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**ELEMENTS OF THEATRICAL DISCOURSE AS A COMPONENT  
OF A POLITICAL MEDIA DISCOURSE**

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**Abstract**

The relevance of this study lies in the fact that the study of the typological diversity of the discourse space in semiotic, cognitive, communicative, cultural and other directions continues to open up new facets and approaches for analysis, which is confirmed by a review of the degree of development of the topic in modern philology, which indicates the fact that the problem of interpretation of discourses continues to attract the attention of scientists from various scientific fields, which puts the topic under study in an interdisciplinary framework. On a theoretical basis, the authors turn to the basic concepts of their research, namely, they clarify the definitions of political, theatrical discourses and media discourse and highlight their systemic features to determine the point of interpenetration of these discourses. A correctly orchestrated political event, a clear alignment of the event series, plays an important role in political life, since modern society is inclined to perceive even political reality through the prism of large-scale entertainment and performance. To achieve its goal, dictated by the context of a particular political event and the course of its development, political media discourse successfully uses the main elements of theatrical discourse. Duality of dramatic stage speech: when an actor in his monologue addresses the viewer, when the course of the play requires the direct participation of the viewer and further remarks of the actors completely depend on the context of the viewer's statements, street performances, live dialogical contact of the characters.

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*Keywords:* Theatrical discourse, political discourse, context, media discourse, stage speech



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## 1. Introduction

The study of the typological diversity of the discourse space in semiotic, cognitive, communicative, culturological and other directions is one of the urgent problems of modern linguistics reaching the interdisciplinary level of research. At the same time, there is a double attitude towards the problem of the universal / specific. On the one hand, in terms of general, the interdisciplinary approach allows expanding the possibility of choosing the features of discourse formation, thereby contributing to the determination of the status of a particular type of discourse; on the other hand, in terms of the specific, the identification and projection of differentiated features in relation to the type of discourse complicates the delimitation of features characteristic of this particular type of discourse in order to describe the formation of the discourse. In this regard, the initial perspective of the problem we are investigating is the interpenetration of discourses under certain conditions. Despite the constant and close attention of linguists to this problem, it has not yet been solved with a sufficient degree of completeness and concreteness. This is evidenced by the works of Russian and foreign authors on the problem of interpreting discourse in general (Ostrovskaya & Khachmafova, 2016; Tameryan et al., 2018; Zheltulhina et al., 2016). A similar trend is observed in the study of theatrical and political discourses. However, in our opinion, and this is factually confirmed, the problem of political media discourse differs significantly from other discourse studies. Pointing to the degree of development of the problem, first of all, it should be noted that in the context of discourse research in the period from the end of the 20th century and the first half of the 21st century, there is an increased interest in the study of political media discourse.

## 2. Problem Statement

The modern understanding of politics presupposes the institutionalization of political discourse, since it is mainly associated with the activities of politicians. Political discourse is defined as the discourse of politicians, realized in the form of government documents, parliamentary debates, party programs, speeches of politicians; a special sphere of speech activity, the results of which are specific texts, verbal and non-verbal signs, typical models of speech behavior that are embodied in specific genres of political discourse (Lipiridi & Tkhorik, 2017; Mechkovskaya, 1998; Tkhorik & Vulfovich, 2017). Scientists talk about the possibility of identifying such system-forming features of the considered type of discourse, such as institutionality, information content, distance, dynamism, to some extent authoritarianism, semantic uncertainty (Astafurova & Olyanich, 2017; Fanyan, 2012; Olyanitch et al., 2017; Plaksin, 2018).

In turn, political media discourse is interpreted as a functionally conditioned type of discourse, which is understood as a set of speech practices and products of speech activity in the field of mass communication in all the richness and complexity of their interaction.

Theatrical discourse is a manifestation of the signifier at the level of its rhetoric, its presuppositions and its utterance. The functions of discourse are not limited to the representation of something; it strives for self-representation as a mechanism for constructing the plot, character and text.

### **3. Research Questions**

Political media discourse is understood and perceived in a mode of interactivity with clearly expressed elements of theatrical discourse, which in turn is part of a complex semiotic unity and has a number of constant characteristics that are inherent in political media discourse: 1) the utterance can be carried out both at the individual level of the character / participant, and on the collective level; 2) in the play, as well as in the transmission of a political nature, there is an organization of text and stage materials, which depends solely on the goal pursued by the authors of the play / transmission. The definition of the special status of political media discourse in the context of other discourse studies is due to the high degree of demand for the problem, which in turn became an aid for its consideration in the projection we have chosen, namely in its modern integrative interpretation from the point of view of the presence of elements of theatrical discourse that make up it.

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

The purpose of the article is to describe the most essential elements of theatrical discourse that penetrate and are reflected in political media discourse. Political media discourse incorporates all those elements of theatrical discourse that help it on the political stage, using theatrical tools and techniques, to influence the public so that the goals set by the director of the political event are achieved and lead to either gaining, or retaining, or strengthening political power. The basic elements of theatrical discourse as a pragmatic category are present to varying degrees in all types of political narrative.

### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of our research is based on the concepts of domestic and foreign scientists in the field of discourse theory, scientific works devoted to political discourse in general and political media discourse, in particular, theatrical discourse, as well as in the field of the theory of linguistics and media linguistics. The empirical base of the study was made up of texts from the largest in terms of volume and circulation Russian mass media of a political orientation, claiming independence and objectivity in the presentation of material, television and radio broadcasts of an information and political nature. The study of the factual material was carried out on the basis of discourse analysis, contextual and field methods of analysis, the method of conceptual analysis, and the hermeneutic method.

### **6. Findings**

Theatrical discourse was a special object of study in the theatrical semiotics of the French school of poststructuralists. Let us consider some elements of theatrical discourse in comparison with political media discourse.

In the theatrical production there is an “actor”, without whom no political program can do. For example, the talk show “To the Barrier!”: two categories of “duelists” take part in the program. The first includes those who act as professional “actors” of the program. They have the ability to play and the right to team stage collusion. The second is formed by amateurs – episodic participants for the program (play

an episodic role). An actor is considered successful when the audience recognizes him outside the stage or screen, when, at times, no one remembers his name, but they refer to him by the names of the characters he played. At the beginning of his career, the actor works for the public, and later the public works for him, bringing him fame, success, wealth and authority. A politician who thinks about his career is always mindful of the public. The success of his political life depends on them. The public is a kind of measure in a politician's career: whether the "spectator" supports his position or not, whether the people will follow him, whether they will approve his plan, in what area he follows politics, apply more hypocrisy, play along, put on a different mask – do everything, so that his name is remembered, so that he is recognizable. In this case, we are talking about the non-verbal component of acting, the verbal content of the stage statement in the framework of this study, we do not pay due attention.

“Director” – a “political director” is needed to stage a political performance. It is absolutely necessary to define this profession, since many imagine a director as a person sitting in a chair with his name and surname written on it and gives instructions to the actors in accordance with the written script and his ideas about the personal qualities of the wards. A correctly orchestrated event of a political nature, a clear alignment of the event series, plays an important role in political life, since modern society is inclined to perceive even political reality through the prism of large-scale entertainment and entertainment.

“Script” – within the framework of our research – is the organization of text and stage materials. First of all, this activity depends on the goal pursued by the authors of the play / program: for example, the headline for a newspaper article "Who writes scripts for a political play?" or an excerpt from a newspaper article: "... We asked the head of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy Fyodor Lukyanov about what the worst and best scenarios for the further development of events look like for Russia ..." (Ostrovskaya & Khachmafova, 2016, p. 100).

The “act of stage expression” is provided at two levels: at the level of individual discourses of the characters / participants in the show, at the levels of the all-encompassing discourse of the author / presenter or participants in the show and the production group:

*the principles, norms and traditions of use that form the basis of spontaneous communication in everyday life are exactly those that playwrights manipulate in constructing speech types and forms in plays. Thus, the rules governing correct and meaningful speech exchange in everyday situations are the source that directors use to construct dialogues in their productions. (Zheltukhina et al., 2016, p. 7408)*

This remark also applies to participants in political media discourse. It should be remembered that the political discourse of the media is a complex communicative phenomenon aimed at the struggle for power through the formation of public opinion, including the text as a verbalized result of speech, context (situational and sociocultural), as well as special linguistic means that meet the goals and objectives of discourse (Nikitin, 2006). For an illustrative example, let us again turn to programs of a political nature, which assume a mode of interactivity, but first let us recall the biaddressing of dramatic stage speech: when an actor in his monologue addresses the viewer, when the course of the play requires the direct participation of the viewer and further remarks of the actors completely depend on the context of the

viewer's statement, street performances, lively dialogical contact of heroes. All these components are also present in political media discourse. An extract from the program "Meeting Place" illustrates not only an example of the act of stage utterance on two levels, but also subtextually indicates the roles of the participants in this program, presenters and editors; illustrates the spontaneous generation of communication and mediated speech exchange with the audience, that is, viewers participating in the program:

Kirill Zhivotovsky (director of the public organization "European Choice", Ukraine): ... hatred was created both by you and by us. And I came here, called you names, for which I want to apologize ... and we must learn to live together again. How can this be found? How can this be achieved? ...

Host: I would like to clarify. Your point of view has changed. What is the reason for this? Why did you change your point of view? (there is noise in the studio, verbal and non-verbal reaction to the words of Kirill Zhivotovsky with extralinguistic manifestations)

Kirill Zhivotovsky: ... We're on a TV show here. We have to swear. We need a rating. ... (a clear indication of the script, the goals set by the director, the context of the program) ... Peace is unpopular.

Presenter: ... the editor will correct me in the earpiece now, but... (an indication of the presence of a "prompter", which is another constituent element of theatrical discourse).

The theatrical text is not only, of course, oral speech, it is a "conventional writing" too. In stage application, it can consist of an utterance in a verbal dimension and in a non-verbal one, i.e. gestures, facial expressions, movement, costumes, body, props, decorations. The main events of the transmission of a political nature, like the main events of the play, can lead their own story – this will be the speech of the plot. Speech as a verbal action, at the level of rhetoric, is an act of utterance, but in the theater "to speak" means "to act," therefore the speech of the characters, and in our case the speech of the participants in the program, should not only reflect the action they perform, but also directly "act" itself. In addition, the utterance can be carried out both at the individual level of the character / participant and at the collective level.

Any type of discourse is expressed in the classical communicative model "sender – channel – receiver". For a theatrical production, such a model is transformed into a "director – actor – theatrical performance – spectator", where the director acts as the sender for the actors and the actors act for the audience, embody the director's intention expressing the author's idea. A receiver is a spectator, a recipient of a special rank for theatrical discourse, since the absence of this receiver makes the above discourse untenable. Speaking about political media discourse, we see that in the role of the sender we are dealing with many representatives, for example, the author of the article, the director of the program, its producer, but most importantly, from our point of view, the context of the problem under discussion, which forms the intention of the starting information. In the political media discourse, there are also several channels used by the senders of information and they depend on the genre of the media: it can be a printed article, a TV or radio program, a broadcast of a political event, etc., and the receiver is still the same viewer or a reader, but of a special type, since he, the viewer, does not always perform only one function of the recipient. In media discourse, this recipient can be an invited audience, a reader, an author of an article, the host of the program himself, an opponent, a large audience that is not regulated only by the place in the studio.

## 7. Conclusion

Theatrical discourse penetrates into political media discourse at different stages and levels. The audience / people / viewer / reader play mainly the role of a receiver, but at the same time the role of an observer-receiver who is inclined to perceive a political action as an event staged for it. To achieve its goal, dictated by the context of a particular political event and the course of its development, political media discourse successfully uses the main elements of theatrical discourse: actors are politicians, theater director is political director, play / production scenario is scenario of political action within media discourse, act stage utterance, which is provided at two levels: at the level of individual discourses of the characters – participants in the program, at the levels of the all-encompassing discourse of the author – the presenter or participants in the program and the production group. As a result of the conducted theoretical and practical research, the hypothesis of our research was confirmed, which is that political media discourse is understood and perceived in an interactive mode with clearly expressed elements of theatrical discourse, which in turn is part of a complex semiotic unity and has a number of constant characteristics that are also inherent for a political media discourse: 1) the utterance can be carried out both at the individual level of the character / participant and at the collective level; 2) in the play, as well as in the transmission of a political nature, there is an organization of text and stage materials, which depends solely on the goal pursued by the authors of the play / transmission.

In the aspect of the current global trends, political media discourse with elements of theatrical discourse is regulated by the diversity of perceptions of all types of “receivers”, turning all subjects of political media discourse into “co-authors” of both the actual political event and its staging, because, as Gaius Petronius wrote, the Roman writer: "Mundus universus exercet histrioniam" – "The whole world is engaged in acting".

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