Nostra (a phrase coined by analogy with Cosa nostra), Epidemocracy (epidemic+democracy)). The capability to manipulate with ready-made lingual units to create new ones and to express new meanings indicates a great human potential for creative activity and symbolizes in-depth mental processes. Such lingual units arouse recipient's interest, attract attention, and urge them to read the article and react appropriately. However, the frequencies of content words can be influenced by topical events such as a political crisis or natural disaster. Headlines and content of the present-day issues of The Economist clearly demonstrate this tendency, the majority of them are dedicated to and contain the words connected with

Covid-19 (e.g. The Covid Network; Carry on Covid; Covid Nostra; Has Covid-19 Killed Globalization?; What Pandemic?; A Plague on Jobs; The Politics of Pandemics; The Right Medicine for the World Economy; Life after Lockdowns; Virus Exceptionalism).

Imagery in articles is mainly created with the help of language units based on the interplay of primary and figurative meanings, on the use of words in their figurative meaning, on their acquisition of additional connotations in new contexts. Such language means are tropes and phraseological units.

The main question is how to differentiate between literal language and figurative language? The problem of detecting figurative language means has been a point of thorough research. The latest investigations represent quantitative models of detecting figurative language with the perspective of providing appropriate equivalents in machine translation (Bogdanova, 2010; Li & Sportleder, 2010). Since during the lesson it seems to be impossible to make any calculations or calculate the distance between a unit in question and other sets, the only logical way for solving this problem appears to be the following: if the meaning of a unit is not in line with the context, significantly differs from the sense of the surrounding text, it usually indicates that the word is used figuratively. If it is a set phrase and may be detected by looking up the dictionary, it is a phraseological unit. If word combinations are not listed in a dictionary, or the dictionary meanings of words do not correlate with the ones they are used with in a context, such units acquire additional meanings and are used figuratively if they appeal to senses and feelings of a reader and create a certain image.

The link between figurative language and specialized discourse has been thoroughly investigated, and economics appears to be a particularly rich field of research as figurative means cover a variety of functions in this specific domain. Bulycheva (2011) distinguishes the following functions that figurative means perform in the economic text:

Explanatory – as The Economist articles are aimed at mass audience, figurative language serves the purpose of presenting in an accessible way economic issues that can be unfathomable for readers. This function is predominately revealed by means of metaphors and similes: e.g. Both leaders want to clean up the mess they inherited (metaphor); He should not try to fight today's battles with yesterday's weapons (metaphor); It took to the principles of its Anglo-Saxon shareholders with the zeal of the convert (simile).

Descriptive – figurative devices (metaphors, similes, epithets, etc.) are used to present and object or phenomenon from a different angle, to strike the imagination of readers and linger in their mind: Under a sky of unbroken light-grey cloud, isolated figures hurry through the spaces between Milan's towering office blocks...(epithets).

Evaluative – serves the purpose to reveal the journalist's attitude towards the object of the article, to influence the feelings and emotions of readers, to trigger the emotional reaction and shape a positive or negative opinion: e.g. ...in a country where Mr Trump has whipped up politics into a frenzy of loathing, Mr Sander's election would feed the hatred (metaphor). The risk is that the prime minister would sacrifice the tools of party discipline and might find himself presiding over a cabinet of big egos and discordant voices (metonymy).

Advertising (highlighting seems to be a more appropriate term) – is characterized by expressiveness, brevity, high semantic charge of figurative means; it is commonly present in headlines: e.g. Russia's leading

business paper is being gagged (metaphor); Markets wake up with a jolt to the implications of Covid-19 (metaphor).

Information compression – serves to fulfil the main principles of newspaper articles – topicality, minimal form of expression with maximum content: Yet many national central banks still look flabby (epithet).

The analysis of figurative units used in The Economist articles showed that the most popular means to reveal the author's point of view in a figurative way are metaphor, metonymy, epithet, simile and phraseological units. Phraseological units are one of the most efficient ways of making an impression on a reader, conveying the meaning and developing a certain attitude to the matter of discussion. They are multicomponent units conveying a figurative meaning that in a concise form reveal the wisdom of people and generations, and make up a separate layer in language system. Their figurative meaning is based on learned convention and they are journalists' preferable means of presenting information: e.g. Rishi Sunak, whose performance has been exemplary, but who may already have enough on his plate, He needs to realise that Covid-19, not Brexit, will determine how he goes down in history.

The complexity of decoding phraseological units lies in the fact that they are rarely employed in their original form, they become a tool for linguo-creative activity of the author; the final product usually contains an allusion to the original text but is coined to describe some economic phenomenon. Journalists often resort to pun and the phrase can be understood in its direct or figurative meaning. The novelty of the unit impresses readers, creates a certain image and lingers in mind: e.g. African exporters of red meat take the bulls by the horns and force their way into new markets.

It must be noted that even professionalisms and terms used in newspaper articles can broaden their meaning and serve as expressive means. Their figurative component is based on such stylistic devices as metaphor, epithet, metonymy, etc. The units that contain three or more components become semantically close to phraseological units: e.g. A beer company tries to keep Brazilian Carnival revellers dry.

The analysis of figurative units applied in The Economist articles made it obvious that the authors of articles resort to a wide range of figurative means apart from metaphor, metonymy, epithet and other devices we mentioned above. We can often come across periphrasis (e.g. The mother of parliaments, is now a sepulcher), understatement (e.g. Sir David King, a former chief scientific adviser, has said he is “a little worried the ministers are setting the scientists up to be the fall guys”), antonomasia (e.g. Eight weeks ago, hardly anybody had heard of the man whose extra-curricular activities graced the newspapers' front pages; today, whether he likes it or not, “Prof Lockdown” (epidemiologist Neil Ferguson) is a public figure) and other figurative means.

Special attention should be given to articles based on irony or cases where irony is used: e.g. Leading politicians have become celebrities. Mr. Johnson built his political career by appearing on television and turning his first name and blond hair into a global brand. Irony is one of the most subtle devices used in a refined way to deny what is literally said. As such negation is not formally marked, insensitive readers do not see the true value of the statement, do not correctly unveil the information and distort the real meaning of the statement, and the figurative effect is lost.

The list of functions that figurative units perform in an economic text can be extended due to a wide variety of stylistic devices that play an important role in revealing the meaning of the text. Thus, we can

speak about nominative, text-building, communicative, euphemistic, aesthetic and a number of other functions figurative language may perform in newspaper texts on economics. If we regard our work with students on interpretation and translation of economic articles, we can even speak about educational function because figurative means become helpful teaching devices both in developing and expanding vocabulary and explaining the concepts they refer to.

7. Conclusion

The Economist articles aimed at non-expert readers do not exploit the language of economics proper. The editors stipulated the objective of the newspaper as writing about international news, politics, business, finance, science and technology in a plain and picturesque manner. This goal of projecting factual information with the help of expressive means is achieved by using figurative language. The creative thinking of The Economist journalists fits in with one of the common patterns of the cognition of reality – presentation of abstract notions as a real object.

Imagery created by application of figurative means does not violate the stylistic features of scientific-publicist texts as they are used to simplify the perception of the essence of a text, to give some explanation, or to reveal personal attitude towards the subject of the discussion. Together with professional words and terms used in such texts, they play an important role as informative, affecting, and aesthetic components of economic texts. The axiological potential of figurative expressions and phraseological units is determined by their role in revealing cultural codes in a certain field of knowledge. Communicative and pragmatic peculiarities of various figurative means are determined by a type of communication, pragmatic interpretation, and stylistic features of figurative devices that help them to perform a wide range of functions.

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