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# MEDIA DISCOURSE AS A COMPONENT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S INFORMATION SPACE

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## *Abstract*

The media discourse in the information space of the university implements informative and representative functions and has a significant impact on the image of the university both in the academic and scientific environment, and in society as a whole. The purpose of the media discourse analysis is to describe the image of an educational institution, which is attractive to students, scientists, the business environment, and the dissemination of innovations in education and science. The authors of the article provide an overview of theories of media discourse, characterized various approaches to determining the information space of a university. While studying the media discourse represented on the websites of the Kazakhstani universities in English and Russian languages, the main attention was given to the analysis of the news texts, comparison of methods of transmitting information in different languages. Concurrently, the genre diversity of texts and the specifics of the presenting information using infographics, hyperlinks, photographs, sound, and interactivity are taken into account. The study focuses on the information space of the university, which combines information and telecommunication systems and networks, information technologies for their maintenance and use. The website is considered as the main tool for the interaction of the university internal and external environment. The use of several languages in a media discourse emphasizes its functional focus on intercultural interaction with a diverse audience.

**Keywords:** Discourse, media discourse, media text, media linguistics, mass media information space, website.

## 1. Introduction

At present, there is a tendency to shift the centre of research interests to the problems of mass media and mass speech influence. The mechanisms of influence on the audience are studied, linguistic means of influence are identified and analyzed using examples of certain types of discourse: political, religious, advertising, including mass media discourse.

In linguistics, arguments about the concept of discourse give rise to many theories (F. de Saussure, N. D. Arutyunova, E. Benveniste, M. Foucault, A. Greymas, J. Derrida, Yu. Kristeva, Yu. Habermas, J. Brown, J.Yul). Discourse is represented as a set of statements, a speech stream, a way of speaking, a text in a situation, a reflection of mentality and ideology in the text (Banda & Mafofo, 2016; Borrelli, 2018; Nagy, 2016; Reardon, 2018; Sandretto & Tilson, 2017; Spohrer, 2016; Talib & Fitzgerald, 2018; Wortham, Kim, & May, 2017). The media discourse as a component of the university's information space attracts research interest due to the media discourse capacity to connect the university with the society and contribute to the third university mission – connection of its activities with socio-economic context (Pinto, Cruz, & de Almeida, 2016). For the linguist this discourse may become the source of the new discursive and linguistic features of a text published within information space of the university.

## 2. Problem Statement

Media discourse as a component of the university's information space creates the image of the educational institutions and influences the audience via linguistic and paralinguistic means. Thus discourse communicates the content and values of the university to the community and society at large to achieve its aims as educational institution. Internationalization forces the use of several languages in the media discourse, thus emphasizes its functional focus on intercultural interaction with a diverse audience.

## 3. Research Question

### 3.1. The concept of 'discourse"

The concept of "discourse" has quite a lot of different interpretations, domestic and foreign scientists in the field of philology and linguistics offer different definitions of this term (Becker & Egetenmeyer, 2018; Dijck, 2018; Ellis, Henderson, Wright, & Rogalski, 2016; Heusinger & Schumacher, 2019; Linnik, Bastiaanse, & Höhle, 2016; Unger, 2016; Valentini, Romenti, & Kruckeberg, 2016).

For the first time the term "discourse" was used by the American scientist Z. Harris in the title of the article "Discourse analysis", published in 1952. The introduction of the term "discourse" by Harris (1952) into the conceptual apparatus of linguistic science is explained by the need to study the contextual use of language and language units. Harris understands discourse exclusively as "a sequence of statements, a segment greater than a sentence" (p. 23). In modern linguistics, such definition could be criticized on the basis of its extreme narrowness, i.e. the researcher can ask natural questions: will a single statement be considered a discourse? In addition, this definition can also be criticized for its one-dimensionality: considering the object from a formal point of view, the scientist completely omits the

"human speaker" factor, which, however, is a key link in the modern understanding of the nature of the existence and functioning of language.

Dijck (1997) notes that discourse can have structures that, based on ordinary rules, cannot rightly be called linguistic, or cannot be fully explained with the help of linguistic grammar.

Traditionally, the most capacious definition of the term "discourse" is the definition given by Arutyunova (1990):

Discourse – a coherent text in conjunction with extralinguistic, pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological and other factors; text taken in the event aspect; speech, considered as a purposeful social action, as a component involved in the interaction of people and the mechanisms of their consciousness (cognitive processes). Discourse is speech immersed in life (p.136-137).

Here, attention is directed to the eventfulness and socio-psychological aspects of communication, where social action is important, that is, what influence the expressed judgment has on the participants of communication.

In the Fuko's works, discourse is defined through the concept of style and individual language (as cited in Yuketter, 2003, p. 36). This understanding implies the existence of specific types of discourse with certain characteristics: language distinctive features, stylistic features, specific topics, ways of reasoning. The variety of spheres is directly proportional to the variety of" social institutions" of human activity: pedagogy, medicine, scientific activity, etc. Thus, social institutions determine the linguistic and stylistic boundaries of a given discourse. In this regard, we can talk about the types of discourse.

### 3.2. Media discourse as the subject of the research

Due to the trends of internationalization and globalization, the development of modern telecommunications technologies in the world community emerged new type of discourse, which is called media discourse.

This problem has been widely discussed by many scientists (Dipper & Pritchard, 2017; Ge, 2016; Molek-Kozakowska & Chovanec, 2017; Ramanathan & Hoon, 2016; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016) and interest in the study of media discourse and today does not weaken. Despite the fact that the term "discourse" itself has not yet received a clear and unambiguous definition, a new term" media discourse" has already appeared, which also has different interpretations.

The concept of mediadiscourse in scientific research practice entrenched thanks to the efforts of Dobrosklonskaya (2006) according to which it is "a message in conjunction with all other communication components (sender, receiver, channel, feedback, communication situation, or context)" (p.23).

When determining the media discourse, there are two approaches. According to the first, media discourse is a specific type of speech-making activity, which is unique to the information field of mass media. In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish between media discourse and other independent types of discourse, such as political, religious, scientific, etc. According to the second approach, media discourse is thought of as any kind of discourse implemented in the field of mass communication, produced by the media. Thus, we can talk about political, religious, pedagogical, and other types of media

discourse, implying that for their implementation, these types of institutional discourse presuppose a relatively stable set of practices for the production, broadcast, and interpretation of mass media (Kozhemyakin, 2010).

Kozhemyakin (2010) defines media discourse as "thematically focused, socio-culturally determined speech-making activity in the mass media space" (p.14). Zheltukhina (2004) states that the media discourse is a "verbal or non-verbal oral or written text in conjunction with pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological and other factors expressed by the media, taken in the event aspect, which is an action that participates in socio-cultural interaction and reflects the mechanism of communicants' consciousness" (p. 132).

In our study, we adhere to the definition of Dobrosklonskaya (2008), who came to the conclusion that the media discourse is a set of processes and products of speech activity in the field of mass communication in all the richness and complexity of their interaction.

The main characteristics of the media discourse include distance, the presence of an individual-collective subject, the presence of an unknown, not collectively defined dispersed addressee (Slyshkin, 2000).

The main forms of media discourse are news texts, advertising texts and other types of media text, including websites.

### 3.3. Information space of the university

In this article, we will focus on universities' websites. We will study the issue of media discourse as a component of the information space of the university.

The emergence of the concept of information space is due to the increased need of society for continuous information. In addition, the formation of the "information society" is closely related to the introduction of innovative technologies that have reduced the time of delivery of information to the audience, allowing a person to be aware of all the events that occur at a given moment.

Information space is a kind of system of interaction between subjects and objects of the environment, connected through the interaction of the processes of production and consumption of information. It is also determined as a set of knowledge and information that is formed and constantly changing in the process of evolution of society.

The information space is presented as a sphere of "activity of individuals, professional groups, subjects of various spheres — that is, virtually any subject of activity that performs such entirely or partially using the capabilities of modern information technologies" (Manoilo, 2003, p.75).

In other words, at both the global and local level, we can consider the formation of the information space, based on a certain context. Any geographical units, world Outlook postulates, traditional beliefs and spheres of human activity can serve as a basis for studying the information space. Therefore, we can also study the subject of art by analyzing the coverage of events related to it in the information space. Since the University in its social component is a unique field of human interaction, which has a characteristic orientation to achieve certain goals in relation to society, we have chosen this area of research.

Pursuing the aim of transferring knowledge and developing professional and personal competencies, the universities undertake different activities. The Universities recruit students, organize scientific conferences, research activities, cooperate with other educational institutions and commercial/non-profit organizations and enterprises, etc. Accordingly, the Universities, like any other organization offering its services, aim to position itself and its services to the communities. The strategies of promoting the Universities in the ways of its implementation are diverse, but the most accessible and easy way to provide information is to promote on the Universities' websites itself.

The Universities' websites have many sections that set different communicative goals. It displays the news of the Universities, describe their history, contain information about institutes and departments; personal offices of students, contacts and personal webpages of teachers, class schedules, and much more. In addition, the Universities' websites are actively involved in the recruitment of applicants, as a result, the site has relevant sections. It is easy to establish that the communicative purpose of these sections is to promote the University.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the given research is to study and describe media discourse as a component of the university's information space within in the context of transmitting the best practices of the university and demonstration of the capacity of the educational institution to achieve the three missions of the university.

The information space of the university creates special conditions and forms the extra linguistic features of the discourse, which have great potential to influence the audience.

## 5. Research Methods

When analyzing media text, we used methods of lexical and semantic analysis, method of compression (selection of key words in the text), method of comparative analysis, method of contextual analysis.

The research is based on the texts of the official websites of the Kazakhstani universities in non-capital cities: Kostanay State Pedagogical University named after U. Sultangazin (KSPU) and Pavlodar State University named after S. Toraigyrov (PSU). For our study we took non-capital universities' websites in order to avoid the influence of the features of the main cities of the country on the study. The total number of the analyzed texts is 60 news publications.

The analysis of the media discourse comprises following aspects: description of the paralinguistic features of the universities' websites as information space and analysis of the texts: linguistic features and the sentiment analysis. In this study the following natural language processing tools were employed such websites: www.azure.microsoft.com and www.majento.ru.

## 6. Findings

As the most important way to ensure fast and effective communication of educational institutions with their target audience, the media discourse of Universities' websites has a pronounced pragmatic orientation. The purpose of the analyzed type of discourse is to create an image of an "ideal" educational

institution, attract potential students, scientists, sponsors, and disseminate the latest achievements in science and education. The well-being and reputation of the educational institution depend on how successfully the University's discourse achieves its goals, so the website's discourse uses the most vivid and convincing means of creating a positive image:

«Павлодарский государственный университет им. С. Торайгырова – *один из крупнейших* университетов Казахстана. Павлодарский государственный университет имени Султанмахмута Торайгырова – высшее учебное заведение *с большой и славной биографией*: более полувека в стенах этого вуза готовят высокопрофессиональные  кадры для всей страны/ Pavlodar StateUniversity (PSU) is one *of the largest* universities in Kazakhstan. Pavlodar state University is a higher educational institution with a *great and glorious biography*: more than half a century in the walls of this University are trained *highly professional* personnel for the whole country».

We see that the texts in the Russian and English languages of the site emphasize the advantages of the University, its reputation, rich history, superiority over other educational institutions, achievements in a particular field by using adjectives in superlative form, and listing adjectives in qualitative form.

Graphic visual communications on the official University's website broadcast its image, promote brand awareness of the University among the public, by presenting the main visual component – the logo, as well as corporate colors which create a unified graphic space.

There is an information slider on the main page on the Kostanay State Pedagogical University's website.  As a rule, on the KSPU information slider is displayed sequentially from four to five slides. The location of the slider on the main page of the website is an advantage, since it is very likely that the visitor will visually inspect the information contained on the slider. Its main purpose is to inform about the most important "trends" for the University and society. The up-to-date information is posted. For example, in the period of student's final examinations in the information slider was posted a slide "Stop corruption". There were also documents that every student of the educational institution should be familiar with: Statement by the head of State and the Article of the Head of state "Looking to the future: modernization of public consciousness".  If we talk about the PSU website, there is no information slider on its website.

On both universities' websites, each news item is accompanied by at least one photo, which makes it look presentable.

The PSU website is decorated in blue and white colors. The selection of this color scheme is advantageous from the point of psychology's view. The white color symbolizes purity, virtue and joy. It is associated with daylight, as well as with the producing power. Whiteness is associated with the idea of the obvious, the legitimate, the true. Blue color contributes to better assimilation of information.

The KSPU website is dominated by blue and yellow colors. In accordance to psychologists, traditionally the blue color-has a calming effect, for many people it symbolizes the sky and eternity. Yellow is the most physiologically optimal color, the least tiring and it stimulates vision and the nervous system. On both websites, you can see their logo at the top.

By analyzing the news texts of the PSU website, we have identified the target orientation of the information and involvement in a particular mission of the University development. According to the analysis, 11 news reports provide information aimed at interaction and service to society.  It is supported by such words as «аккредитация», «эффективная деятельность», «рекомендовала к назначению

ректором», «благотворительная ярмарка», «подписаны соглашения», «ярмарка вакансий», «санитарная безопасность».

On the website we can see the socio-cultural orientation of the University. These publications are accompanied by several photos of these events. Descriptive adjectives are used, such as «зрелищный», «боевой», «достойный».

6 articles were devoted to science and research. A number of keywords found in the text allowed us to refer them to this category: «научные изыскания», «инновационная деятельность», «идея внедрения чат-ботов», «разработал мобильное приложение», «проект», «защита презентаций».

The news in the "science" category provides accurate information, names of projects ("PSY Exams", "Green pharmacy", "Safe Smoke"), numbers are used ("record of 6000 liters", "70 students and 25 projects"), which makes the information more detailed.

Four articles were posted in the "education" category. The news covered the learning process, innovations in education and many other topics. The keywords to these texts are «evaluation of educational programs», «evaluation of exam questions», «electronic portal of the University».

News is posted by date of novelty. But the date of posting information is not specified, which makes the process of searching for the necessary information difficult and long, so we consider this as disadvantage of the site. Also, regardless of the language of news texts, the name of the University is always indicated in English as "Toraighyrov University".

Texts are characterized by citations that are characteristic of the journalistic style: «Нашему обществу издревле были присущи навыки медиации, в казахских степях многие века все споры разрешали суды биев», – добавил М. Бегентаев.

A similar analysis was performed with the website of the KSPU. Unlike the PSU website, news on this site is posted with the date of publication, which makes finding the necessary information simple and easy. The following keywords can be highlighted in the news aimed at fulfilling the University's mission of education: «новые учебники», «открытый урок», «учебный процесс».

In the news aimed at fulfilling the University's mission of science development, the following keywords can be identified: «конкурс научных проектов», «онлайн-семинар», «открытое занятие», «международная научно-практическая конференция».

In the news media interaction and service to society, we can highlight such key words as: «профессиональные спортсмены», «психологический тренинг», «торжественное мероприятие», «встреча со студентами», «стратегия привлечения абитуриентов», «волонтерский проект», «кураторский час», «церемония награждения», «волонтерская деятельность».

You can often find descriptive adjectives as «irreplaceable», «active», «spectacular», and adjectives in excellent form (the newest, the best).

Some articles cover different categories of University promotion, as different issues and problems of universities are discussed. These articles include: «Круглый стол «Современные проблемы дошкольного образования», «Проведение Олимпиады по Туризму среди студентов и школьников», «Вручение сертификатов Атамекен по основам предпринимательства студентам образовательной программы «Физическая культура и спорт».

The KSPU website summed up the events by the end of 2019. The news related to the University's activities, achievements in various fields. Also info graphic with the rating of universities was posted. On the PSU website, the outcome of the 2019 events was not summed up.

During the celebration of national holidays and memorable dates, the site is filled with publications about the events held. For example, 5 articles are dedicated to the independence Day of Kazakhstan on the KSPU website, and 2 articles are dedicated to this event on the PSU website.

According to the analysis, you can see that most of the publications on the PSU website are devoted to the category of interaction with society (11 publications). In second place by the number of publications can be attributed to publications in the category of science (6 publications). And the subject of education is the least covered (4 publications). As for the site of the KSPU, you will notice that there is the same trend. The topic of interaction with society is covered most of all. Further articles are devoted to the category science and education.

To attract the attention of the addressee, articles use the main stylistic feature of the journalistic style – advertising. This can be seen in the headlines: «Битва за выпускников», «Рекорд в 6000 литров», «Движение вверх».

The analysis of the emotional coloring of a text is understood as the task of automatic analysis of the emotionally colored vocabulary and opinions expressed in the text. When analyzing the tone of a text, 3 types of emotions are identified: positive, negative, and neutral. A text is considered to be neutrally colored if it does not contain an emotional component.

In total, 30 news publications were analyzed on the KSPU website. The Microsoft Azure site was used for implementation. At the beginning, we identified the percentage of tonality of each news publication, then determined the overall indicator. As a result, we found that the majority, namely 23 publications, are neutrally colored. Their percentage is 50 %. This indicator can be explained by the fact that news texts are narrative in nature. 7 news publications are positively colored. Their percentage is more than 69%. These news publications report on universities' achievements, victories in competitions, and various educational and social events («Champions, again!», «Kozybaev readings-2019», «The updated content of education is a requirement of the time», «Open lesson on the Kazakh language», «Open lesson at the Department of Arts», «Psychological training in the Students' House», «Best University Teacher – 2019»).

Thus, the overall percentage of the tonality of texts is 59%, which indicates a positive emotional coloring of texts.

A similar analysis was conducted with the PSU website. 30 news publications were analyzed. As on the KSPU website, most of the sites here are also neutrally colored, i.e. 24 publications. We didn't identify any negative emotional publications. 6 news publications are positively colored. Their percentage of tonality exceeds 77 %. To sum up, the overall percentage of text tonality is 57.2 %, which indicates the prevalence of positive emotional coloring of texts in news publications.

Some news publications on the PSU website are not presented in English. From 30 publications that we have taken for analysis, 7 of them have not been translated into English, which makes it difficult for foreign visitors to get information about that news.

For semantic analysis we used the site majento.ru. According to the semantic analysis carried out, it can be seen that the most common part of speech in texts is the «noun» (42.4%), then «adjectives» (13.1%), then «prepositions» and «verbs».

## 7. Conclusion

From the stated above we may come to the conclusion that media discourse is integrated into social, personal and professional relationships and can be used to achieve appropriate illocutionary effect. Media discourse is a leading type of discourse that penetrates into all types of institutional and everyday communication. Mediatexts become significant means of forming society outlook and world perception of individuals.

Our analysis shows that due to the competent content of news texts and correctly constructed visual communications, the site plays a great role in promoting the university image. Though it is impossible to count the number of the website visitors to correlate it with the particular discourse, the certain analytical data obtained as a result of the media discourse analysis can be used to correct the University's communication policy. The news block is located in the center of the page of the official site and is an internal site represented by announcements and current events. Analysis of news reports revealed a positive emotional color of texts, which positively affects the recipient's perception of the university's activities.

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