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Post mass media in the modern informational society
"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:
achievements and problems"

TECHNOLOGIES OF MANIPULATION WITH ETHIC CONCEPTS
IN MILITARY DISCOURSE OF MASS MEDIA

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Abstract

Increase in the role of technological factors in the communicative practices of mass media and in politics leads to the “double” effect of impact in the mental and language field of political journalism. The propaganda practices with different degree of manipulation appear within the military and political discourse. Among the main manipulative technologies there are: informational processing; use of certain ways of information submission; influence upon the psychological targets. On the mental and language level these components will be realized through the construction and transmission of certain, specially sophisticated concepts. As a methodological tool to study the character of manipulative impact there was chosen the concept as an operative thoughtful unit of consciousness which has the core-periphery structure. The authors considered representation of the concepts “freedom” and “responsibility” in the texts of two national newspapers – The Russian Newspaper (RN) and The New York Times (NYT), highlighting the Palestine-Israel conflict, and draw the following conclusions: 1) journalists of RN frequently appeal to the concept “responsibility”, the semantic center is presented with the military semantic; journalists of NYT mostly deal with the moral-ethic and communicative-dialogue component of “responsibility”; 2) the concept “freedom” in RN is not imperative because it is connected with the idea of restoration of historical justice; in NYT it possesses the absolute necessary modality; 3) NYT is objectively neutral, but RN expressively poses one of the opposing viewpoints.

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1. Introduction

Journalism in the conditions of contemporary informational and communicative reality becomes less original, creative, personal and, on the contrary, more technological and industrial which makes a good reason for the research of those qualities of contemporary journalistic text that transformed from purely linguistic into mental-linguistic. The managerialization of informational processes, technologization of journalism led to a new understanding of the latest – “as the industry of every day texts” (Kalmykov & Kohanova, 2018, p.17), the branch which is occupied with “the production and change of the sense” (Korotkov, 2010, p. 25). Discussing the functional essence of journalism, the researchers use the nominations of mental kind: “presentation of problems”, “priority of images”, “precedence of the problem”, “frequency of mentioning” (Bautina, 2009), “representation of environment”, “creation and reproduction of reality” (Mansurova, 2010, p. 118-119). Such modern phrases change the accent from traditional, i.e. creative, understanding of journalism (journalism is an art) to modal (journalism is a tool) which finally allows speaking about journalism as a means of construction of fragments of reality (Bautina, 2009), a combination of technologies, “oversaturating the social space with senses and meanings” (Mansurova, 2010, p. 119), including those that perform the communicative-pragmatic tasks.

2. Problem Statement

The sense-producing, mental-technological vector of development of contemporary journalism needs relative, integrative paradigms of journalistic text study, which would allow interpreting the content-factual information of mass media texts properly, including the definition of their communicative-pragmatic potential in the form of description of mental technologies of influence upon the addressee. Such research tasks, in our opinion, are solved by linguistic cognitology as a multi-discipline, which assigns the language a part of the tool of conceptualization and categorization of the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 2017; Kibrik, 2019; Dem'yankov, 2015, 2016).

The study of conceptualization of the world fragments presupposes the description of processes of construction and modification of the sense structure of certain mental formations (i.e. actualization of some sense elements and desactualization of other ones). The research of categorization means the comparison of media discursive world view and common language, “normative” world view with the purpose of pragmatic revelation (reasons, purposes) of such sense transformations, deformations, making the speech influence upon the addressee.

3. Research Questions

The research of the question of conceptualization and categorization of the world through certain mental constructs in the military and political discourse of mass media leads us to the main notion of the cognitive linguistic – “concept” serving the explanation of mental resources of consciousness and the informational structure which reflects the human knowledge and experience. The concept is an operative, thoughtful unit of memory, mentality in the form of a verbally significant substrate (Maslova, 2016, p.

46). The minimal cognitive unit of the concept is the “sense quant”, or “sense”. The core-periphery structure of the concept vividly rates the senses in terms of their importance, topicality.

Extrapolating the conceptual findings onto the media reality, we may speak about the fact that mass media, operating with common for all the language bearers concepts, intervene into the cognitive space of the addressee, causing the discursive transformation (Voroncova, 2016), the restructurization by actualizing some components of the sense structure, adding new content into their structure, changes in correlations of sense components. In the terms of global influence, mass media use the technology of speech manipulation (Issers, 2016, 2017; Petrova & Raciburskaya, 2016; Chernyavskaya, 2017), inwardly filling the recipient’s consciousness with the relations, paradigms, values which serve the addresser’s interests. The purpose of speech manipulation is to make the recipient of information believe that certain messages are true without criticizing them (Issers, 2016).

4. Purpose of the Study

A bright example of speech manipulation is the propaganda practices in the military and political discourse of the national mass media, when the mass consciousness is implemented with certain senses, necessary for the participants of the war conflict. Along with this the journalistic content uses the concepts of the so-called “language of hatred”, possessing a high manipulative potential – “terror”, “defense”, “victim”, “responsibility”, “guilt”, “tolerance”, “freedom”, which on the one hand make moral and ethic judgments about the military actions, and on the other hand appeal to emotions (frequently – to the feeling of pity, guilt, compassion).

The purpose of the study being to describe the manipulative technologies through the significant concepts in the military and political discourse of two national mass media The Russian Newspaper and The New York Times, we referred to two ethic concepts – “freedom” and “responsibility”, which present, on the one hand, two sides of the conscious human activity, and on the other hand, a modal unity of the human activity manifestation, with the ontological foundation of “choice” as a philosophical category (“choice” being followed by “action” as it is understood by Bakhtin (1986). In the military and political discourse such concepts are often attributed with manipulativity, provocativity, speculativity, because the question of choice and action is very acute here, it has different solutions and receives ambiguous judgments.

5. Research Methods

Using the continuous sampling method, we formed the empiric data base (402 texts).

Following the method of conceptological analyses which includes the field method and the method of component analyses (Karasik, 2015a, 2015b; Vorkachev, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; Krasavskij, 2016, 2017; Maslova, 2016), we reconstructed the usual and discursive models of two analyzed concepts in two national printed mass media, described their semantic structure, defined the actual senses and verbal mechanisms of their submission, correlated them with the methods of speech influence (Issers, 2016, 2017; Petrova & Raciburskaya, 2016; Chernyavskaya, 2017). The basic methods of manipulative influence usually include: 1) informational processing (concealment, distortion, batching of information);

2) use of certain ways of information submission; 3) influence on the psychological targets (Bagulina, 2011, p. 10).

6. Findings

The material of the research includes the texts of two national federal newspapers The Russian Newspaper and The New York Times printed from December 1, 2017 till December 1, 2018, with the focus on the Palestine-Israel conflict and the use of the concepts “responsibility” and “freedom”. RN has 165 texts of the kind (“freedom” – 38 units, “responsibility” – 127 texts), and NYT has 237 (“freedom” – 61, “liberty” – 80, “responsibility” – 96). Supported with quantity data, we may say that firstly the American press closely follows the development of relations in the Near East, secondly the Russian press in the military conflict situation pays greater attention to “responsibility”, but the American press – to “freedom”. This may be explained by the difference in the national systems of thinking: the most important social regulative mechanism in the Russian mentality is guilt (Dzhenkova, 2005), and here the cognitive scenario “call for responsibility through guilt” works, in the American mentality the same status belongs to right as the opposite of guilt, because for Americans its is extremely important to demonstrate “a high degree of assurance in their right, in indisputability of views they claim” (Filippova, 2011, p. 34). Thus, we may observe the manipulative technology of influence on the psychological targets (targets are the most important values, needs of a linguocultural community).

Before reconstructing the discursive models of the concepts it is a common practice to characterize their usual, common-language (common for all the language bearers, based upon the analyses of lexicographical sources) implementation to further compare and find the discursive modification.

The information from various dictionaries allows describing the usual model of the concept “responsibility” as:

- the core: “duty, necessity to be responsible for the actions and their consequences”;
- the near core zone: 1) “something that a human being lies upon himself voluntarily”; 2) “something important, meaningful”;
- the periphery zone: 1) “obligations which are not supported by abilities and go against desires”; 2) “everything which is connected with law and rules abuse”; 3) “action permitted to a human being by a special reward or right”; 4) “a number of unpleasant duties which are to be fulfilled by a person who has no relation to them”.

In RN the discursive model of the same concept looks differently:

- the core: “responsive reaction upon the attack in the form of combat operations” (83 texts) – such an obvious quantitative overbalance in comparison with other discursive groups testifies the tendency of RN to underline the permanent acuteness of the conflict and armed confrontation: the countries-counterparts often use military ways to the problem solution, not economic and diplomatic (counterattacked; in response to the night operation; stroke in response);

- the near periphery: “reaction to some actions of non-combat character” (19); “a line in the dialogue” (13); “a certain level of negative consequences for the subject in case of his violation of the requirements, degree of his guilt” (9), in 6 out of 9 cases the sense is connected with the Palestine Islamic

movement HAMAS, and only in one case the negative consequences are discussed in relation to Israel which testifies, in our opinion, the tendency to submit the information from the pro-Israel position;

- the far periphery: “the result of the task solution” (1); “duty to be responsible for the actions and their consequences” (1); “personal characteristic of a human being, describing his ability to analyze the situation, to forecast the consequences and to make the choice, readiness to accept the consequences of the choice” (1).

Two moments in the comparative analyses of the common-language and discursive models draw our attention: 1) the lacunar fragments (a “gap” zone) in the discourse are in the near core zone because it is completely absent, the change from the core to the periphery is very fast, which tells about the “abruptness” of spread of semantic signs within the field, and it further means the flatness, rigidity of the RN journalists’ consciousness, when they describe the war conflict situation; 2) moral and ethic semantic of “responsibility” is ahead in the usage, because it is in the near core zone, but in the military and political discourse of RN it migrates in the far periphery zone, though the military semantic is accumulating and generalizing in the discourse (it “covered” the near core zone); we may draw the conclusion that RN demonstrates other manipulative technologies: information processing (it tells about the importance and possibility of the armed solution only), use of certain ways of information submission (pro-Israel focus).

We demonstrate the common-language model of the second concept – “freedom”:

- the core zone: “ability of a human being to act in accordance with his interests and purposes, without causing harm to others or violating the law”;

- the near core zone: 1) “absence of restraints and restrictions, limiting the social and political life and the activity of all the society and its members”; 2) “absence of any restrictions, restraints in smth., personal independence, self-sufficiency”; 3) “condition of someone who is not imprisoned or captured”; 4) “lightness, absence of difficulties in smth”;

- the periphery fields: 1) “absence of bondservice, slavery”; 2) “vital condition or quality which is possessed through struggle; smth is worth struggling for”; 3) “foundation of democratic principles”; 4) “an element alien for Russia, but common for the West”; 5) “deception and lie, instrument of manipulate, propaganda”.

We specify the model of the same concept in the discourse of RN:

- the semantic center: “restoration of the original sovereignty, separateness though the war conflict” (20 texts), in 16 fragments this sense is realized through the names of missions Palestinian Liberation Organization and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Though, in spite of the frequency of the names, the senses which are traditionally connected with the semantic of liberation, are transformed by the journalists in such a degree that they possess the opposite meaning – which is supported by the analyses of the content. We shall illustrate this with the following example: Israeli special troops boldly liberated the hostages of the so-called Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine which hijacked the aircraft Air France, made it fly to Uganda and kept the passengers under detention between life and death. The concept “freedom” is verbalized twice here (through lexemes liberate, liberation), but the journalistic discourse is built in such a way (including the use of irony – the so-called Popular Front for the Liberation), that the reader understands: only Israeli actions bring the true freedom,

but Palestinians hide themselves under this notion making just the opposite – taking hostages and keeping them under detention;

- the near periphery: “life beyond the detention” (8); “absence of restraints, restrictions” (6);
- the far periphery zone: “the legal foundation of the sovereignty” (3); “opportunity to exercise the will freely” (1).

Comparing both models, we observe: 1) the reduction of the discursive near core zone and its “distortion” in the core military-aggressive semantic; 2) appearance of new sense in the discourse – “restoration of the original sovereignty, separateness through the war actions”, which immediately gets in the center, and this testifies the significant transformation of the concept, because freedom is understood as a political value, which is worth struggling for, the idea of vengeance goes to the front, which makes us think about the manipulative strategy of influence upon the addressee.

Now we shall consider the model of the concept “responsibility” in NYT:

- the core: “response to some actions” (30 texts), though the responses of the military character are mentioned rarely (5), in comparison with the responses of other kinds, for example, financial, diplomatic, organizational, emotional: Acquiring the loyalty of his own uncritical right-wing media outlet was one response. Leaders and officials of Muslim nations declared East Jerusalem the Palestinian capital on Wednesday at a summit meeting in Istanbul, producing the strongest response yet to President Trump’s decision to recognize the city as Israel’s capital. This allows thinking that American journalists in their texts put an accent on diplomatic, not military, ways of the political conflict solutions. Further on: “duty to be responsible for actions and their consequences” (28): responsible for policing themselves; an Israeli willing to take responsibility; assume at least part of the responsibility. This sense is verbalized in NYT much more frequently than in RN, where it occupies the far periphery zone. Thus, we observe a paradoxical situation: quantitative indexes (see above) tell about the priority of “responsibility” for the Russian mass media (in most cases they speak about the war counterstrikes), though the qualitative indexes (analyses of content) testify the importance of reflection on the moral side of this question for the Russian mass media. In other words, RN simply transmits more verbalizers, “implementing” the common for this situation military semantic, while NYT leaves the mental samples and calls the society to think about the moral responsibility;

- the near core zone: “a line in the dialogue” (24). The frequency of this sense element tells about the importance of verbal communication for the American press in the process of constructing the political dialogue;

- the near periphery: “a certain level of negative consequences for the subject in case of violations of the requirements, degree of his guilt” (14). It is interesting that these consequences, as in RN, in most cases are rested on the Palestinian part (four times upon HAMAS, one upon the National Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Mahmud Abbas and the Palestinians, once upon the Israeli: a Jewish rabble responsible for their demonization by anti-Semites).

The basic representations of the concept “freedom” in English are the lexemes freedom and liberty, the first mostly correlates with the spiritual component of the personality, and the second, more “official”, is connected with the human rights provided by the state. Nevertheless, it is the word freedom that actualizes.

- the core sense zone – “historically and socially grasped imperative of the state political order” (23). Here we included the freedom of country as it is (free Palestine; free country) as well as rights and freedoms important for the state (the promise of equality, freedom and justice; the freedoms of movement, assembly and speech; lack of political freedoms). This tells about the close connection of spiritual freedom of the Palestinians and the level of political freedoms in the consciousness of the American journalists;

- the near periphery zone: “necessary existential condition for full life” (10); “freedom as a subject of desires” (8); “absence of obstacles and restrictions” (8);

- the far periphery zone: “vital conditions, qualities which are possessed through struggle” (4); “free life outside the prison or captivity” (4); “time off work” (2); “lightness, absence of difficulties” (1); “inner strength of an individual” (1).

The verbalizer liberty transmits fewer senses. More frequently it is used in the form of liberation and is a component of social and political organizations’ names, for instance, Palestine Liberation Organization. The basic (core) sense, which is expressed by the word in the journalistic texts, is “historically and socially grasped imperative of the state political order” (72). Besides the mentioned names we include the set expression civil liberties and some others into the list of its objectivizers. The far periphery: “vital conditions, qualities which are possessed through struggle” (3); “the subject of desires” (3); “free life outside the prison” (1); “space for creativity” (1).

7. Conclusion

The national mass media in the military and political discourse, possessing the provocative and manipulative features, differently reveal the ethic concepts “freedom” and “responsibility”:

1) RN journalists on the formal level (verbally) more often appeal to the concept “responsibility” than NYT journalists, and the semantic center is presented with the exact military semantic, which is common for the habitual, non-critical consciousness – “war counterstrikes”. RN seems to fix the well-known cognitive scenario of the war actions: the war counterstrikes must follow any attack or aggression. NYT journalists bring the moral-ethic and communicative-dialogue component of “responsibility” in front;

2) the concept “freedom” in RN is not imperative, because it is primarily connected with the idea of restoration of historical justice (restoration of original sovereignty), but in NYT, on the contrary, it possesses the unconditionally necessary modality because freedom is presented in the newspaper discourse as a historically and socially grasped imperative of the state political order, because freedom is “the most important and frequently mentioned” value, “this notion plays such a role from the very birth of the American nation” (Filippova, 2011, p. 28);

3) NYT takes the objectively negative position, but RN often expressively demonstrates one of the opposite view points.

Thus, the national mass media in the military and political discourse transmit the new, different from usual senses within the “traditional”, ethically oriented concepts, considering firstly the cultural codes of the nation, and secondly, informational policy of the issues – all these technologies of manipulation allow building certain ideas in the readers’ consciousness.

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