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SPEECH REPRESENTATION OF PROTEST SENTIMENTS IN THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MEDIA OF LATVIA

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Abstract

The article deals with the study of ways and means of verbalizing the protest discourse that formed in the mass media of Latvia in the fall of 2017, after the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia to amend the Law “On Education”. The aim of the study was to identify and linguistic analysis of the speech means of representing protest sentiments in the Russian-language media of Latvia, supporting the position of defenders of Russian schools. As a result of a content analysis of materials from the Russian-language newspapers 55 journalistic texts were selected reflecting the conflict situation, and 348 text units verbalizing protest sentiments. Using a discourse analysis of text units, it was found that the main strategy for the formation of a protest discourse in these media is a communicative strategy of aggressiveness, implemented through appropriate tactics: discredit of political opponents, accuse, humiliation, negative outlook and others. The main means of representing the protest sentiments in the media is speech aggression. The article defines the types of verbal aggression for a communicative purpose, the type of violation of the norm and the language form of expression; lexical, grammatical and discursive means of verbalization are identified. As a result, the hypothesis about the predominance of implicit forms of verbal aggression over explicit ones was confirmed, which is explained by the desire of journalists to comply with the country's laws and ethical codes and express a negative attitude to the displayed phenomena.

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Keywords: Bilingual education, explicit means of speech aggression, implicit means of speech aggression, language policy of Latvia, protest discours, speech aggression



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1. Introduction

Currently, there is an increase in protest sentiments around the world and, as a result, the formation of protest movements due to disagreement with the actions of the authorities and disapproval of the political decisions they promote (Bazylev, 2017). Protest sentiments, as a rule, are manifested when laws, decrees, resolutions, etc., are adopted that infringe on the rights of a particular social group, and are most often associated with national, ethnic, religious, etc. disagreements (Bushev, 2015).

Often, the starting point for the emergence of protest sentiments in society is changes in the language policy of the state. For example, the Law on the state language of the Republic of Latvia, 1999, adopted by the Sejm of Latvia in December 1999, infringed on the rights of the Russian-speaking population because it limited the possibility of communication in Russian: in the new law, the status of Russian language was defined as “foreign language” and “language of the national minority”, as a result, government agencies and state organizations stopped accepting documents and giving answers in Russian, as was done earlier when the state recognized two languages (Shibayeva, 2012).

Another fundamental law adopted in October 1998, “On Education”, which envisages the complete transition of all Latvian schools into the state (Latvian) language until 2004 (Education Act of the Republic of Latvia, 1998), also demonstrated the violation of the rights of Russian-speaking residents of Latvia and provoked a protest of the Russian-speaking population. The result of the protest movement was the introduction in 2004 of amendments to the Law “On Education”, which described the so-called “transitional rules”, providing for the gradual transition of Russian schools to teaching in the state language. At that time, Russian schools switched to teaching at least 60% of subjects in the state language and no more than 40% of subjects in Russian (Filey, 2014).

However, the idea of bilingual education in Latvia was not supported by nationalist-minded members of the government. In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science submitted proposal to the Cabinet of Ministers to completely transfer high school education only to the Latvian language, and to bring the share of subjects in Latvian to 80% in grades 7–9 by the academic year 2021–2022. In addition, the Minister of Education and Science Karlis Shadurskis proposed amendments to the law “On Higher Education”, which actually prohibit teaching in Russian not only in state, but also in private universities. Of course, such a language policy in a country where, according to the 2011 census, ethnic Russians make up 26.9%, and an even greater number of people consider Russian to be their native language – 37.2%, cannot but lead to conflict situations and form protest movement. Protest sentiments are especially pronounced in large cities, where the proportion of people using the Russian language for everyday communication is quite high: approximately 55.4% of residents communicate in Russian in Riga, more than 45.9% in Jurmala, and up to 88.9% in Daugavpils (Russian language in Latvia, n.d.).

2. Problem Statement

After the Ministry of Education and Science came up with another initiative in the fall of 2017 to completely convert Russian schools into the state language, the leaders of the movement “Russian Union of Latvia” suggested holding a protest action on the public portal “ManaBalss.lv” (“My vote”) “For the preservation of bilingual education”. The collection of signatures for a petition in defense of teaching in

Russian schools in Russian took place, with a small interruption, from October 26 to November 29, 2017. The initiative to collect protest signatures, in turn, caused discontent among official circles, primarily representatives of the nationalist parties of the Sejm.

As a result, a conflict arose between the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, which represents and implements the state doctrine in the field of language policy, and the public movement “Russian Union of Latvia”, expressing the position of the majority of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia and protesting against the complete prohibition of education in Russian in secondary and higher educational institutions of Latvia (Dimante, 2017).

The voting process and discussion of this process were reflected in the Latvian media, both pro-government and independent opposition. The position of the Ministry of Education was supported by pro-government publications in the Latvian language, such as “Diena” (“Day”), “Latvijas avīze” (“Latvian newspaper”), “Neatkarīga rīta avīze” (“Independent morning newspaper”), in which the demands of the protesters were presented as knowingly unfounded and contrary to the Constitution of Latvia.

The opposite position – the position of supporters of the protest action in favor of Russian schools “For the preservation of bilingual education” was reflected in the publications of the independent Russian-language media in Latvia – the socio-political daily newspaper Today and the weekly Vesti. It is Russian-language publications that serve as a channel for transmitting the ideas of opposition representatives and a means of mobilizing participants in protests (Medvedeva, 2015), and it was in them that a protest media discourse was formed.

3. Research Questions

The object of the research in the article is the protest discourse formed in the mass media of the Republic of Latvia. The subject of the research was the verbal means of verbalization of the protest sentiments of the Russian-speaking population of Latvia, used by journalists in covering and discussing protests.

The research material was 55 journalistic articles related to the protest discourse published in the Russian language daily newspaper Latvia Today (Segodnya. Obshchestvenno-politicheskoye yezhednevnoye izdaniye, 2017) and the Vesti weekly newspaper (Vesti. Obshchestvenno-politicheskoye izdaniye, yezhenedel'nik, 2017) during the period of the main discussion – from 02. 11. 2017 to 29. 11. 2017. It was at that time that the collection of signatures was organized on the public portal “ManaBalss.lv” under the petition “For the preservation of bilingual education”. The articles representing the protest sentiments of the Russian-speaking population and related to the protest discourse were selected by us using the content analysis method for the keywords and phrases “Russian language”, “school reform”, “bilingual education”, “petition”, “collection of signatures”, “protest”. As a result, 348 text fragments representing the protest sentiments of the protesters were highlighted.

Research hypothesis: verbal means of representing protest sentiments are dominated by means of verbal aggression, expressed in an implicit form in the analyzed articles.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was identification and linguistic (linguo-pragmatic and linguo-stylistic) analysis of the speech means of representing the protest sentiments in the Russian-language media of Latvia during the protest actions in the fall of 2017.

Tasks of the research:

- select journalistic texts from the Russian-language media of Latvia on the protest against the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science on the full transition of all schools and universities to the Latvian language using a continuous sampling method;
- identify the types of speech aggression in these journalistic texts;
- identify and analyze the means of speech aggression at the lexical, grammatical and discursive levels;
- determine the quantitative ratio of explicit and implicit means of verbal aggression and identify the reasons for using the prevailing group of means.

5. Research Methods

One of the research methods was the content analysis of journalistic texts in the Russian-language media of Latvia, as a result of which 55 articles were selected to discuss the progress of the protest action against the prohibition of teaching in Russian. Another method used in the framework of this article is the critical discourse analysis method proposed by Van Dijk (2006) specifically for political communication and assuming an analysis of extralinguistic factors (place, time, situation, communication subjects) and direct linguistic analysis of linguistic units, primarily lexical and grammatical. As part of the discourse analysis method, linguo-pragmatic methods were used (to identify the functioning of speech means of representing protest moods in media texts) and linguo-stylistic analysis (to identify stylistically labeled language units expressing speech aggression).

6. Findings

During protests, representatives of a certain social group demonstrate their disagreement with the decisions of power structures, as a rule, through conflict of speech behavior, expressed primarily through means of communicative aggression (Bykov & Gladchenko, 2019). In this case, the aggressive behavior of the subjects can be explained from the standpoint of the frustration theory of aggression developed by D. Dollard and his colleagues, who believed that aggression is a consequence of frustration, i.e. obstacles to achieving goals (Dollard et al., 1939). For the Russian-speaking population of Latvia, the amendments to the Law on Education adopted by the government act as frustrating elements, according to which Russian language is phased out of schools for national minorities. The inability to achieve the goal leads to protests and to an increase in the level of aggressiveness in society.

A high level of aggressiveness is a characteristic feature of protest discourse (Krepkova, 2015). The media, which in their publications touch on the topic of protests, are quite actively using means of verbal

aggression in order to draw the attention of the audience to the issue under discussion, to present their point of view as the only true one, to incline readers to their side (Sidorov, 2019).

We mean a special kind of communicative behavior of a person by speech aggression, the purpose of which is to express a negative attitude towards someone or something, to demonstrate strong opposition to someone's opinions or opinions, and to want to dominate other participants in the communicative act and impose their point of view (Balakhonskaya & Bykov, 2018).

We will consider types of speech aggression according to the following criteria:

- communicative purpose;
- type of violation of norms: communicative-ethical and legal;
- language form of expression.

Depending on the communicative goal, the following types of speech aggression are distinguished: ascertaining, provoking, manipulating (Gromova, 2019).

A stating speech aggression is a type of speech behavior in which the subject of aggression sets a goal – to express one's own attitude to the object, without taking into account the state of the object and its changes during the speech act. This type of aggression is called subjectively oriented: “It is not a secret that bilingual education is a fiction in some schools in Latvia” (Sinitskiy, 2017, para. 32).

Provocative speech aggression is a type of speech behavior in which the subject of aggression seeks to provoke an object to perform any action or change their state. This type of aggression is called object-oriented: “Referring to fabricated data, the Ministry is developing a plan for transition kindergartens and elementary schools into Latvian! The middle one has almost been transited under YOUR, dear reader, tacit consent and even sofa-bottom approval” (Aleksandrova, 2017, para. 10).

Manipulating speech aggression is a type of speech behavior in which the subject of aggression aims to influence the consciousness of the object in such a way as to change personal attitudes – beliefs, attitudes, position (Kazakov, 2018). For example:

Of course, why analyze the results of the work of ethnic minority schools and to draw disappointing conclusions about why they successfully develop children's mental and creative skills? The Ministry of Education and Science sees its task in a completely different way. Its reform aims to eliminate education in Russian. I'll venture to suggest that the result can be the same as with the abolition of two-level tests in mathematics: the general level of knowledge will be reduced to low scorers, and even students will cease to cope with this level. (Pribyl'skaya, 2017, para. 21)

It seems necessary to count the number of examples of stating, provoking and manipulating speech aggression and determine the percentage of the total number of examples of speech aggression. The results are shown in the Table 01.

Table 1. The ratio of stating, provoking and manipulating speech aggression

Type of speech aggression depending on the communicative goal	Number of examples	Percentage of total
Stating speech aggression	222	63.79%
Provoking speech aggression	45	12.93%
Manipulating speech aggression	81	23.28%

Depending on the type of violation of norms - communicative-ethical or legal, one can distinguish deviant and illegal speech aggression.

Deviant aggression is associated with a violation of communicative and ethical norms in the process of communication, but the legal boundaries of the permissible are not violated: “Education reform: they will also hit kids” (Pribyl'skaya, 2017, para. 1); “For MES, vocational schools are some kind of junk that is not worth attention?” (Pribyl'skaya, 2017, para. 10). As N. S. Gromova notes, deviant speech aggression can be attributed more to communicative techniques than to a public threat (Gromova, 2019).

Illegal speech aggression is associated with the infringement of the rights of an individual or collective subject acting as a subject of legal relations in society, for example, in case of insult. Researchers also propose to call this type of crime criminogenic speech aggression (Nikishin, 2019). Let us analyze an example of unlawful speech aggression from the text of an interview of journalist Viktor Sinitskiy with the Minister of Education and Science Karlis Shadurskis:

– Is it truth, that you are thinking about moving from a liberal Unity to a national association? - I will answer in Russian (before that Karlis Shadurskis basically spoke Latvian. – “TODAY”): what an idiot told you that?! – The prominent members of the national association are talking. – I did not want to offend anyone. (He is switching to Latvian.) No, I don't have such plans. (Sinitskiy, 2017, para. 21-23)

According to the speaker, the replica “what an idiot told you that?!” should have been perceived by the listener as an emotionally colored rhetorical question that does not require an answer. But the journalist pretended to perceive the remark as a direct question, and gave an answer to it. As a result, a conflict discourse is formed within the framework of the dialogue: the context where the journalist's response was heard changes the meaning of Shadurskis's remark, which, unwittingly, called the prominent members of the national association “idiots”. In this case, we can talk about insulting a group of people united by an ideological principle. Unexpected for the speaker, the transition in the process of dialogue to another communicative register makes him, in fact, apologize: “I did not want to offend anyone” (Sinitskiy, 2017, para. 23).

During the study, we calculated the number of examples of deviant and illegal speech aggression and determined the percentage of the total number of examples of speech aggression. The results are shown in the Table 02.

Table 2. The ratio of deviant and illegal speech aggression

Type of speech aggression depending on the type of violation of the norm	Number of examples	Percentage of total
Deviant speech aggression	343	98.56%
Unlawful (idelincent) speech aggression	5	1.44%

Explicit and implicit speech aggression are distinguished depending on the language form of expression. Explicit speech aggression is observed in the case of a direct expression of a negative attitude towards someone or something, with an open demonstration of contempt, hostility. The explicit means of verbal aggression can be interstitial vocabulary, in the semantics of which there are negative components of meanings, stylistically reduced vocabulary (colloquial and vernacular) with negative connotations, invective, slang, taboo vocabulary, imperative constructions expressing requirements in a rude form, etc.: “And suddenly, completely unexpectedly for himself, he turned into a demonic figure of the main strangler of Russian Latvia” (Gil'man, 2017, para. 4).

Implicit speech aggression is a disguised, implicit, hidden aggression that may not be immediately recognized by the object or not recognized at all, since it requires certain intellectual efforts and taking into account extra-linguistic communication factors (Apresyan, 2003). The means of implicit aggression include linguistic demagoguery, implicatures, presuppositions, irony and sarcasm, improperly direct questions, intertextuality, and some others. Example:

An invitation came from the Ministry of Education to the Advisory Council on the Education of National Minorities on Friday November 10 at 14:00. We will probably be discussing the closure of the formation of national minorities. I usually guess the agenda myself, as the ministry sends it a couple of hours before the meeting. For a better dialogue, a fresh look and the common good, of course. (Ivanov, 2017, para. 2)

The implicit means of expressing aggression in this text fragment is the implicativity, presupposition, and irony with which the journalist covertly and implicitly accuses the Ministry of Education of poorly preparing the meeting, deliberately limiting the time for studying by invited opponents of educational reform, cynical behavior of the initiators of the reform, which, as the author ironically observes, they do “for a better dialogue, a fresh look and the common good, of course” (in the same place).

During the study, a quantitative and percentage ratio of examples of explicit and implicit speech aggression in the analyzed texts was revealed. The results are shown in the Table 03.

Table 3. The ratio of explicit and implicit speech aggression

Type of speech aggression depending on the type of violation of the norm	Number of examples	Percentage of total
Explicit speech aggression	156	44.83%
Implicit speech aggression	192	55.17%

Speech aggression is the main means of implementing a communicative strategy of aggression. The aggressiveness strategy in political protest discourse can be implemented using tactics such as discrediting

opponents, insulting (including ethnic grounds), accusing (including unprofessionalism), humiliation, threatening or warning, negative outlook, unarguably negative impact on the consciousness of the addressee (manipulation), etc. (Bykov et al., 2018). For example, in the text of an interview with Russian schoolgirl Anya, journalist Pavel Kirillov quotes her words indicating that she was subjected to ethnic discredit in the school:

...Once, it was in the seventh grade, I sat in the lobby and heard a new student ask two of my classmates about me: what kind of girl is this? To which they answered him: This is Anya, she is our classmate. But you don't communicate with her, she's Russian. (Kirillov, 2017, para. 17)

The advice of classmates not to communicate with the Russian girl is not explicitly motivated by anything, except to indicate that she is not of the titular nation. The implicitly expressed meaning in this example: Russian – means not like everyone else, perhaps in some way flawed, worse than everyone. The aggressive message is that nationality serves as a kind of “stigma”, a label by which it is possible to distinguish between “friends” and “strangers”.

The desire of the subject to discredit a political opponent can be embodied in the deliberate exaggeration of any of their shortcomings, in the negative characteristics of their professional competencies, in the rejection of committed or planned actions, in criticizing the opinions and opinions expressed, in insults, accusations, etc. For example, in the heading articles “Latvian authorities commit genocide of the Russian people” (Suharevskaya, 2017, para. 1) tactics of discrediting the Latvian authorities is based on accusations of genocide against the Russian people.

7. Conclusion

In the course of the study, speech means of representing protest sentiments in the Russian-language mass media of the Republic of Latvia were identified. Using a discourse analysis of 348 text units extracted from 55 texts published in the *Segodnya* and *Vesti* newspapers, it was found that the main strategy for generating protest discourse in these media is a communicative strategy of aggressiveness (Vasilkova, 2018), implemented through appropriate tactics: discrediting political opponents, accusations, humiliation, negative outlook and others.

The types of speech aggression in journalistic texts were identified and the means of its verbalization were identified: lexical, grammatical and discursive. A quantitative analysis of the types of speech aggression is carried out, their relationship is indicated and the reasons for the dominance of certain types are determined.

The study showed that out of the three types of verbal aggression allocated for a communicative purpose, stating prevails (63.69%), manipulating is in the second place (23.28%) and provoking is only in the third place (12.93%). This distribution can be explained by the fact that the use of stating aggression requires less time and effort from a journalist, as it is based on the need to demonstrate one's own attitude to the described object without affecting it at all. Manipulating aggression involves influencing the consciousness of an object in such a way that it changes its beliefs, position, views, and this requires certain

efforts and professional competencies. Even more skills and efforts involve the use of provocative aggression, the result of which should be a change in the psychological state or response of the object.

An analysis of the types of speech aggression depending on the type of violation of norms – communicative-ethical or legal – has convincingly proved that there is a deviant speech aggression that does not go beyond the boundaries of legal norms in journalistic texts mostly (98.56%).

The desire to remain in the legal and ethical field also explains the predominance of implicit aggression in journalistic texts (55.17%) compared to explicit (44.83%). Implicit aggression allows the journalist to give a negative assessment of the described events or actions not directly but covertly, to express their attitude towards opponents. Implicit speech aggression is verbalized using discursive means that require considering not only textual (linguistic) factors, but also extralinguistic (social, political, sociocultural, etc.). Thus, the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of our study about the possible predominance of implicit forms of verbal aggression in the protest discourse of the Russian-language media in Latvia, reflecting the conflict between the authorities and opposition forces on the reform of school and university education, was confirmed.

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