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THE IDEOLOGIZATION OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF 1917

Liya Gao (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, 6, Miklukho-Maklaya st., Moscow, Russia, 877191721@qq.com

Abstract

This article deals with the ideologization of the language of Soviet newspapers after the revolution. We understand ideologization as the subjection to the system of the political, legal, moral, esthetic, religious, and philosophical ideas typical of a specific development stage of society. We analyzed the ideologization during one of the key periods of Russian history, i.e. the October Revolution of 1917 and the post-revolutionary period. This research is deemed relevant because the ideologization of the language is an ongoing process and evident today in the Russian media. As such, it must be analyzed by linguists taking into consideration its historical bases. The author focuses on the linguistic means that facilitate the ideologization of the language of Krasnaya Gazeta in 1920. Among those are new nominative units (names for new realia), imagery and expressive means, verbal cliches, officialese vocabulary, colloquialisms, pronouns *we* and *our*, slogans. The ideologization of the language was one of the methods of influencing the reader in the 1920es when language became a key tool in spreading ideological views and forming the new mentality of the Soviet people. We assume that larger historical events in terms of political changes result in the greater ideologization of the language of the media. Language ideologization in the publications of Krasnaya Gazeta helped transform the mentality of the public and shape new ideological stereotypes to ensure that people could have faith in the new world order and its social significance, addressing the needs of ordinary people.

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Keywords: Russian, revolution, ideologization, Krasnaya Gazeta, colloquialisms



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1. Introduction

Languages constantly change due to their internal processes and external factors. Linguists have little doubt that the most significant changes in languages are linked to the history of the people and the social situation in which the language is used (Krylova, 2014). Radical political, economic, and social transformations in society act as crucial external factors of linguistic development. Linguists and sociologists wonder “how significant and deep are the changes in a linguistic system caused by the new circumstances, in which the language exists” (Romanova, 2002, p. 37), as well as whether these changes reflect the social evolution of the language (Scott-Phillips, 2007).

The history of Russian comprises several periods, during which the significant changes in social life stimulated the significant transformation of the language. Our research is relevant as the Russian language is undergoing one such period since the 1990s when the political system changed and the respective processes came into being. To understand the current linguistic processes, it is necessary to review the impact the social transformations had on the Russian language during the previous stages of its development.

The October revolution of 1917, when capitalism was replaced with socialisms, resulted in significant changes in the Russian language that had some effects on cultural, economic, and social life. Linguists note such typical post-revolutionary features as the active word-building using suffixes like *-щина (-shchina)*, *-изм (-izm)*, *-изация (izatsia)* (Matveeva, 2017), the excessive use of ‘officialese’, the “stone-dead clichés” (Khazagerov, 2012), “anti-archaism, increased expressiveness, neologisms” (Gao, 2020), “the active use of various abbreviation types” (Zuev, 2005) along with other processes.

The transformations occurring after the October revolution cannot be viewed as accidental because “the changes of the language may result in the transformation of mentality, which was successfully used by the revolutionaries, public speakers, and authorities” (Matveeva, 2017, p. 58). Zuev (2005) believes that “the language is the object of manipulation and it can influence the mentality and world-view of the country’s populace” (p. 73). After the revolution of 1917, language ideologization became one of the methods of the conscious transformation of the Russian language to influence its speakers.

2. Problem Statement

Ideologization stipulates the “penetration of ideology in all of the areas of social and personal life, and the subjection of all aspects of the country’s life (economic, political, social, and spiritual) to some ideology (Tsakhilov, 2015). Ideologization can manifest itself in education (Yamane, 1983), mass media (Jaspers, 2014), psychological theories (Dobles, 1999), and other areas. During the Soviet period, ideologization affected various aspects of life, including the language. Ideologization reflects the principles of an ideology/ Philosophers define ideology as a set of political, legal, moral, esthetic, religious, and philosophical views. We understand language ideologization as its subjection to the system of the political, legal, moral, esthetic, religious, and philosophical ideas typical of a specific development stage of society.

Language ideologization occurred in various areas of its use, first of all in newspapers that provided the public with information about the current events and shaped public opinion.

The language of Soviet newspapers in the first post-revolutionary years was analyzed by many researchers. Kim (2015) notes that slogans that “stroke a chord with the Soviet workers” were its key components. Savina (2018) analyzed *Pionerskaya Pravda* of the 1920s and discovered in it negative assessments (*treacherous, predatory, menial, evil*), colloquialisms (*bourgeois*), stable associative phrases like *the ambitious lord Pilsudski*, etc. All these features laid bare the ideologization of the newspaper's language resulting in language transformations reflecting the ideological system of coordinates (Logunova, 2013) and its alignment with the established state social and cultural paradigm.

3. Research Questions

This research analyze:

- the various methods of language ideologization found in the publications by *Krasnaya Gazeta* in 1920 (KG, 1920);
- the effects the language ideologization tools had on the reader's perception of the Soviet reality of the first post-revolutionary years.

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this research is to identify the methods of language ideologization in political essays impacting the reader's perception of reality.

5. Research Methods

In our research, we used observation and description, as well as the structural-semantic and comparative-historical methods.

6. Findings

Krasnaya Gazeta was the “second most significant voice of St. Petersburg's bolsheviks after *Petrogradskaya Pravda*” (Izmozik, 2010). This is due to the fact that the newspaper was established to document the activities of the new Soviet state, especially the events in Petrograd. The ideologization of the newspaper space was achieved using various means, including linguistic ones.

In this newspaper, we can find words that name new phenomena in life that appeared because of the revolution and the revolutionary changes in society. Let us provide examples of such words found in just one little article entitled *The New Beginning of the Petrograd Workers* (KG, 140): *proletarians, proletary, nonpartisans, communists, bourgeoisie, working people, beginning*, etc. Many of these words comprise phrases: *Petrograd workers, ordinary laborers, labor movement, the red Petrograd, professional unions, Polish landlords, true communism, vocational schools*, etc. As we can see, sense groups are formed among the words describing new phenomena, whose components often have opposite meanings: *workers, laborers, proletarians – bourgeoisie, former rulers*, etc. These words are used to describe the events in the country. The article in question tells about the establishment of resorts for the

working class in the manors that used to belong to the bourgeois: “*The island where the richest of the bourgeoisie enjoyed luxury became the island where the most exhausted portion of the proletariat relaxed*”. Such words do not belong to the high style, they do not sound solemn, yet they transmit the readers the idea that the party cares about ordinary people and that the new country is a state for ordinary working men, not for the elites.

These words and phrases name the realia that started to appear in the newspaper following the changes in the political life of the country, as well as “new phenomena and circumstances that required (in some ways) new names” (Selishev, 2003, p. 28). They transmitted the readers the idea that the social transformations achieved were resilient, that the new world was stable and it was there for the working class, and its aim to improve their lives. You can find these in almost all of the articles in the newspaper: “...*The workers in all countries have become strong enough to strike back against the hatred of capitalism*” (Prepare for May 1st!) (KG, 90).

Many of the articles in Krasnaya Gazeta reflecting the revolutionary atmosphere of the period use various imagery and expressive means. For instance, in the leading article on the fiftieth birthday of V.I. Lenin we see the following epithets: “*When we doubted and lost courage in the moments of utter darkness... our resilience sparkled in him and returned to us*”; metaphors: “*We survived, we remained strikers*”; idioms, including those with transformations: “*This is our Lenin! Our flesh and bone*”; rhetorical questions: “*Now, when he is writing his decrees... Is it not like a striker’s work?*”; anaphor: “*He is with us, he is before us*”; syntactic parallelism: “*We made him like this – this is our pride, our honor. He made us like this – this is his merit, his genius*” (KG, 87), as well as other expressive devices that help create an uplifting mood. Articles of this kind, full of imagery and expressive devices and words, exclamations and slogans, aimed to strengthen the readers’ understanding that the three-year-old revolution was everyone’s win and brought joy to the working class.

Expressive devices are often found in the headlines. These are the most powerful parts of the articles and their purpose is to catch the reader’s attention and make some ideological and emotional impact on their perception of the article’s content. These may include metaphors: “*The fate of the slivers of Yudenich’s army*” (KG, 28); metonymies: “*Hammer and plow shall win!*” (KG, 31); hyperbole: “*The death throes and the bloody confines*” (KG, 28); antithesis: “*Victory or death*” (KG, 28); rhetorical questions: “*Is it yet time?*” (KG, 34); rhetorical exclamations: “*Follow and follow suit!*” (KG, 30); using a question in the headline and providing the answer in the article itself: “*What should I read?*” (KG, 28), etc. These headlines lift the emotional pitch of the newspaper and provoke the reader to feel concerned, compassionate, indignant, interested, etc. Thus, they improve the ideological force of the articles.

Some of the expressions that appeared in the newspaper’s lingo as bright and expressive can become trite clichés. For example, in headlines like “*The goals of the bread front*” (KG, 20), “*The news from the labor front*” (KG, 21), “*To the industrial front*” (KG, 21), we can see such clichés as labor front, bread front, and industrial front that are based on a military metaphor rethinking the concept of the front line. Besides, the headlines employing the word *control* like “*The workers’ control and public catering*” (KG, 24) or *question*: “*The Polish question*” (KG, 27) also seem trite. Selishev (2003) wrote about such expressions in 1927: “Many of them used to be emotional... Having been coined too often, some of the most popular words and phrases did not just lose the emotion, but also their real meaning”.

We believe that the articles published in 1920 were not trite yet. For simple workers, comprising the bulk of the readers, they were still powerful and relevant linguistic means influencing the readers and their views, as well as the understanding of the country's circumstances.

Officialese becomes an integral component of the Krasnaya Gazeta lingo. We understand it as stylistically unmotivated use of bureaucratic clichés, i.e. words and expressions typical of official documents in unlikely contexts (Kopnina, 2014). For example: “*The current life conditions force us to pay special attention to the physical condition of children*” (Child healthcare) (KG, 46). This sentence is cluttered with officialese expressions: *current life conditions, pay special attention, physical conditions*. The officialese expressions make the text less personal and reduce the impact on the readers. Besides, the bureaucratic lingo makes the message seem more significant (Volkova, 2020). Nevertheless, we believe that in the 1920 newspaper they play yet another role that cannot be characterized as the improper use of the language: they show the readers that their life is settled and developing according to the specific rules and principles.

Colloquialisms make a striking contrast with the officialese expressions. The article entitled Shame tells that “*some of the citizens*” weasel out of outdoor cleaning using “*different IDs*”. It reads: “*Let other Kombeds [abbreviation for the Committee of the Poor] ignore these papers too*” (KG, 46). The low-style papers here stand for dubious IDs that cannot be used to excuse oneself from the labor: “*These IDs have no legal power, therefore the teacher was fined for refusing to clean the house upon the request from the Kombed.*”

A colloquialism may serve as an instrument that bonds the author and the addressee. For instance, during the 1920 campaign to combat spotted fever, this disease is referred to by two names: the official *typhus* and the colloquial *spotted fever*. We can see that the phrase spotted fever dominates the headlines on one of the newspaper pages: “*Today we begin the fight against typhus*”, “*Lectures on the means of combating typhus*”, “*Fight the spotted fever*”, “*The next meeting of the Council on Wednesday canceled as all the members mobilized to combat spotted fever*”, “*Combating spotted fever week*” (KG, 31).

One of the morphological methods of language ideologization is the use of collective we. Pronouns we and our are often used to describe the author of the article. For example: “*It seemed like the vicious circle of crises was locked, increasing our breakdown by day*” (Great opportunities) (KG, 45); “*We, women workers and peasants from all countries, understood that our interests are aligned with the shared interests of all the proletariat and peasantry*” (In the name of Communist International) (KG, 179).

Pronouns we and our allow the authors of the articles to make an impression that they speak on behalf of the wide working-class and bond with the reader. This method must convince the readers that they share the ideas expressed in the articles published in the newspaper and that the newspaper is addressed to them and tackles their pressing needs.

Slogans play a huge role in the newspaper structure. Most of them are structures as rhetorical exclamations and appeals: “*Away with slovenliness!*” (KG, 26), “*Away with slovenliness and stealing!*” (KG, 27). Kim (2015) notes that slogans made a great effect on largely uneducated readers who started to use the most popular slogans in their letters to the editors and everyday speech. This proves that they were an important ideologization tool for the newspaper’s lingo.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the lingo used in Krasnaya Gazeta of 1920 shows that the newspaper used a set of linguistic tools to ideologize its lingo. Linguistic means helped introduce many important concepts into the minds of readers, including the resilience of the new world, the state's care of ordinary people, the joy of living in the Soviet society, the unity of all working people in fighting for the new life, the equality of all residents of the new world, the importance of the needs of ordinary readers, and addressing the problems common for the authors and the readers in the newspaper, etc. The newspaper had a conscious policy of linguistic bonding with the public and ideologizing it using the language. We observe that after the 1917 revolution the journalist lingo becomes one of the ideologizing means for society. The extent of linguistic changes is determined by the scale of political and ideological transformations.

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