

ISCKMC 2020
International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»
REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL CONCEPTS IN TAINMENT
TECHNOLOGIES

Konstantin Valerievich Kiuru (a)*, Alla Vladimirovna Groheva (b),
Elena Yurievna Karmalova (c), Alexey Dmitrievich Krivonosov (d)

*Corresponding author

(a) Chelyabinsk State University, 129, Bratyev Kashirinych str., Chelyabinsk, Russia, kkiuru@mail.ru

(b) Chelyabinsk State University, 129, Bratyev Kashirinych str., Chelyabinsk, Russia, bagi-94@mail.ru

(c) Saint Petersburg State Economic University, 21, Sadovaya str., St. Petersburg, Russia, elen.ka05@mail.ru

(d) Saint Petersburg State Economic University, 21, Sadovaya str., St. Petersburg, Russia, krivonosov.a@unecon.ru

Abstract

In this article, the authors analyze concepts from the political-institutional discourse and these are the concepts related to political institutions, not those which fall within the political sphere only from time to time (for example, religion, church, family, etc.). In particular, attention is focused on such concepts as “power” and “state”, since they are central political institutions. It is concluded that the concept “power” loses the near-nuclear and peripheral zones, and the concept “state”, on the contrary, acquires a peripheral zone, which is absent in the conventional model. The tainment sphere is a repository of “tainment communications”. The latter imply various technologies for transmitting news and conceptual information being storytelling (or narrative communication, specifically, creating a legend, a story about a company, a public person or a network user’s experience), including, politainment (forming political consciousness by the facts “easy” for perception). The article analyzes the materials of the regional Internet portal 74.ru.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Concept, politics, public sphere, tainment communication



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, information and communication practices are being implemented in a special public sphere. The prerequisites for changes in the modern public sphere were noted by the French communications researcher Bounou (2001). First, it is the introduction of mass media as an element of a public sphere into the private sphere of an individual. Secondly, it is the fusion of the economic market and advertising, when the public sphere is under pressure of economy. In addition, Bounou (2001) points at the mass media modernization and the target groups of consumers' disintegration, which implies that each consumer has "their own" channel, means of mass communication.

Obviously, a new or different public environment has its own set of tools, which initially should include social media, where various tactics of producing public discourse can be implemented. However, today we are witnessing the development of not only information and communication techniques but also the evolution of the content and functioning of a communicative space designated by the concept of "public environment".

The new post-industrial society changes the quantity and quality of communications between its members. The British researcher McQuell (2014) considers the main phenomenon of the information society to be "the exponential growth of the production and transmission of all forms of information (private and public) by numerous means, primarily telecommunications, and then digital, exceeding the human ability to record or process it" (p. 28).

By the end of the 20th century, in the information age, the media began to play a significant role in shaping public opinion, gradually becoming an active player in the business space and often expressing not the power of an independent "fourth" power but the interests of their founders. "At the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries, the media have also become the most important institution of the national state uniting the nation as a community that speaks the same language and has many informal ideas, values, and collective agreements that unite it in addition to common formal legislation. According to Vartanova (as cited in Russian Media System, 2015), it was during the creation of a single space for public discussion when the media system began to play a significant role and it turned the media into one of the central players in the "public sphere".

Thanks to active web-communications, it is possible to record the presence of another public environment being a "virtual" one, which differs from the traditional environment not only in information channels but also in goals, functions and actors. In turn, the "virtual" public sphere is subdivided into the public sphere and "tainment" sphere, which is possible due to the different composition of the actors of the given environment.

The tainment sphere is a repository of "tainment communications". The latter imply various technologies for transmitting news and conceptual information being storytelling (or narrative communication, for example, creating a legend, a story about a company, a public person or a network user's experience), infotainment denoting "informative entertainment" or "entertaining information", scienertainment, specifically, popularization of scientific knowledge, politainment being the formation of political consciousness by the facts which are easy for perception, or "entertaining" politics, businesstainment denoting popularized knowledge or news information about business processes and edutainment, which is entertaining education.

2. Problem Statement

The given article analyzes concepts from political-institutional discourse, by which we mean the concepts related to political institutions, and not those that fall within the political sphere only from time to time (for example, religion, church, family, etc.). In particular, we will focus on the concepts “power” and “state” as they are central political institutions.

3. Research Questions

The study of political concepts forming an idea of modern politics in the minds of a mass audience with the application of tainment technologies.

1. Discourse analysis of concepts based on the material of the regional publication 74.Ru.
2. Influence of political concepts on the target audience using tainment technologies.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to investigate how the new public environment (social media) implements various tactics of producing public discourse with the application of tainment technologies.

5. Research Methods

We conducted a discourse analysis of the mentioned concepts on the material of the regional Internet publication 74.ru. This portal, in general, publishes either informational (news materials) or the ones with the elements of analytics.

The texts were selected using the “search” function on the website of the Internet edition in the archive of publications by the keywords “government” and “power” for the period from March 23, 2020 to April 20, 2020. The selection was based on the method of continuous sampling.

Initially, 1,500 materials were found, and then those in which words with the given components were not in the articles but in comments, advertisements, links to article titles related thematically to the readable material and headings of online broadcasts were removed from these publications. It was stipulated by the fact that the goal of this study was to analyze media texts and not their composite (titles) or user comments at the end of the articles. Thus, 1,077 materials remained after the initial analysis of the texts.

Next, we removed all materials written in the chronicle genre, in which the title and the main content practically duplicated each other (what? where? when?), from the text array. However, we did not remove extended information notes. Thus, we left 1,030 texts, 500 of which contained the lexeme “power” and 515 had the lexeme “government”. It was these texts that we analyzed with regards to contexts with the above lexemes, which resulted in building discursive models of concepts.

6. Findings

Currently, various types of communication activities being promotion, propaganda, political advertising are the forms of politics informational existence. Political journalism and publicistic writing have also always been the sphere of mass political practice implementation. In today's media, the products of journalistic activity are practically absent. However, some researchers attribute mass information to the content of political communicative discourse, and the media are its broadcast channel.

At the same time, recently political journalism has been dominating by such a form of information presentation as politainment (literally, politics plus entertainment). This is due to the general trend towards increased escapism, entertainment, content commercialization and the process of its creation.

Modern tainment technologies are a combination of entertainment principle with the usual spheres of human activity and culture. Foreign researchers consider these "hybrids" to be separate forms of mass communication. Some domestic experts regard such forms as edutainment, politainment, technotainment, scienctainment and others as varieties of infotainment, which spread from the media to other public areas.

Politics is seen as a fusion of politics and show business. Its representation is the unity of news, entertainment and advertising. The dominance of politainment in Russian and foreign information processes indicates the development of a trend towards a decrease in the media content quality.

Politainment has its own characteristics depending on the type of media. However, in general we can say that it is characterized by an entertaining rather than a serious presentation of information, escapism caused by the unreality of the recreated situations and conflicts, primacy of form over content, visualization and, in general, an emphasis on the visual, visual effects, thematic and compositional clip, relying on emotionality rather than rationality of perception, polygenre, rating, fragmentation, universality, transnational character, a certain target audience, much more democratic in terms of education and status than high-quality media.

Politainment in print media is characterized by simplification of information transmission forms, typical of politainment, emphasis on catchy, scandalous headlines, controversial topics (mainly related to the recreational sphere) as well as the active use of multimedia and accompanying materials (such as cartoons, battle toads, memes, drawings, collages, etc.) enables to expand the target audience of the publication and bet on the mass character, where the quality of analytics and information content gives way to an increase in the number of views (Kuznetsov & Slavina, 2005).

According to Schultz (2012), "the key to understanding contemporary politics begins with two simple concepts. The first is that it is the world of politainment where politics and entertainment had collapsed into one another, producing a new world of politainment (politics + entertainment). A second concept to understand about contemporary politics is that it is a business" (Introduction).

Due to the lack of theoretical and methodological apparatus, scientists working in the field of axiology of journalism adopt the methods of other related sciences. In particular, such a science is linguoconceptology.

The main method of this science is the concept, which means all the signs of an object immersed in language and culture (Vorkachev, 2010). The concept is always inextricably linked with language, culture, thus, we can say that the concept has a value component, which means that it coincides with the conceptual issues of the axiology of journalism.

When studying this or that concept, you first need to recreate its general language model (it is also called a common model or a naive/linguistic worldview) which is a concept functioning in the mass consciousness. The method of dictionary definitions was used to reproduce this model.

The revealed meanings are ranked for a more complete understanding. Specifically, the relationship with the concept name is more clearly traced as long as certain meanings move away from the conceptual field. The following semantic zones (fields) are distinguished: nuclear (basic), near-nuclear and peripheral, and sometimes the near and far peripheries are singled out as well. However, it is not always possible to identify all the named zones while their availability depends on the transmitted meanings and their frequency. This approach is called the “field method”.

The core zone (conceptual component) of a concept is always reflected in the attribute structure of the lexeme that gave its name to the concept. Therefore, it is reconstructed using explanatory dictionaries.

The concept near-nuclear zone is composed of denotation based on figurative meanings indicated in explanatory dictionaries.

The peripheral zone is determined with the help of derivational etymology, associative dictionaries, dictionaries of epithets, collections of proverbs and sayings (as a rule, the peripheral zone is a significant and figurative component). In this zone, the evolution of the form of a given lexeme is reflected. It shows what place this lexeme occupies in the language (Vorkachev, 2004). First, we reconstructed the general linguistic model of the studied concepts. To do this, we turned to the main dictionaries of the Russian language being explanatory, derivational, associative and other ones.

The nuclear zone is always a conceptual component, i.e. it will be determined by the meaning in the explanatory dictionaries. Thus, for the concept of “power” we got the following results:

- 1) “the right and the ability to dispose someone/something” (Kuznetsov, 2002).
- 2) “right, power and will”, “peculiar to the authorities”, “to dispose, to dominate” (Dal, 1999).
- 3) “the right to govern the state, political domination”, “government bodies”, “the right to dispose, command” (Evgenieva, 1984).

The meanings in the nuclear field of the concept of “power” are primarily associated with the very right for power and the ability to exercise it. Power is also synonymous with the state, and sometimes it is understood as a certain group exercising constant control. First of all, power is the prerogative of the state, and it is unknown who exactly exercises power in the state.

The near-nuclear zone is restored according to the etymological, associative, semantic, word-formation dictionaries of the Russian language.

In Tikhonov’s (1990) word-formation dictionary, we see that the lexeme “power” has a poor family of words consisting of four adjectives, five nouns, two verbs and one adverb.

The etymological dictionary of the Russian language indicates that this word comes from the Common Slavic word “volost”, which in turn goes back to volda, which the word “power” came from (Fasmer, 1886). In the etymological dictionary of Semenov (2003), at the same time, the lexeme “authority”, which is translated from Latin as “influence, power, imperium”, is described. The word imperium in translation from Polish means “power, command, state”. Thus, we can say that the lexeme “power” in Russian culture has a long history and its own evolution, although it lacks a rich family of words.

According to the ideographic dictionary, “power” refers to such semantic clusters as monarchy, autocracy, anarchy, court, crowd, throne, regime, ruler, owner, sovereign, sovereign, dictatorship, etc. (Shvedova, 2011). Anyway, the semantic field of the analyzed lexeme is very ambiguous but it is always associated with totalitarianism.

In an associative dictionary, the stimulus “power” includes the following reactions (the number of reactions is indicated in brackets, the total number of these reactions is 103):

- “Soviets” (18);
- “to the Soviets” (9);
- “money” (3);
- “to the people” (3);
- “power” (3);
- “cruelty” (2);
- “the haves” (2);
- “government” (2);
- “darkness” (1);
- “Alexander the Great” (1);
- “administration” (1), etc. (Karaulov, 1996).

The near-nuclear zone of the concept largely repeats the meanings from the nuclear zone. However, a more negative coloring appears, specifically, totalitarianism, authoritarianism, imperialism.

Let us move on to the analysis of the peripheral zone of the concept “power”. Peripherals are always restored according to the data of metaphor dictionaries, proverbial dictionaries and sayings.

In the dictionary of epithets of the Russian language, the lexeme “power” is described in the following metaphorical meanings:

- associated with political institutions: “state”, “supreme”, “legislative”, “executive”, etc.;
- ideological sphere: “democratic”, “bourgeois”, “noble”, “autocratic”, “authoritarian”, workers’ and peasants’, etc.;
- existential sphere: “creative”, “sacred”, “mysterious”, “harsh”, etc.

In the dictionary of proverbs and sayings of V. I. Dahl with the lexeme “power” there are only three semantic blocks:

- “God-faith” – 3 (“We are all in God’s hands”, etc.);
- “will he, nill he” – 1 (“Willing or unwilling”);
- “punishment-mercy” – 1 (“Mercy is over sin that water above fire (that is, it is powerful)”) (Gorbachevich & Khablo, 1979).

It turns out that the periphery is represented by a wide variety of metaphors (from political to existential) associated with religion and national ideas about fate and justice.

Having analyzed the conventional model of the concept “power”, we can draw the following conclusions: first of all, this concept is associated with the state and the bearer of supreme power, or the head of state, however, as it moves away from the core, the concept acquires either an ideologically colored meaning mainly associated with totalitarianism and tyranny (near-nuclear zone) or existential and religious motives (periphery).

Let us move on to the reconstruction of the general language model of the concept “state”.

The core zone of the concept is composed of the following meanings: “political organization of society”, “a country with a certain political system”, “a large territory with independence” (Kuznetsov, 2002). These are neutral meanings indicating such signs as a territory with its own borders, sovereignty, and its own political regime.

According to the data of etymological and derivational dictionaries, the following meanings are included into the near-nuclear zone: the lexeme “state” itself originated from the Common Slavic word “gospodar”, which goes back to the word “sovereign” by its roots, and it is associated with “lord”, meaning “master”, “owner” (Semenov, 2003). The analyzed lexeme also has a rather poor family of words consisting of a total of three adjectives and adverbs (Tikhonov, 1990).

The analyzed lexeme also has a rather poor family of words consisting of a total of three adjectives and adverbs (Tikhonov, 1990).

The associative dictionary of Karaulov (1996) fixes the following meanings:

- “country” (49)
- “our” (26)
- “power” (20)
- “socialist” (19)
- “and law” (18), “legal” (18)
- “Soviet” (18)
- “large” (16)
- “USSR” (16)
- “and revolution” (14)
- “revolution” (13)
- “right” (12)
- “this is me” (12)
- “great” (10)
- “huge” (10)
- “Russian” (10)
- “mine” (8), etc.

There are also such single reactions as “nonsense”, “nobody”, “terror”, “pit”, “collapse”, “will die” (Karaulov, 1996).

The dictionary of Karaulov presents the reactions not typical for modern Russians as it was compiled in the 1990s. Therefore, we observed values associated with the old political system and ideology. Thus, in 2014 Nikitin repeated the experiment of Karaulov for the lexeme “state” among students of St. Petersburg State University and revealed the following results (in descending order):

- “Russia”
- “power”
- “right”
- “power”
- “the power of one”

- “monopoly”
- “power”
- “might”
- “honesty”
- “disappointment”
- “freedom”
- “politics”
- “government”
- “Putin”
- “the president”
- “history”
- “war”
- “democracy”
- “corruption”
- “enemy”
- “The Roman Empire”
- “civilization”
- “anarchy”
- “decay”
- “very complex system”
- “flag”, etc. (Nikitin, 2014).

In the peripheral zone, the analysis of dictionary definitions showed the absence of a lexeme in any of the dictionaries. In our opinion, this may be due to the fact that reflection on the part of citizens is important for the figurative component. However, as we can see even from the etymological dictionary and associative dictionary, most often the lexeme “state” is associated either with a certain political leader or a form of government, ideology, which makes it difficult to present it in a generalized form for dictionaries. This lexeme is thought of only in a specific discourse.

Thus, we can say that in the general linguistic worldview, the state is a territorial entity with independence and isolation, with a built political regime. This power is most often monopolized, and the state perceived as a “very complex system” draws attention to citizens, mainly carries out punitive measures against external and internal enemies.

It is worth noting that in the naive picture of the world there is a connection between the two concepts in the basic meaning (nuclear zone) and they are as follows: first of all, the state has power, and the concept of the state is focused on the political leader, for a legitimate state its head being the bearer of supreme power is important. The concept of “power” is characterized by the following meanings identified during the analysis of media texts:

Power is a faceless group of individuals in charge of a country/region (644 contexts);

Power is the same as political dominance (606 contexts).

The remarkable thing is that in the discursive implementation of the concept “power” there is no clear division into nuclear, near-nuclear, far and near periphery, only the nuclear zone, which includes

meanings that indicate the same denotations identified for the conventional model of the concept. Power is related primarily with a state and state power, while there is no indication of a specific holder of power and it is presented as something very distant and detached from reality. As well, a completely peripheral zone is absent, while in the naive picture of the world it is this zone that is the richest in data from dictionaries, and it is to the periphery that all existential-philosophical and ideologically colored meanings are taken out. However, in articles published on 74.ru you can see only direct values.

However, since 74.ru is a regional publication, a certain opposition can be traced between the regional and federal authorities. The texts repeatedly note that local authorities should receive some explanations and follow-up instructions from the federal authorities, i.e. the power of regional politicians will not be supreme. Regions are distanced from the world of big politics. The regional authorities are intermediaries between regions and a supreme power but for citizens they still remain a certain group with powers of authority, which, however, cannot always be fully implemented.

One more feature of texts content has been noted. Specifically, often the authorities of the region promise to do something or give explanations on any issues. However, it is often impossible to find exact answers to the question and the timing of the fulfillment of these promises in materials. The content and tone of publications in most cases does not have intonations of certainty and confidence, they are more like campaign slogans.

The next concept to be analyzed is “state”. We have identified the following meanings for the nuclear zone:

- The state is the same as the country (310 contexts);
- The state is the same as the authority that controls, provides order, distributes benefits (303 contexts).

We see that there are also meanings with a neutral context as well as in the conventional (general language) model in the nuclear zone of the discursive realization of this concept. Moreover, the meanings are partly similar and are as follows: “the same as a country” in discourse and “a country with a definite political system”, “a large territory with independence” in usage).

In the near-nuclear zone, the following meanings are revealed:

State is a part of the name of an organization/slogan/position/rank, etc., representing a certain idea (220 contexts).

The state is an impersonal representation of country’s officials (212 contexts).

In the discursive realization of the near-nuclear zone of the concept there is a discrepancy with the linguistic implementation. If in the naive picture of the world the concept of “state” is emotionally colored, moreover, personalized, then in discourse we again find neutral-colored meanings. As well, there is a depersonalization of contexts (the state is a priori impersonal political education, that is, it is faceless but only has the official names of positions).

The periphery includes the following meanings:

- The state is the same as the benefactor (100 contexts).
- The state is the same as the reliability (88 contexts).
- The state is the political organization of society (55 contexts).

Note that in contrast to the discursive implementation of the concept, the periphery is completely absent in the conventional model. Here we can observe that most of the meanings are somehow emotionally colored. Basically, here are the meanings associated with a state being a political organization, in which the idea of strong power (or “strong state”) is realized. The imperious mission of the state determines the policy, in which special attention is paid to security and reliability, social protection.

Thus, in the discursive implementation, the concept of “state” only partially retains the meanings identified in the conventional worldview. However, in this case we will talk about a specific country, and not a certain territorial unit. Otherwise, we see that the meanings in the linguistic worldview are more emotionally colored. However, a peripheral zone appears in the discourse with a slight hint of emotionality.

At the same time, we can assume that the prevailing neutral coloring of the concept “state” is partly stipulated by the fact that this state of affairs is a development of the meaning “a very complex system”. Neglecting social and partly economic responsibilities by a state leads to the situation when citizens distance themselves from it, which, again, refers us to distinguishing the concepts of “country”/”motherland” and “state”, usual for the Russian mentality.

7. Conclusion

Thus, we can say that the discursive implementation of both concepts, in general, develops the tendencies set in the general linguistic worldview. However, it has some peculiarities. Namely, the concept “power” loses the near-nuclear and peripheral zones, only the nuclear one remains. And the concept “state”, on the contrary, acquires a peripheral zone, which is absent in the conventional model. However, both concepts in the discourse of the online edition 74.ru have an overly neutral connotation, which can be partly explained by the development of the thesis “too complex system” (note that the concept of “power” falls under this definition in the discursive implementation) as well as by the format of the publication itself. 74.ru is an Internet news portal, a mass publication, which explains the use of already established clichés and ready-made meanings. As well, an orientation towards a mass, average audience does not imply a search for creative meanings and word forms, and there is active interaction of audiences in the comments, in which users express their assessment of the current regime.

Acknowledgments

The study ga 1/3 was carried out within the framework of a grant from the Fund for Support of Young Scientists of ChelSU, order No. 68-1 of 02/04/2020.

References

- Bougnou, D. (2001). *Introduction aux sciences de la communication*. Paris.
- Dal, V. I. (1999). *Explanatory Dictionary of the Great Russian Living Language*. Moscow.
- Evgenieva, A. P. (1984). *Dictionary of the Russian language. Vol. II*. Moscow.
- Fasmer, M. (1886). *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*. Moscow.
- Gorbachevich, K. S., & Khablo, E. (1979). *Dictionary of Russian epithets*. Science.

- Karaulov, N. Yu. (1996). *Russian associative dictionary. From stimulus to reaction*. Moscow.
- Kuznetsov, S. A. (2002). *Modern Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language*. Moscow.
- Kuznetsov, I. S., & Slavina, V. A. (2005). Politeinment and tabloidization of quality press “Where can we sail” – linguocultural conceptology: current state, problems, development vector, Language, communication and social environment. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=37285787>
- McQuell, D. (2014). *Journalism and Society*. Moscow.
- Nikitin A. V. (2014). *The concept of “state” in history, culture, and language. Translation*. Tongue. Culture.
- Russian Media System*. (2015). Aspect Press.
- Schultz, D. (2012). *Politainment: The Ten Rules of Contemporary Politics: A citizens' guide to understanding campaigns and elections*. Paperback.
- Semenov, A. V. (2003). Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language. <http://evartist.narod.ru/text15/001.htm>
- Shvedova, N. Yu. (2011). Russian Ideographic Dictionary. <http://www.slovari.ru/default.aspx?s=0&p=5586>
- Tikhonov, A. S. (1990). *Word-formation dictionary of the Russian language*. Moscow.
- Vorkachev, S. G. (2004). *Happiness as a linguocultural concept*. Gnosis.
- Vorkachev, S. G. (2010). “Where can we sail” – linguocultural conceptology: current state, problems, development vector, Language, communication and social environment. <http://www.philology.ru/linguistics2/vorkachev-10a.htm>