

# LINGUISTICS

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## MEDIA DISCOURSE STUDIES: GENERALITIES AND SPECIFICS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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**Abstract.** The paper addresses political discourse specifics in global mass media as exemplified by the coverage of events in Egypt of 2013 and other latest political and economic developments. It gives a critical review of Russian literature written on the subject of mass media and stresses the need to elaborate cognitive interpretation techniques required to understand the global media content currently formed on the Internet. The author shows stereotyped expressions and evaluative connotations of political terms in the context of mass-media. In conclusion different approaches (linguistic and rhetoric) to political discourse analysis are considered, and the latest events shaping discourse investigations enumerated.

**Keywords:** mass media; political discourse; interpretation; evaluation; stereotypes; discourse analysis.

### Introduction

Due to the Internet and globalization, as well as to the development and worldwide distribution of satellite channels, students taking a course in foreign journalism can easily watch programs on BBC News, Euronews and Bloomberg TV Europe. Work realities for journalists have also changed: having demolished the once strong Iron Curtain, online media have turned into truly transboundary media. Contemporary students know English which now performs as a New Latin of global media. At their disposal they have both on-line web-based multimedia and traditional news media posted on the Internet. The new generic features of mass media include hypertext links, multimedia, interactive techniques and transgenic characteristics.

New consumers have no difficulty orientating in multimedia content. Blogs on the web-sites of traditional media, once printed, introduce a new personage of a prosumer. The User Generated Content (UGC) is constantly moderated on media web-sites. Principles that a convergent editorial board adheres to in performing their work are continuous 24 / 7 monitoring of news lines. Students don't find it hard to understand media metrics and online media sociology.

## Literature Review

An extensive review of foreign news agencies can be found in the book by V.I. Sapunov [1] which however applies groundless critical approach to mass media. Some modern works [2-4] can be recommended for theoretic comprehension of convergent media phenomena and for studying theories of information-oriented society.

A modern comparative approach to foreign and home news media is contained in works by Zasursky [5, 6]. These publications present observations on public TV (BBC News) and its assessment by Euronews as a counterbalance to English-speaking news media. Euronews is featured as presenting their material without interpretation or involvement of journalists in the studio, forming a channel expressing the European point of view.

Understanding digitalization and convergence of news media as well as new practices connected with them do not cause any difficulties for the computer-age generation. Narrowing down all the content-broadcasting channels to a single computer screen does not need long explanations. Technologies change drastically; this is why chapters dealing with mass media technologies are so quickly outdated as, e.g., in the course book by S.A. Mikhailov [7]. The book narrates about the possibility of receiving mass media content on one's smartphone screen, of accessing the Internet from a smartphone, etc. E-book readers, that are now quite common, are presented there as state-of-the-art devices. The book does not provide a sufficiently comprehensive list of electronic carriers of content, etc.; it does not discuss online communication through social networks and its legal status.

The latter phenomenon introduces a new understanding of mass media interaction with public conscience: for example, A. Podshibyakin's book [8] comprises curious chapters observing how LiveJournal changes the reality and how a special non-stop reportage is kept up by prosumers in the social network.

As far as specific countries are concerned, the following books can be recommended: L.V. Sharonchikova [9], M.I. Makeyenko [10], G.F. Voronenkova [11]. All three books are written by mass media researchers investigating respective countries; they contain a lot of factual information about mass media structure and tendencies but lack examples of content topics in mass media and don't give examples of mass media texts. These works practically do not cover the media discourse: key issues, language, specifics of discourse presentation, the theories of agenda, and news development. What news do media present and what language do they speak? How are the implications constructed? What is contained in the headlines? That remains beyond the contents of these monographs.

At the same time, after having discussed media particulars, a British course book "The Media: An Introduction" [12], offers a discursive con-

struction of such issues as social class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, young people and youthfulness, nationality, privileged status, disabled people, sports, parliamentary policy and censorship, etc. We consider that it is necessary to study such types of discourse as social, economic, military, political, cultural, popular science, everyday life, etc. in media. After all, the term ‘journalism’ itself assumes a professional discussion of social problems using factographic methods. What is the media agenda? What are the stereotypes of viewing a situation? What is the basis for building a certain point of view? How are the viewpoints balanced? How do media reflect the state of their consumers or, alternatively, how do they construct their perception? To these questions the monographs mentioned above do not give any answers whatsoever.

### Stereotypes in media

To find answers to the questions put above, the discourse investigators’ approach appears quite logical. Only the deciphering of language signs, anchoring of the signified to the signifier will give us a chance to speak about the global and marginal discourse, about imposing its standpoint, about reflecting the socium and socio-constructive function of media discourse. Illustrative stereotypes are given below:

Stereotypes in presenting countries of the Third World: *dangerous conditions prevail.*

Europolitics stereotypes: *Mrs. Merkel is Miss Austerity for Greeks. She gives the feeling “I’ll fix the crisis”.*

Stereotypes in presenting economic levers of Neokeynesian model: *to raise spending, tough cuts, additional help for flagging economies. Generally speaking, in this context it is essential to decipher such allegories as austerity, bailout, recession.*

Stereotypes in presenting terrorism: *suicide attack, devastating attack, cowardly perpetrators, masterminds of a broader network, the export of violence.*

Stereotypes of power structures demonization: *unequivocally confirm, beyond doubt opposition orchestrated the attack.*

#### *Stereotypes in describing political events in Egypt of 2013*

Let us dwell on the recent political crisis in Egypt to show how political events are described in numerous metaphors, assessments, nebulosity and allusions which are frequently standard:

*ousted from power* (trivial metaphor);

*ban the activity of Muslim Brotherhood* (semantics of prohibition; the word “Brotherhood” in the name of the organization);

*referendum banning the activity of religious political parties* (banning religious parties);

*crackdown on the movement by the military* (trivial metaphor of advance; euphemism of military operations);  
*dispersed the demo* (semantics of banning, violence);  
*detained leader* (semantics of disorders);  
*bitterly divided* (semantics of split);  
*sheds the blood of fellow-Egyptians* (trivial metaphor);  
*thieves and thugs* (evaluability of nomination);  
*raising flashmobs* (semantics of rampancy of a crowd);  
*Mubarak dictatorship* (evaluability of power structure);  
*gangs* (evaluability of nomination);  
*culture of impunity* (evaluation semantics of impunity);  
*Western intervention* (metaphor of support, euphemistic);  
*to pressure the interim government* (metaphor of promotion).

Depending on the channel's point of view each side is represented as being right. At the same time both parties appeal to human rights, to the ideals of representative democracy, to the need to enforce law using legal methods; they estimate the counter-party as having various pejorative qualities. Excessive acts are referred to as "revolutionary changes". The adversary is pictured as a pillar of conservatism, Islamic fundamentalism or militarism.

#### *The latest stereotypes*

We can cite other examples. The discourse of 2013 about the elections to German Parliament is highly evaluable and standard. When assessing its constituents we can easily find elements of commonality and evaluability. Even the encrustment of English into German phrases is commonplace for many articles of those days: *amazing*; *congratulations*; *Wir bleiben Kanzlerin!*; *thanked voters*; *the Mother of the Nation*; *a personal triumph*; *the most powerful woman*.

Evaluative symbolism is worthy to be noted when the chancellor is equated to the mother of the nation.

The widespread discourse disclosing facts of spying launched by Assange and Snowden and resumed by mass media in connection with phone-tapping of first persons of states abounds with standard concepts: *spying on phone calls*; *unacceptable*; *trust*; *allies*; *security*; *clandestine activity*; *balance between security and privacy*; *breach of trust*; *lack of trust*; *to seek full account of what happened*; *trust has been shaken*.

All of them are to different extent based on the metaphor of failing trust. This topic is recurrent but not discussed in mass media.

The theme of economic crisis persists on newspaper pages. We have already identified metaphors typical for an economic crisis. They remain unchanged in the economic discourse of global news media also in the climate of 2014: *slowdown in GDP level*; *quantitative easing*; *credit driven*

*growth; flagging economies; austerity; tackle liquidity crisis; cut jobs; dollar dropping; shrinking public sector; plunge into recession.*

In our paper we have demonstrated the importance of nominating phenomena in a political discourse, the application of set phrases and clichés as of specific instances of stereotypy, using axiological vocabulary, metaphors, euphemisms, iterations, periphrases, complex term definitions, manipulation of facts, disguising opinions as knowledge and some other obligatory phenomena of political discourse.

### **Media discourse investigations**

In view of the above, it is hard to avoid addressing the standpoints of researchers who move to discourse from language, e.g., M.N. Volodina [13].

The judgment of the world of politics involves discursive studies and we can follow their progress from Z. Harris via T. Van Deik and R. Wodak to D. Yule, D. Brown, D. Shiffrin, D. Tannen, N. Fairclough, M. Yogansen, etc. It is to be noted that according to the American tradition *discursive* is understood as practically *neo-rhetorical* and discourse studies are aligned with well-institutionalized rhetoric, rich in tradition and tools. In this regard quite representative are Russian discourse studies, i.e., the works of the Urals Group “Discourse-P” under the supervision of O.F. Rusakova; online magazine of discourse studies issued in Belgorod under the supervision of Ye.A. Kozhemiakin.

It is not quite clear whether the reality itself submits the material more dynamically or the accumulation of knowledge and the development of the discursive analysis method is more energetic. It should be mentioned that at the initial stage of our investigation our attention was directed to the coverage of Kosovo bombing in 1999 by the Internet. A new vision was provided to the researchers by the informational wars in North Caucasus. Explanatory potential is also characteristic to the works of G.G. Pocheptsov’s School dealing with the discourse of the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine [14]. Following the events of September 11, 2001 we investigated the military-political rhetoric of Operations ‘Enduring Freedom’ and ‘Iraqi Freedom’ which were actively covered by global mass media. Some material was obtained from ethno- and socially-tinted demonstrations in Paris of 2005; we investigated the disorders in France of 2005. 2011 provided us with materials about disorders in Great Britain. Public politics also promotes a formation of understanding about the critical analysis of discourse. Over recent years, on the Internet and in mass media, we could observe the course of election campaigns for electing presidents of the USA and France which have filled the blogosphere space too. It certainly represents a new phenomenon. And again life hurriedly ‘delivers’ the latest most topical materials to the researcher: Indignados Movement in Spain, ‘Occupy the Wall Street’ action and demonstrations in Greece, and,

finally, the operation of coalition forces in Libya and liquidation of M. Kaddafi, S. Hussein, O. Ben Laden. The discourse about the economic crisis and the discourse of multi-culturalism also promote the development of categorical mechanism of discourse studies [15].

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### ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ В МЕДИЙНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ: ОБОБЩЕНИЯ И ОСОБЕННОСТИ В ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

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**Аннотация.** Работа посвящена специфике политического дискурса в мировых СМИ на примере освещения событий в Египте 2013 и других последних политических и экономических событий и представляет собой критический обзор русской литературы, написанной на тему средств массовой информации, подчеркивает необходимость разработки когнитивных методов интерпретации, необходимых для понимания глобального медиа-контента, образовавшегося в настоящее время в Интернете. Автор приводит примеры стереотипных выражений и оценочных коннотаций с политической точки зрения в контексте массовой информации. В заключении рассматриваются различные подходы (языковые и риторические) в политическом дискурс-анализе, перечисляются исследования последних событий, формирующих дискурс.

**Ключевые слова:** средства массовой информации; политический дискурс; перевод; оценка; стереотипы; анализ дискурса.