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**FUNCTIONALITY OF LANGUAGE GAME AS A MEANS OF
HUMOUR IN MEDIA DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

The phenomenon of language game as a way of creating a journalistic image, also humorous, ironic, satirical, can be called one of the most actively developing traditions in modern Russian media. The aesthetics of postmodernism has increased interest in both the language game and the humour – an effective way to assess the events of reality, and to express the author's position. In the situation of language inflation, the audience, tired of the news, formed a request for a multifunctional text, involving co-creation, provided exactly by language game. Researchers define "the virus of irony" as a characteristic feature of modern media text, with the paradigm of irony constantly expanding: from light humor to destroying sarcasm and grotesque. The paper attempts to identify and systematize the functional types of language game as a way to create a comic effect. On the basis of the analysis of prominent journalists' works the authors determined the techniques of language games, which are most actively used to create the humour – humorous, ironic, satirical – image. These are paronomasia, pun, occasionalisms, transformation of phraseological units, stylistic contrast. Language game as a deliberate violation of the norm is manifested at different levels of the text: grammatical, lexical-semantic, syntactic, and stylistic. The role of the humour in the headlines of modern publications of different directions is also characterized. Special attention is given to principles for the publicists' appeal to laughter as a simple and sharp form of criticism that allows implementing a variety of communicative intentions: humour, outrage, and others.

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, the language game is inextricably linked with the category of humour. This is no accident. humour – is something "an author's expression of his attitude to something through laughter" (Duskayeva, 2018, p. 252). Musiychuk and Pavlov (2016) call the main function of humor in the language game "development of intellectual activity," according to researchers, the language game translates the speech and the sociocultural reality into the "game plane," which is due to the individual and sociocultural experience of communication participants.

In addition, to create a language game, it is necessary to redesign the speech flow, which is similar in nature to the comic transformations of text and discourse. Negryshev (2006) identifies two systemic symptoms of language game: intentional violation of norms and comic effect.

Raskin (1985) and Attardo (2017), creating their theory of the humour, based on the cognitive approach to its study, suggested to allocate semantic aspect as a macro component of this category. Raskin (1985) notes that all existing theories of the humour are reduced to the principle of discrepancy, which he considers the main mechanism for creating a comic effect. This conclusion was confirmed and developed in further studies (Attardo, 2017). Language game helps to expose this discrepancy, presenting it in a form entertaining for the addressee.

Language game as a phenomenon has been widely represented in the works of philologists for several decades (Full & Lecolle, 2018; Winter-Froemel & Thaler, 2018). However, philosophers were the first to address the concept. As you know, the term language game (Sprachspiel) was introduced in science by L. Wittgenstein in his work "Philosophical studies". In Russia, the study of the phenomena began with the release of the work of Zemsкая, Kitaygorodskaya, and Rozanova (1983). The authors presented a purely linguistic understanding of the term. They understood the language game as deviations from the language norm.

The authors present the language game as a direct realization of the poetic function of the language, thus narrowing the scope of its application to fiction (Sherzer, 2002). It should be noted that the authors of these studies actually ignored the philosophical content of the term, inherent in the work by Wittgenstein (Kos'kov, 2018).

This line of linguistic interpretation of the term was continued in further research. Thus, Sannikov (1999) in the monograph "Russian language in the mirror of language game" proposes to distinguish between situational jokes (subject ones), based on the humorous play of life situations, and the language ones, which are based on the interpretation of language means for the purpose of intentional violation of the norm.

Currently, a large amount of works has been accumulated, which consider the arsenal of language game promoting tools (Butakova, 2014; Cherkasova, 2016; Chumakov, 2015; Popova, 2016 etc.). A separate group is represented by the studies that consider the language game as a characteristic inherent in a certain genre form. Recently, the study of the language game in the media has been actively developing, but these studies are also mainly focused on the search for means of language game expression (Amiri, 2015; Annenkova, 2015; Bachmat, 2017; Strelchuk, 2015, etc.). Thus, all of them to some extent continue the narrow linguistic line of language game consideration. Meanwhile, the British researcher Crystal

(2006) notes that the space of the language game and the means of its implementation are limitless (p. 64):

Language game is a natural form of language existence; the whole human life consists of a set of language games (Cook, 2000). Therefore, it is impossible to describe all the means of the language game. Moreover, this is not necessary. It is necessary to look for other ways to study it in the field of linguistics, considering the communicative basis of the phenomenon. So, Arutyunova (1987) understands the language game as "the sequence of deviations from the norm, which originates in the perception of the world, supplying data for communication, passes through the sphere of communication, which is deposited in the lexical, word-formation and syntactic semantics and ends in verbal creativity" (p. 8).

Thus, when considering the language game as a comic resource in digital media communication, it seems to us that we should return to a broad, communicative understanding of the language game. Wittgenstein (2019) implies the language game to be a whole system of communication that is a single whole: "the language and actions with which he gossips". Thus, according to his concept, the language game is inextricably linked with the form of activity that generates it. A new form of activity leads to new games. Steps in this direction have already been made in separate studies in the sphere of media linguistics (Helle-Valle, 2010; Negryshev, 2006).

2. Problem Statement

Having chosen this way, one should also take into account the understanding of the word *game*, which is reflected in the dictionaries of different languages (Hornby, 2016; Grimm & Grimm, 2019; Longman Dictionary..., 2018).

This similarity in the interpretations in English, German and Russian dictionaries is not accidental. The understanding of the game as an activity for the sake of the activity itself and the fun associated with it comes from a philosophical understanding of the problem of the game (Huizinga, 2019; Marone, 2016; Vezhbitskaya, 1996). Professional speech activity of a journalist is a special sphere of language existence, which should generate its communicative forms of language play.

3. Research Questions

So, the range of questions of our study is determined by the problem posed – the study of the language game functioning as a means of comic in the modern media that are the special type of a discursive practice.

The authors raised the following questions: What are the principles of the language game functioning as a way to form a comic effect? To what extent does the functioning of the language game depend on the discursive characteristics of the publication? Does the object of the description define the way of the ironic evaluation and the reception of the language game? What are the levels of the modern media text affecting the language game? How does this correlate with the type of media? Why does the language game in modern media discourse acquire the features of the aggression, the deviant comic behavior?

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of our study is to define the principles and to identify the patterns of the language game functioning in modern media.

5. Research Methods

The material of the study was the texts of high-quality Russian publications "Izvestia", "Kommersant", "Novaya Gazeta", published on the official websites of these publications in the period from 2016 to 2019. The method of continuous sampling was used to analyze media texts, the authors of which are well-known publicists and presenters, who can be called opinion leaders and who, of course, affect the "language taste of the era". The study of ways which create a journalistic image, including humour, in the works of these journalists is relevant both in the context of domestic journalism development, and in terms of the media functioning. The appeal to the works of authoritative and popular authors reveals the features and patterns of the media language development, the most important characteristic of which is now irony. This trend is explained by the traditions of domestic journalism, where satirical genres have always been in demand. The current situation in the modern mass media is conditioned by the aesthetics of postmodernism. A special place in this process is taken by the game with precedent texts.

The following methods were used: linguistic, functional, structural and compositional, textual, discursive, and typology. The methodology was based on the linguistic and cultural analysis of various ways and means of creating a comic effect in the modern media text. As a result, an attempt is made to create a typology of both language game forms and comic discourse functioning types formed in modern media.

6. Findings

6.1. Multifunctionality of language game as a means of humour

Language game as a popular and multifunctional technique in the "era of interpretation of a ready-made word" (Annenkova, 2015) is the most important component of the modern media-style, while the choice of a method of shifting the language norm is made due to the discursive features of communication, including typological features of the publication, offering texts semiotically significant for the target audience. "The author's expression of his attitude to something through laughter" (Duskayeva, 2018, p. 252) is the most important typological characteristic of special columns in periodicals, television programs ("ProjectorPerisHilton", "Evening Urgant", "Everything happened with Dmitry Bykov", "Fomenko fake", "On duty in the country with Mikhail Zhvanetsky"), YouTube projects ("Citizen poet", "BadKomedian", "Nemagia"). Not less important in the choice of methods are the comic intentions of the author, and the language game becomes the most important component of the writer's idiosyncrasy. We shall note that the names of many media projects indicate the name of the author.

The most popular programs of this type on domestic television include "Dolls" (NTV, 1994-2002); "Informational and parasitic program "Totally" (NTV, 2001-2002); "Informational and soothing

program "Put out the light!" (2000-2003); "ProjectorParisHilton" (First channel, 2008-2012, 2017). Note that most of the names of the above programs and categories used language game that not only attracts the attention of the audience, but also creates a comic effect.

6.2. Humor in the gaming headlines of modern media

Note that this replicated method of language game is the most popular in the headlines of modern media texts, and the discursive adaptation is particularly noticeable in this case, although there is always a common dominant function – the creation of a comic effect. However, the image created with the help of a language game is not developed in the journalistic material and does not even realize the most important function of the title – information. Communicative, expressive and advertising functions come to the fore, the playful title is needed only to attract the recipient's attention to the publication, and the informative function is shifted to the subtitle. In modern media, this type of title is called "clickbite-title". The game effect is quite often based on the following techniques:

- paronomasia – "Bill of words", "Whether it is not Laden", "I'm a lousy Shaquille";
- pun – "Bravo for the mistake", "So far so hockey", "Pale sun of the desert";
- occasionalisms – "Oil-reducing industry", "Unbittable experience»;
- transformation of a phraseology, often paradoxical – "a new friend is better than the old two", "the vacationer pays twice";
- rhyme – "bad luck has affected roads".

The use of a game title with a pronounced ironic connotation is not so always justified, but the desire to attract the attention of a potential reader is more important than the creation of a title corresponding to the content of the text. A way to create a comic effect which has become extremely popular, up to becoming a stamp, can be called a "game for the sake of the game", since there is no discursive development in the text.

6.3. Language game as a specific characteristic of Andrei Kolesnikov's ironic report

Another variant of using the techniques of language game in modern media communication is based on the reference to the precedent text in order to create a journalistic image, which, as a rule, expresses the main idea of the material, where the author's position dominates at all levels of the text. This approach is typical for columnists, most often found in such publications as "Novaya Gazeta", "Sobesednik", "Snob", which is manifested already at the level of the title: "Bird of high litter" (paronomasia – flight/litter); "In St. Petersburg – zeal!" (paronomasia – drink/zeal); "Decl (Bit) of truth on Groundhog Day" (paronomasia day/Decl and the name of the famous Hollywood Comedy), etc. Such publications are analytical, critical, most often based on the satirical development of reality.

The ironic reports of Andrei Kolesnikov in "Kommersant" newspaper are of interest as an object of research from this point of view. It is the language game that can be called the reason for the transformation of the traditional genre. The emotional dialogue with the audience turns into the dominant of the author's detailed statement, where irony makes the basis of a complex media image of a political event and a politician.

The conceptual and emotional position of the author, A. Kolesnikov, is expressed in the intertextual headlines, in the expanded author's metaphors; a well-known, we can say a textbook, precedent text is often played upon: "the Ministry-buff" – the transformation of the name of the play by V. V. Mayakovsky "Mystery-buff", in which he presented a "heroic, epic and satirical image of our era, etc. The boundaries and the quality of the humour vary from the destroying caustic sarcasm to subtle irony, which allows to express a positive attitude to the hero or event.

The laughable context is created, firstly, by the play of words to grow/to ramp up/to stick, secondly, by hyperbolization (longer is hardly possible to grow) and, finally, by grotesque evaluation (the world has not seen a sadder spectacle). The publicist ridicules the discrepancy between the form and content of the event.

Contrast as the basis for both creation of a journalistic image, of language game, and of an ironic assessment can be called a significant feature of A. Kolesnikov's reports. And often this laughable effect is achieved with the help of a pun already in the header complex. The image of the political event presented in the report is formed with the help of ironic epithets: stunning lightness, hellish everyday inconveniences, exhaustively formulated, the most important tasks of business. The discrepancy between the proper and the obvious is also emphasized by the language game: "And Boris Titov, meanwhile, using *the data of the presentation, showed on his fingers.*"

Laughter, as an intelligible and acute form of criticism, as the implementation of communicative intentions, for example, to assess negative phenomena, requires a consciously active perception on the part of the audience, which should see the reproach, discontent, censure, ridicule, indignation, exposure behind the language game. Very often the texts demonstrate an ironic play on the discrepancy between the status of a person and his behavior: Sergey Ivanov "is currently working as a special representative of the President for interaction with animals and plants" (31.03.2017). In the quote, laughter is evoked by the contrast between the title of the "special representative of the President" position and the absurdity of the activity itself: a solid person will interact with animals and plants.

The deliberate violation of the compatibility rules as a method of language game allows to create a comic effect and to give an assessment to the hero or the event: "Mr. Barroso was smiling strangely and *shyly*"; "After Sergei Aristov was refused to shake hands, he could only *understandingly and even gratefully shrug his shoulders*"; "And he *spoke for a long time in front of the laughing faces and looks of the meeting participants*"; "the way to getting the ticket *turned out to be more informative.*" Stylistic and semantic contrast in A. Kolesnikov's journalism turns into a universal means by which the author expresses his attitude to what is happening. Meanwhile, the actual basis of the report allows you to create the effect of presence, and the language game becomes a way of keeping the attention of the audience, which is invited to co-creativity.

6.4. Laughter as a means of criticism in the journalism of Irina Petrovskaya

The same functions of the language game are typical for Irina Petrovskaya's TV views in 'Novaya Gazeta': the image stated in the title unfolds in a critical interpretation of what is happening on modern television. To create a comic effect, the author uses primarily such types of language games as the transformation of phraseological units and pun. In comparison with A. Kolesnikov's reports, the header

complex in I. Petrovskaya's materials seems more coherent and holistic, as the subtitle is a continuation of the title, both on the semantic and stylistic level: "Impudent presenter. The law of negative selection on the country's television" (23.05.2019). The lexical level itself shows that the author's assessment is not limited to irony, the publicist sharply criticizes the phenomena of modern reality, turning to such means of humour as satire, sarcasm, grotesque.

In her publicistic statements, I. Petrovskaya does not ridicule, but denounces with the help of a language game, and her choice of language means and forms is always determined not only by a priori negative assessment, which has long become a typological feature of 'Novaya Gazeta', but also by the features of the object of criticism. Each time the comic effect gets a certain stylistic coloring: for game interpretation elements of different functional styles are chosen: artistic – "Exclusive vs super-exclusive. With the beginning of the television season the abyss opened" (11.09.2018); official-business – "Battle with psychics. "Russia" Channel exposes television obscurantism" (25.01.2019).

Sharply criticizing the new type of a presenter – "gopnik syle", I. Petrovskaya deliberately uses vernacular, colloquial vocabulary, jargon, as if agreeing with an understanding recipient about the rules of the game. The language game is always based on active communication, when its participants understand and accept the rules of this game, from this point of view, the satirical image created in the TV views of "Novaya Gazeta" is interesting from the point of view of its multi-aspect and multifunctional nature.

6.5. Language game as an important feature of Dmitry Bykov's idiostyle

A convincing example of how the language game becomes the most striking feature of the publicist's idiostyle is Dmitry Bykov's work, who publishes rhymed feuilletons in 'Novaya Gazeta', and who is the author of satirical parodies of "Citizen poet" project. D. Bykov, we can say, is actively experimenting with the language at various levels: lexical, morphological, stylistic. Thus, occasionalisms become the most popular means when creating a comic effect, they almost always express unambiguously negative attitude of the author to the object of criticism: "*megaleader*"; "*grandmother-phobia!*"; "you, *bezyaikaya* (no-eggs)" etc. This type of language game can be called words-making

The game interpretation of reality in D. Bykov's journalism fits into the concept of semantic game, which Y. M. Lotman defined as "the condition of rhetorical organization of the text" (Lotman, 2004, p. 187). At the level of content and composition, the comic manifests itself in playing with the facts of reality, creating ridiculous, sometimes paradoxical situations. The paradoxical principle makes the basement for transformation too – the shift (sometimes destruction) of precedent texts), phraseological standards: "How do you dare change me at the crossing?"; "And where shall I go? I have nowhere to go!". The game interpretation is an evaluative attitude to the object. The game is always a subjective interpretation of the event. The game interpretation is an estimated relation to an object, as for the author, game is a way of subjective interpretation of an event.

In D. Bykov's texts, comic effect is achieved by intentional violation of the norm:

- grammatic – "*klyanusya* (I swear) with my mom", "But not to live is much *huzhey* (worse)";
- lexico-phraseological, due to the addition, reduction, transfer of meanings – "As Rogozhin said to Myshkin – freaks, prince, little people, prince!";

- syntactic, most often at the level of parcelling and inversion – "Just us. Yes these sanctions. Yes, Crimea. Yes, Kiselev", "a floral chest on Bel-railway station was the fault of inflation".

One text by D. Bykov is indicative in this respect, in which the tightening of control over the press turns into a detailed metaphor, based on the language game — the opposition of two letters of the Russian alphabet: a soft and a hard sign. The language game allows D. Bykov to be classified as a type of journalist-reader, whom Annenkova (2015) considers as a specific person who presents his thoughts to the audience through "consciously motivated speech activity" (Annenkova, 2015).

7. Conclusion

The conducted analysis allows us to talk about different principles of the language game functioning as a way to create a comic effect. It should be noted that the functions of the language game in the laughter discourse are due to the typological features of the publication.

From the point of view of game interpretation, the most popular is the appeal to precedent texts. The game situation and comic effect can be attributed to the most popular and effective means of attracting the attention of the audience, which is explained by the conditions of fierce competition in the media market, and the informational satiety of the audience, which led to the inflation of the language.

Another way of using the language game in the title is typical for a quality press, where analytical materials are published. In such types of text, the ironic or satirical image created with the help of a language game is developed in the text, which is manifested at all levels of its verbal design. Pun, transformation of phraseology, paradoxical author's metaphor are most often used in such game titles.

The level of communication between the addresser and the addressee when referring to precedent phenomena is very different: from precedent (and playing with it) as a sign to the expanded publicist image that expresses the position of the author and his aesthetic and ideological principles.

The result of the study is interesting and indicative: in most cases, it is not the object of reality that determines the ways of ironic evaluation and the methods of language play, but the system of value representations and the individual style of the publicist.

The reporter of "Kommersant" newspaper, Andrei Kolesnikov, covers the activities of Russian President Vladimir Putin, which allows us both to talk about one object of study, and about the dominance of one principle of creating a comic effect – an ironic interpretation of political events. "Novaya Gazeta" columnist, Irina Petrovskaya, although limited to the topic – the programs of modern television, deliberately chooses such facts, events, phenomena that need to be exposed, which requires expressive satirical evaluation from the publicist. However, the techniques of language play in this type of media discourse are already determined by the specific object of criticism, or rather by the peculiarities of its author's interpretation, which is manifested at all levels of the text – lexical, syntactic, stylistic. In the satirical journalism of Dmitry Bykov, not individual facts of modern reality are sharply criticized, but ideas, concepts, situations that do not correspond to the author's value ideas about the ideal and which, from his point of view, should be debunked and destroyed. Therefore, the language game takes on the features of verbal aggression and mockery (Duskayeva & Scheglova, 2019).

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