

**MSC 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.  
COMMUNICATION»****PRECEDENT NOMINATIONS IN THE RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE  
MEDIA DISCOURSE: SEMANTICS AND FEATURES OF  
FUNCTIONING**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the study of precedent nominations in the Russian-language media discourse. A systematization of scientific provisions is carried out, in which the term “precedent” and related concepts are studied. It is proved that the variety of meanings and shades of meanings, due to the ambiguity of interpretations and differences in the linguistic and cultural picture of the world, are characteristic primarily for mass media texts. The authors come to the conclusion that the precedent units are the valuable fragment of the political picture of the world, the source sphere of which is the names of vehicles enshrined in history, mythology, literature, while the precedent name “Flying Dutchman” is one of the brightest units of the imagery in media texts. The metaphorical potential of the image of the “Flying Dutchman”, when represented in media texts, expands, and complements the system of imaginative means that affect the pragmatic potential of media texts. Media texts broadcast the image of “The Flying Dutchman” not only in the meaning enshrined in the Russian language consciousness, but also at the secondary nomination level, significant both in characterizing a ghost ship and in actualizing various political actions or events. It is a comprehensive analysis of the precedent name that allows describing it most objectively as a valuable fragment of the media picture of the world.

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*Keywords:* Connotation, “Flying Dutchman”, media discourse, precedent name, precedent nomination, precedent text



## 1. Introduction

In modern linguistics, a few features of media texts are highlighted. Such features as the clichédness of the tools used, the expressiveness of the language, the use of reduced vocabulary, the use of techniques and figures of speech are especially pronounced. According to the researchers, one of the brightest signs of the texts of modern media is the active use of precedent phenomena.

Depending on the point of view of the researcher, various terms are reflected in modern science: *a precedent phenomenon, a precedent name, a precedent cultural sign; nomen, some verbal micro and macro units; textual reminiscence; intertextual, intertext, manifestation of intertextuality, logo epistem; concepts of precedent texts, precedent cultural signs*, etc. These terms do not fully coincide in their content, however, they have common components of meanings

Researchers include both verbal (lexemes, phraseological units, sentences) and non-verbal (paintings, music, architecture) units that make up a significant part of the national fund of culturally oriented signs. According to a narrower definition of precedent phenomena proposed by Gudkov (2003), these terms can be defined as “known to any average representative of a linguistic and cultural community and included in the cognitive base of this community” (Krasnykh et al., 2012, p. 70).

## 2. Problem Statement

The polyphony of meanings, caused by the ambiguity of interpretations and differences in the linguistic and cultural picture of the world, is characteristic primarily for mass media texts. Precedent names can function differently in speech. Krasnykh (2014) notes that it is the complexity of the structure of the precedent name that determines the functioning of the precedent names in speech:

First, it can name the subject and directly indicate denotation. In this case, the defining features of this name do not have special significance and are not taken into account. Secondly, the precedent name may indicate a set of any signs that are significant for a particular character or the work as a whole. The precedent's name is direct and indirect (p. 83).

Possessing wide manipulative potential, precedent phenomena are widely used in political media of a political nature. One of the important reasons for this spread, from the point of view of Butakhina and Filipova (2012), is their multifunctionality, the possibility of rethinking and saturating the text with new meanings. According to Nakhimova (2007), appeal to precedent phenomena is a traditional feature of domestic political communication. The significance of these units of the figurative system, according to the scientist, is due to the fact that it is with their help that the author's political position is most fully represented and the pragmatic impact of the text is strengthened.

## 3. Research Questions

The dynamic nature of the language of modern media texts leads to the emergence of new sources of precedent. Characterizing modern sociopolitical realities, politicians and journalists actively use

precedent units in accordance with the author's vision. Media space analysis in 2010–2020 allowed to conclude that a valuable fragment of the political picture of the world are precedent units, the source sphere of which are the names of vehicles enshrined in history, mythology, literature.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is a comprehensive analysis of the precedent name “*Flying Dutchman*” as a valuable component of the current media space.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The object of study determined the importance of an integrative approach, involving the use of linguistic and general humanitarian research methods: the component analysis method – to establish the seminal structure of words and phrases; identification method – to determine the locus characteristics of linguistic units; a method for analyzing cognitive oppositions – to identify mental constructs and interpret prototypical situations; distribution method – to study the contextual environment of the studied language units; methodology of contextual analysis – to establish figurative-associative meanings encoded in the internal form of the language units of the secondary nomination.

#### **6. Findings**

Precedent phenomena, on the one hand, are reproducible (and therefore standard) units; on the other hand, they are always emotionally charged, expressively charged. According to the observations of scientists, many precedents are incomprehensible to the modern reader, especially the young one, which means that they do not fulfill their role. Zemskaya (1996) emphasizes that “the modern reader is not well acquainted with the sphere of culture, does not identify many citations, does not know the classics of Russian literature” (p. 57). This is also explained by the fact that precedent units in political texts perform a neo-mythological function, which is determined by the fact that part of the original text undergoes transformation. This thesis is also confirmed by the analysis of the precedent name “*Flying Dutchman*” we are exploring. This image originates in the Dutch legend about a sailor, who, despite a terrible storm, promised himself to go around the cape, even if it took him an eternity. In response to this, heaven punished him for pride: the sailor was doomed to eternal wanderings in the seas on his ship in search of a coast to which he could never approach.

The popularity of the legend was determined by the fact that the name “*Flying Dutchman*” passed into the category of household names. In the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Winged Words and Expressions, under edition of Serov (2018), fidget travelers are called *flying Dutchman* allegorically and with an ironic touch.

At the same time, the use of this unit in the Russian-language media discourse is the most striking and multifacete. So, in the media texts, there is an ironic comparison of the *Flying Dutchman* nomination with the name of yachts or other vessels owned by officials or political leaders: “*Flying Dutchman*” by Viktor Yanukovich. *The fate of the yacht of ex-President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich is one of the most discussed topics of recent times on Rublevka. After Yanukovich settled in Barvikha on an estate for \$ 40*

million, his gorgeous yacht was also noticed in one of the ponds” (Grachev, 2016). In this context, an ironic connotation is achieved by updating the semantic component “sudden appearance”, characteristic of the mythological image of the ship and the unexpectedly emerged yacht of the ex-president of Ukraine.

Another characteristic of a ghost ship is its ability not only to suddenly appear, but also to suddenly disappear, which is also widely represented in the media: “Remember everything, or the Flying Dutchman ISIS. So, ISIS is on the agenda! When did we first learn about it? Why, during the period that has elapsed since its appearance in the information field, and this is already more than a year and a half, it has been reminiscent of the “Flying Dutchman”: it appeared or disappeared again? And how were its occurrences and disappearances connected with a country that, it would seem, was not side by side with ISIS in particular and with the Middle East as a whole – with Ukraine?” (Skogoreva, 2015, para. 1). Another example of the allusion associated with the appearance and disappearance of a *flying Dutchman* is the context in which the fear of the appearance of warships is expressed: “Flying Dutchmen” off the Syrian coast. Recently, at the suggestion of the Arab media, there has been a steady rumor about some three Russian warships off the coast of Syria, at the base in Tartus. Chinese reporter Li Mingbo decided to check and published an article about the Russian naval base of Tartus in Syria, saying that he had not found a single Russian warship” (Markelin, 2011, para. 2). Note that in this example, the *flying Dutchman* nomination is used in the plural, which changes the perception of the denotative value of the *flying Dutchman* – a ship from the deep sea that has the ability to appear and disappear. In the context, “Flying Dutchman” refers to ships whose appearance is in great doubt.

As it is known, “Flying Dutchman” is fixed as a wrecked ship floating without a crew in the Russian linguistic consciousness. In this regard, in mass media texts, frequency examples are those in which a similar situation is described with a touch of irony. The ironic effect is achieved by comparing the *flying Dutchman*, which, as you know, was a huge majestic ghost ship with black sails raised even in the most terrible storm, with an ordinary inflatable boat or a ship that drifts for a very long time in place: “A “flying Dutchman” appeared In Kherson. An inflatable boat with a motor, but without people on board, was ashored to local berth No. 3” (Kern, 2017, para. 1); “The Flying Dutchman” of the Ukrainian defense order. In the waters of the Persian Gulf, a ship drifts for about six months, on board of which there are about fifty armored personnel carriers, which Ukraine was supposed to deliver to Iraq” (Srubin, 2019, p. 1). No less frequent are examples in which the semantic component “lack of crew” is updated. This idea also appeals to the myth of a ghost ship that sailed without a crew: “In Kiev, the uncontrollable “Flying Dutchman” without a crew sailed the Dnieper. On the Dnieper, near the Zhukov island, the ship “Captain Ostapenko” ran aground” (Il’ichev, 2013, para. 1): A “Flying Dutchman” was found off the coast of Baltiysk. In the waters of the Baltic Sea near the city of Baltiysk, the Ministry of Defense ship intercepted a suspicious yacht without people on board” (Semenov, 2017, para. 2).

An interesting observation is the description of the expression of a flying Dutchman as a two-component construction (adjective + substantive), where the denotative content of the “flying” adjective already contains a secondary nomination – “able to move quickly, move around” (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2016, p. 412). Note that the image of a *flying Dutchman* is often presented in the meaning defined as “capable of flying, rushing in the air” in mass media texts (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2016, p. 412). This value is typical for the nomination of the *Flying Dutchman* not as a maritime, but as an air transport: “Flying

*Dutchman from the CIA. Inconvenient facts of the crash of the Malaysian Boeing*” (Volfman, 2014, para. 2). This example is an allusion to the mysterious disappearance of the *Flying Dutchman*, with which the mysterious crash of the Malaysian Boeing is compared, the reasons for which experts still argue. There are other examples of the use of the *Flying Dutchman* nomination as a designation of air transport: “*Flying Dutchman in the Russian sky. An emergency situation occurred in the airspace of the Tyumen Region*” (Spirin, 2017, para. 2); “*The Flying Dutchman*” is a unique case in aviation. A couple of American F-15 fighters tried to intercept from the Dutch base Susterberg (Kakorin, 2017, para. 1). In these cases, the names are determined by the location of the air base – the Dutch base. A reference to the place of the described actions is also presented by the following examples: “*Flying Dutchman. Who and why organized the anti-Ukrainian campaign before the referendum in the Netherlands*” (Trubachev, 2016, para. 2); “*The Flying Dutchman*” in the steppes of Ukraine: the strangeness of the Ukrainian-Dutch “friendship”. The visit of the Prime Minister of Ukraine Nikolay Azarov to the Netherlands in mid-September of this year ended with a rather unexpected agreement on cooperation between Ukrainian and Dutch shipbuilders” (“Letuchiy gollandets” v stepyakh Ukrainy: strannosti ukraino-gollandskoy “druzhby”, 2013, para. 3).

Despite the fact that in the cultural tradition a *flying Dutch* is understood as a ship, it can also be represented by motor vehicles in media texts: “*The Flying Dutchman with the detainees on board is doomedly circling St. Petersburg. For more than three hours, a bus with detainees on the Champ de Mars has been plowing the vast expanses of St. Petersburg and cannot not find a haven. It was denied hospitality in all police departments*” (Il’ichev, 2017, para. 1). The bus received the ironic name, probably in connection with a long search for the police department, which would take protesters.

It is known that the Ukrainian production of R. Wagner's opera “*Flying Dutchman*” has become a unique international project. The premiere of the performance took place on December 8, 2012 at the Donetsk Opera House in honor of the anniversary of the composer. In connection with this fact, it became relevant to compare the crashed Malaysian Boeing with the sensational performance: “*The Flying Dutchman*” in the steppes of Ukraine. Why I am trying to explain the “*Dutchman*” and not the “*Malaysian*” as part of my version. The story of the Malaysian Boeing more and more begins to resemble a well-directed performance” (Karpov, 2014, para. 1). The performance aroused media interest, which is actively reflected in the media texts: “*The Flying Dutchman*” caused a storm. Richard Wagner’s opera was staged in Donetsk” (“Letuchiy gollandets” vyzval buryu v Donetske, 2012, para. 1); “*Flying Dutchman*” under the Ukrainian flag. The tour of Donbass Opera goes to the finish line” (Bilousova, 2013, para. 2). In the following context, the first component of the construction flying Dutchman is transformed (replaced by another adjective) in order to emphasize the place where the opera premiered, namely the Donetsk Opera House: ““*Donetsk “Dutch”. Big money and high notes. A tour of the Donbass Opera (artistic director Vadim Pisarev) was held in Lviv, Odessa and Kiev with an ambitious international project – the opera The Flying Dutchman*” (Polishchuk, 2013, para. 1).

An interesting fact is that the expression *Flying Dutchman* has become a household name for universal landing ships of the Mistral type: *Mistral is the Flying Dutchman of global politics. Relations between Russia and France bypassing NATO*” (Leshchenko, 2010, para. 1). It is believed that ships of this type are capable of performing several tasks: to land motorized military units on land, to receive and service combat helicopters, to be a command center and a floating hospital.

In mass media texts, the image of the *Flying Dutchman* is rethought, depending on the current events described. So, as is known from the legend, the *Flying Dutchman* walked along the seabed and rarely emerged from the depths of the sea. It was this fact that became the reason for the association: “*The Flying Dutchman in Ukrainian. Secret casino hide in the sea*” (Usova, 2016, para. 2).

Staying of the political leader on the “*Flying Dutchman*” reflects faith in a new reform, hope for the revival of the combat potential of the fleet, the resumption of funding: “*Poroshenko on the “ Flying Dutchman: what will the Ukrainian fleet be after the reform*” (Usova, 2016, para. 1). The media texts record not only the president’s aboard the *Flying Dutchman*, but also the political leader’s ability to “transform” himself into the *Flying Dutchman*, which is explained by the same ability to disappear: “*We understand that Victor Andreevich [V. A. Yushchenko – the ex-president of Ukraine – E.A., A.M., I.R., N.S.] turned into such a flying Dutchman in the sea, who already lost all his reputation in the ranks of the Democratic Forces and therefore now such negotiations begin in order to unite all the forces under the wing of one block, – summarized V. Pisarenko*” (Pisarenko, 2011, para. 4).

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the metaphorical potential of the image of the “*Flying Dutchman*”, when represented in media texts, expands and complements the system of imaginative means that affect the pragmatic potential of media texts. Media texts broadcast the image of the “*Flying Dutchman*” not only in the meaning enshrined in the Russian language consciousness, but also at the level of the secondary nomination, including the semantic components “sudden appearance”, “sudden disappearance”, significant both in characterizing a ghost ship and in updating various political actions or events. The associative potential of the *Flying Dutchman* nomination is extrapolated to various cultural and political realities, which allows this image to gain a high degree of prevalence in mass media texts. This kind of interpenetration of the cultural and political spheres allows us to identify the semantic-pragmatic and associative background of the precedent nomination *Flying Dutchman* in the Russian-language media discourse, to draw attention to significant socio-political realities and cultural events.

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