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**PARAMETERS OF LANGUAGE MODELING OF THE IMAGE
OF RUSSIA AND ITS LEADER**

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Abstract

The article deals with the study of communication-pragmatic parameters of language modeling of the image of Russia and its leader in the Ibero-American media. The study material is articles in the Ibero-American newspapers in 2017-2019 which cover the reaction to the 2018 Russian presidential election and the 2018 World Football Cup held in Russia. Topicality of the research question is conditioned by the fact that the media material of 22 Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries has for the first time allowed to find out the most representative manipulation strategies and tactics, as well as the choice of respective language devices. Among the main study methods are both linguistic methods (structural and semantic, descriptive analytical, methods of semantic, contextual and stylistic analysis), as well as methods of related sciences (CDA, content analysis, cognitive, linguopragmatic, linguocultural, linguopolitical, method of comparative historic assessment) aimed at defining a positive/negative image of Russia. The study allows to conclude that the main aspect in modeling communicative-pragmatic parameters of the image of Russia and its leader is extralinguistic factors based on perceptions of Russia, existing national stereotypes of the image of an ‘alien’, historically developed and current relations between the Ibero-American countries and Russia, relations between the Ibero-American countries and the USA, which contributes to an ambiguous image of Russia in Ibero-America. Interpretation of extralinguistic factors is reflected on the stylistic level in the form of manipulation tactics applied embodied in a specific choice of morphosyntactic and lexical devices of the Spanish and Portuguese languages discussed herein.

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Keywords: The image of Russia, language modeling, the Ibero-American media, communication-pragmatic parameters, language manipulation devices.



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1. Introduction

The article has been written in the framework of scientific research project «Language modeling of the image of Russia in the Ibero-American media» and deals with the definition of communication-pragmatic parameters of language modeling of the image of Russia in the Ibero-American political discourse, in particular, the 2018 Russian presidential election and the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia. Over the past few years specific features of portraying the image of Russia have attracted the attention of Russian scholars (Khazieva, 2018; Kostina, 2015, etc.), who point out ambiguousness of interpretation of this country's image in mostly English-language media, yet a comprehensive study of the Russian image in Spanish-language and Portuguese-language media has never been done. A country's image is usually understood as specific notional associations based on the whole of rational and emotional stereotypical concepts of the country, including knowledge of historical facts, specific features of the national character, lifestyle, culture, involvement in the international political processes, as well as their interpretation. Thus, the notion of image is tightly connected with the categories of expressiveness, judgment and persuasion. According to the concept of "communication media images" of McQuail (1996, p. 65), media act as a mediator in the sense of intervening between ourselves and 'reality', this information varying from strictly neutral to reflecting some persuasive goals, depending on the ideological discourse of a specific media outlet.

2. Problem Statement

Designing a country's image is a way of delivering information on a country. Among types of images classified by Zernetskaya (2000, p. 137-138) the following are of most interest for our study: an image as a particular filter choosing some facts and viewpoints and deliberately hushing other, and an image as a screen or a barrier imposing false concepts for propaganda reasons. Through using regulatory function and discourse strategies of melioration and pejoration, media promotes a positive or negative image of a country to a considerable extent. Linguistic means used to this end are an embodiment of designing the image as a mental unit.

3. Research Questions

Designing a country's image is considered in the framework of the communication-pragmatic approach typical of the political discourse, which allows to study the language's ability to manipulate the conscience depending on extralinguistic conditions of utterance production (personal characteristics of the speech act participants and their status, genre characteristics of the text, register, cultural, historical, political and social background). Methods of content and discourse analysis allow to find out value paradigms of specific politicians, as well as metaphorical models and stereotypes which build up a certain ideology (Denton & Woodward, 1998; Van Dijk, 2013; Wodak, 1989, etc.). In the Russian linguistics the problem of political discourse has been mostly studied by the example of the Russian and English languages (Alyoshina, 2015; Chernyavskaya & Molodychenko, 2018; Ratsiburskaya & Petrova, 2018; Skrebtsova, 2018 and so on). Studies which focus on the Spanish and Portuguese political discourse follow the general theoretic approach and only focus on few aspects of the problem (Fajardo, 2016;

Guervós, 2018; Rodríguez, 2017; Rodríguez, 2016; Zarco, 2016, etc). The study of linguistic strategies of manipulative influence on mainstream audience in the Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking media in 22 countries of Ibero-America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela) aims at definition of basic communication and pragmatic parameters of language modeling of the image of Russia. However, the main non-linguistic parameter is extralinguistic factors connected with the notions of Russia, causing various associations conditioned by a whole range of external factors which derive from the history of relations between Russia and a certain Ibero-American state, with greater or lesser political and economic dependency of Ibero-America from the US, the EU policies, national and cultural notion of Russia typical for the Ibero-American countries. Taking into account that a country's image depends to a great extent on the image of its political leader, pre-election situation in Russia and its presidential race were covered in the Ibero-American media mostly with the focus on the personality of candidate Vladimir Putin. A study of the Ibero-American press in 2017-2019 has shown that basic image characteristics of Russia in the official Ibero-American media range in this respect from positive (Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua), neutrally judgmental (Mexico, Portugal, El Salvador), moderately negative (Brazil, Honduras, Panama, Ecuador), mostly negative (Guatemala, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Uruguay) to negative (Argentina, Spain, Peru), reflecting the existing strategies of melioration and pejoration (post-truth). This distribution of Russia's image characteristics quite clearly correlates with entrenched and currently existing diplomatic, economic, cultural relations and military and technical cooperation between Russia and a certain Ibero-American country. Moreover, the influence of the US on EU countries, as well as Latin America, should also be taken into consideration in this respect, as the US have always seen Latin America as a territory of their national interests. Thus, interpretation of extralinguistic factors connected with Russia is reflected on the stylistic level in the form of manipulative influence tactics applied, embodied in a specific choice of morphosyntactic and lexical means of the Spanish and Portuguese languages.

4. Purpose of the Study

Analysis of manipulative influence tactics on mainstream media audience in Ibero-America and respective choice of morphosyntactic and lexical means of the Spanish and Portuguese languages to create the image of Russia are the aim of this study. van Dijk (2013) stated that critical discourse analysis contains notions which imply discourse power abuse, the term 'manipulation' among them (p. 254). According to van Dijk, studying manipulation is of critical importance, as at present "there is no semantic theory of the structure processes involved in manipulation" (p. 254).

Following Kopnina (2007) under language manipulation we understand "a form of manipulation by way of using specific language resources with an aim of hidden influence on cognitive and behavioral activity of the addressee" (p. 25). With the help of linguistic and non-linguistic manipulation devices notions, stereotypes, value paradigms which influence the view of the world and cause politically beneficial reaction are embedded into the conscience of a general reader.

5. Research Methods

The study, conducted for the first time and based on comprehensive analysis of media texts of the leading Ibero-American media (Spain, Portugal and Latin America), includes both linguistic methods (structural and semantic, descriptive analytical, methods of semantic, contextual and stylistic analysis), as well as methods of related sciences (CDA, content analysis, cognitive, linguopragmatic, linguocultural, linguopolitical, method of comparative historic assessment) with an aim to generate positive/negative status of the phenomenon studied – the image of Russia.

6. Findings

6.1. The main manipulative influence tactics in the Ibero-American media

The most wide-spread among mainstream manipulative influence tactics in the material studied are: methods of programming nomination, labeling, aggravation, specification, theatricalization and creolization (the use of illustrative and visual means), hoaxing facts, fragmented citation, self-explanatory headings, information manipulation (information transformation (understatement, overstatement, violation of proportions); discrimination (the use of information beneficial to stress one's own point of view only); special means of presenting information (informational overload, fragmentation of information, mixture of facts and opinion (Kopnina, 2007, p. 46-99).

Let's take as an example the following. Programming nomination – anticipation of events – can be found in media headlines which inform the readership of the planned election result in advance: Rusia afronta un año de enormes desafíos y unas elecciones de puro trámite 'Russia enters the year of enormous challenges and purely formal elections' (Med, 2019, p. 138).

'Self-explanatory' article headings are an important programming nomination device as well, as they facilitate shaping reader's opinion: El zar Putin I de todas las Rusias, las Américas, las Sirias y dentro de poco las Europas 'Putin I the Czar of all the Russias, Americas, Syrias and soon all Europe' (Med, 2019, p. 146); El mundo bajo la bota de Putin 'The world under Putin's boot' (Zernova, 2019, p. 101). It can be seen that these headings instill the idea of growing influence of Russia, authoritarianism of the Russian president, which threatens the whole world.

Indirect quotation with the source of information indicated at the end of the sentence allows the author to relieve themselves of responsibility for the opinion and at the same time emphasize the negative tone of the text: Los desmentidos, los cruces de acusaciones y las amenazas de represalias recíprocas marcaron la semana y son el resumen de un mandato en el cual Rusia retornó a la escena internacional, en un clima con tintes de Guerra Fría con el conflicto en Siria, la anexión de Crimea y la insurrección en el este de Ucrania llevada a cabo por separatistas apoyados por Moscú, según Kiev y Occidente 'Lies, mutual accusations and threats of repression characterize this week, and this is the result of the rule, when Russia returned to the world stage in the atmosphere close to the Cold War with the Syrian conflict, annexation of the Crimea and upsurge in Western Ukraine organized by the Moscow-backed separatists, according to Kyiv and the West' (Nikolaeva, 2019a, p.189).

Specification – using statistical data - emphasizes the long term of the current President: Putin inicia cuarto mandato como presidente da Rússia ‘Putin begins his fourth presidential term’ (Nikolaeva, 2019a, p. 178); ZarPutinhasta 2024 ‘Czar Putin till 2024’ (Med, 2019, p. 138).

Labelling, which means stereotypification and replicatuion of V.Putin’s image as a former KGB officer, can be found in the Ibero-American media as well: se graduó como agente del KGB (siglas en ruso del Comisariado para la Seguridad del Estado) ‘Putin graduated from the Higher School of the KGB (Zernova, 2019, p. 97).

Creolization, often used in the Ibero-American media texts (‘self-explanatory’ pictures of V.Putin), facilitates theatricalization of the political discourse (Iakushkina, 2019a, p. 247-248; Sokolova, 2019, p. 222-223).

The abovementioned manipulative tactics imply specific use of linguistic means. The study of linguistic manipulative devices conducted in the pragmatic aspect showed that these devices can be found on morpho-syntactic and lexical levels of the Spanish and Portuguese languages.

6.2. Morpho-syntactic manipulative devices in the Ibero-American media

Among manipulative devices we have found preposition adjectives aimed at enhancing negative effect: El líder ruso tomará este lunes <último mandato> con el reto de sacar a Rusia del retraso económico sin modificar su agresiva política exterior ‘This Monday the Russian leader will take the last mandate <to draw Russia out of the list of low-performing economies sticking to aggressive foreign policy’. In the phrase *agresiva política* (aggressive policy) the negative adjective in preposition enhances the strategy of instilling the negative attitude (Sokolova, 2019, p. 216). The thematic- rhematic articulation, change in the word order, apposition in preposition to the name in the heading «Ex-agente del KGB al frente del país desde hace más de 18 años, Vladimir Putin acaba de ser reelegido por seis años más con una mayoría aplastante» ‘Ex-KGB agent, the head of the country for more than 18 years already, has just been reelected for a six-year term by a landslide’, form an additional negative attitude (ex-KGB agent), while specification (more than 18 years) stresses his long term in power (Nikolaeva, 2019a, p.189).

Prevalence of hypotaxis (complex sentences) with subordinate clause in postposition should also be mentioned; in those negative attitude to the facts reported is explicated as something conventional and hence indisputable: Lo tendrá muy difícil el líder ruso para no perder el último tren antes de que la revolución tecnológica que ya está viviendo el mundo deje a Rusia definitivamente en la cuneta ‘The Russian leader will have to try hard not to miss the last opportunity before the global technological revolution leaves Russia on the margins of history’ (Sokolova, 2019, p. 214).

Breaking the rules of sequence of tenses for better actualization of the message and the use of future tenses with hypothetical modality for judgmental prediction of events is also typical for the Ibero-American political discourse: Se cumplirá el cuarto mandato que hoy conquistó, Putin será estado no poder entre 2000 e 2004, quase sempre como chefe de Estado. Mudará Putin a Lei Fundamental? Renovará a manobra medvedeviana de 2008? ‘If Putin is to complete his fourth presidential term he has been elected to, he will stay in power from 2000 to 2004, almost entirely as the head of state. Will Putin change the Fundamental Law? Will he renew Medvedev’s 2008 reform?’ (Nikolaeva, 2019b, p.98).

The use of various grammatical and lexico-grammatical constructions with gerund and participle can be used as a manipulation device as well. Thus, in the following sentence ‘V. Putin, ex-agente del KGB lleva 18 años imponiendo su autoridad en Moscú’ ‘V. Putin, ex-KGB agent, has been imposing his authority in Moscow for 18 years already’ persuasion is reached by the use of progressive gerund construction which marks the continuance combined with negative semantics of the verb ‘to impose’ and the use of an adverbial modifier (18 years) (Sokolova, 2019, p.215).

This article does not allow to discuss such grammatical devices as the use of impersonal pronoun passive (zero-subject) which results in formation of various constructions, constructions with the indefinite subject to eliminate personal opinion, structures based on coherence and cohesion (for instance, distant repetitions which enhance the sender’s communicative intention (Nikolaeva, 2019b; Sokolova, 2019).

6.3. Lexical manipulative devices in the Ibero-American media

Among lexical manipulative devices the most frequently used are conceptual metaphors, key homonyms, ideologemes, affective words, invective words, modern coinages, loan words, allusion, irony, precedent phenomena, phraseological devices, play on words, citation, the use of war speak, and all these aim at creating positive/negative image of Russia in the Ibero-American media.

The main aim of a political metaphor is to affect popular mentality through vivid metaphorical images and to form the relevant public opinion. The Ibero-American mediatexts display a lot of anthropomorphous (Csar President), religious, theatrical, morbid metaphors etc. Thus, for instance, conceptual metaphor of the game compares V. Putin with a strong chess player skillfully setting up the global chess board: *Mientras el mundo juega a las damas Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin triunfa en el ajedrez* ‘While the world is playing checkers Vladimir Putin triumphantly wins a game of chess’ (Med, 2019, p. 148).

Ideologemes “putinismo, putinología, putinización” (‘putinism’, ‘putinology’, ‘putinization’) are used for negative characterization of political views of the Russian president and his supporters. We see a lot of affective words which verbalize positive and negative emotions: *Ele fala as coisas interessantíssimas. É um dos maiores líderes mundiais* ‘He says most interesting things. He is one of the most outstanding world leaders’ (Nikolaeva, 2019a, p. 180); *es un líder culto, carismático, valiente, con los pies bien puestos sobre la tierra, un orgullo para el pueblo Ruso. A diferencia de Trump, que es una vergüenza para el pueblo estadounidense»* ‘, es aneducated, charismatic, brave leader, with both feet on the ground, pride of the Russian people. Unlike Trump, who is a shame for the American people’ (Voiku, 2019, p. 75). Wide use of lexical devices with semantic dominant of the ‘power’ (hombre fuerte, hombre viril, hombre invencible – a strong person, a courageous person, an invincible person) forms a positive image of the Russian leader (Zernova, 2019, p. 99-100).

The use of precedent names, known to the public and giving rise to either positive or negative associations (Roosevelt, Churchill, De Gaulle, Machiavelli, Napoleon, Nicholas I, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen) together with the name of the Russian leader is an important manipulation device as well: *Putin es un gran político, un estadista a la altura de Churchill, pero la historia la escriben historiadores ingleses y americanos que nunca dejan bien ni a españoles ni a rusos*

de manera muy injusta, así que ellos ya empezaron hace años a escribir la historia a su manera sobre Putin ‘Putin is a great politician, a statesman of the level of Churchill, yet the history is written by the British or American scholars who have never spoken well of the Spanish or the Russians, thus for several years already they have been writing the history of Putin in their own manner’(Med, 2019, p. 155).

Manipulative semantics as a special use of lexis and phraseology is also characteristic of the Ibero-American media. For instance, the use of adjective «demoscópico», usually used in study and analysis of public opinion through polls and interviews: estudio demoscópico, análisis demoscópico» ‘demoscopic study’, ‘demoscopic analysis’ out of the usual context brings about new meanings. Thus, Putin is usually ascribed so-called demoscopic health, based on TV reports of his keenness on sport: $\langle \rangle$su buena salud demoscópica es a prueba de bomba ‘his demoscopic health is excellent’. Collocation “hacerse un traje a medida” ‘make a suit to measure’ is a tailoring term. Yet in characterizing Putin’s election campaign the term is used for critical estimation of the constitutional reform of the electoral system: «Precisamente por eso, se preparó un traje a medida antes de su regreso, una reforma de la Constitución alargando de cuatro a seis años la duración de los mandatos presidenciales ‘That’s why he made his suit to his measure before his return – a Constitutional reform which extends the presidential term from four to six years’ (Med, 2019, p. 151).

We should also pay attention to warspeak as a means of linguistic manipulation which shows alleged threat from Russia and the Russian President, who is to protect the country from the hostile world: carrera armamentista ‘arms race’, nuevo arsenal nuclear ‘new nuclear arsenals’, defensa nacional ‘national defense’, gastos de defensa ‘defence spending’ (Iakushkina, 2019a, p. 257).

Compared to the electoral situation which is ambiguously interpreted in the Ibero-American media the analysis of newspaper articles of 22 Ibero-American countries which covered the FIFA World Cup showed predominantly positive reaction to it, expressed by positive judgmental lexical devices (fabuloso, fantástico, espectacular, impresionante- fabulous, fantastic, spectacular, impressive), characterized by destruction of negative stereotypes in perception of Russia and hence creating an attractive image of an open, friendly, hi-tech country (Iakushkina, 2019b).

7. Conclusion

The study of the Ibero-American media allows to conclude that the main aspect in modeling communication-pragmatic parameters of the image of a country and its leader is extralinguistic factors based on long-standing relations between countries, existing national stereotypes of the image of an ‘alien’, current international political events and Russia’s internal policy, relations between the Ibero-American countries and the USA. The material has shown that creation of the image of Russia and its leader mostly involves filter technologies which choose the facts necessary for manipulation, and barrier technologies which impose fake narrative of the current processes. A major role in communication-pragmatic parameterization of the country’s image is played by regulatory function of the media language and discourse strategies of melioration and pejoration, which use the existing manipulative tactics and various morpho-syntactic and lexical devices of the Spanish and Portuguese languages.

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