Artículo de investigación

Linguo-Pragmatic Features of Elliptic Constructions in Media Discourse

Características linguo-pragmáticas de las construcciones elípticas en el discurso mediático

Лингвопрагматические особенности эллиптических конструкций в медиа-дискурсе

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Abstract

The article is devoted to a linguistic research of the impact of social media texts on modern society. The article considers the linguistic and pragmatic features of ellipsis in mass media texts and their influence on readers. The argument of the article is illustrated through the discourse analysis of media texts.

The object of the present paper is to analyze ellipsis as a particular characteristic of media texts. Ellipsis is a cultural phenomenon in the language, giving the possibility for the authors to make the communication process more productive. But, on the other hand, it is sometimes difficult to identify what the intended meaning of an elliptical structure is. Thus some fundamental features of ellipsis have been revealed in the course of the research, such as thought viruses, incorporation, speech presupposition, and address to the authority, which clarify the author's intention.

Keywords: elliptic constructions, media discourse, linguistic features, pragmatic features.

Аннотация

Статья посвящена лингвистическому исследованию влияния текстов социальных сетей на современное общество. В статье рассматриваются лингвистические и прагматические особенности эллипсиса в текстах СМИ и их влияние на читателей. Аргументация статьи иллюстрируется дискурсивным анализом медиатекстов. Целью настоящей статьи является анализ эллипсиса как особой характеристики медийных текстов. Эллипсис – это культурное явление в языке, позволяющее авторам сделать процесс общения более продуктивным. Но, с другой стороны, иногда трудно определить, что подразумевается под эллиптической структурой. Таким образом, в ходе исследования были выявлены некоторые фундаментальные особенности эллипсиса, такие как мыслительные вирусы, включение, речевая предпосылка и обращение к органу власти, которые проясняют намерение автора.

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Ключевые   слова: эллиптические конструкции, медиа-дискурс, языковые особенности, прагматические особенности.

Resumen

El artículo está dedicado a una investigación lingüística del impacto de los textos de las redes sociales en la sociedad moderna. El artículo considera las características lingüísticas y pragmáticas de la elipsis en los textos de los medios de comunicación y su influencia en los lectores. El argumento del artículo se ilustra a través del análisis del discurso de los textos mediáticos.

El objetivo del presente artículo es analizar los puntos suspensivos como una característica particular de los textos de los medios de comunicación. La elipsis es un fenómeno cultural en el lenguaje, que ofrece a los autores la posibilidad de que el proceso de comunicación sea más productivo. Pero, por otro lado, a veces es difícil identificar cuál es el significado pretendido de una estructura elíptica. Por lo tanto, se han revelado algunas características fundamentales de la elipsis en el curso de la investigación, como los virus del pensamiento, la incorporación, la presuposición del habla y la dirección a la autoridad, que aclaran la intención del autor.

Palabras clave: construcciones elípticas, discurso mediático, características lingüísticas, características pragmáticas.

Introduction

The study of discourse remains the center of attention in modern linguistics, as it is cross-disciplinary and can be a multidimensional concept. Russian and foreign scientists based their works on T.A. van Dijk's thesis, that discourse is one of the indistinct concepts of linguistics, semantics, and pragmatics. Moreover, discourse, in a broad sense, is a complex communicative event. Media discourse transmits a vivid communicative atmosphere through the minimum amount of words. The use of the smaller number of words leads to the linguistic economy expressed in elliptical constructions. Context acts as a major factor in the formation of ellipsis. Therefore, without context, ellipsis loses meaning and communicative function. The purpose of the article is to consider the main types of elliptic constructions in media discourse and reveals their linguo-pragmatic indicators in the texts.

Materials and methods

As a material for the analysis were considered 300 English media texts. The texts were taken from the websites on the Internet of American and English media from 2015 to 2018: www.youtube.com, www.adsoftheworld.com, www.theodysseyonline.com, www.video.search.yahoo.com, www.tapconet.com/store/product-detail/R4ab/fasten-your-seat-belts-sign?sku=332628&c=Eeab; www.cafepress.com/mf/29673184/drunk-driving-kills_bumper-

sticker?productId=295756705; www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdgljWs60hk www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/lego_violence; www.theodysseyonline.com/stop-treating-people-the-way-you-want-to-be-treated; www.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-t&p=Stop+Global+Warming.+You+Can+Help.#id=52&vid=f96b6e3f8bfb2326d09b81195b0e6501&action=click; www.ecorazzi.com/environmental-ads-wwf-preserve-your-world-preserve-yourself/ and others.

The article is based on a systematic approach to the interdisciplinary analysis of elliptical constructions. Discourse analysis allows us to consider the linguistic and pragmatic information in media texts, in order to reveal the features of successful communication.

Results

The huge flow of information as a result of scientific and technical progress and globalization, has led to a reduction of the amount of words in statements. Over time, the amount of incomplete sentences in texts has increased and, as a result, language has undergone linguistic economy, especially in oral speech. Eventually, language adaptation caused searching new ways of thought expression with enough information for understanding. The ellipsis is used to avoid repetition in language without losing much

meaning. The ellipsis is a linguistically appropriate omission of words or series of words in the statement but the sense of the sentence can be clearly understood.

Hillier (2004) defines ellipsis as 'leaving out' and distinguishes between textual and situational ellipsis. Hoey (1983) treats ellipsis as deletion that occurs "when the structure of one sentence is incomplete and the missing element(s) can be recovered from a previous sentence unambiguously". According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), ellipsis can be regarded as "substitution by zero". Salkie (1995) makes it clear that every unsaid or left out expression cannot be considered an example of ellipsis. On the contrary, he writes, ellipsis is a gap or unsaid information that is known to the listener/reader of the text already, as it refers back to something already said. McCarthy (1991) also holds the idea that

ellipsis is 'a speaker choice made on a pragmatic assessment of the situation, not a compulsory feature when two clauses are joined together'. McCarthy (1991) Halliday and Hassan (1976), and Salkie (1995) shared the view that, in English, ellipsis operates on nominal, verbal and clausal level.

Nominal ellipsis
Nominal ellipsis occurs within the nominal group in which the nominal head of a noun has been omitted and substituted for other modifying elements. Such elements are deictic (determiners), numerative (numerals or other qualifiers), epithets (adjectives) and classifiers (nouns). The role of nominal ellipsis is to upgrade "a word functioning as deictic, numerative, epithet or classifier from the status of modifier to the status of head" (Halliday and Hasan 1976).

Which **scarf** will you wear? – This is the best ○.

Verbal ellipsis
Verbal ellipsis occurs within the verbal group "whose structure does not fully express its systemic features" (Halliday and Hasan 1976).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguish two types of verbal ellipsis: lexical and operator ellipsis.

Have you **been singing?** – Yes, I have ○.

What **have** you **been doing?** – ○ **Eating**.

The difference between the two examples of verbal ellipsis is that in the first example (lexical ellipsis) the lexical verb is omitted from the verbal group, whereas the second one (operator ellipsis) involves the omission of the finite part in the verbal group, the subject is omitted. In operator ellipsis, the lexical verb always remains intact, i.e. it is presented in the

same form in which it is used in the presupposed verbal group.

Clausal ellipsis
Clausal ellipsis involves the omission of the whole clause. According to Halliday and Hasan, the principle of clausal ellipsis is general to all types of questions.

What were they **doing?** – ○ **Playing tennis.**

Besides spoken and written language, which aims at economy and expressiveness respectively, elliptical constructions are common to some special types of text.

Many linguists see text and discourse analysis as the same process whereas some others use these two terms to define different concepts. Text in discourse can be referred to as a genre and it is identified through the manipulation of discourse for a specific purpose (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). T.A. van Dijk describes discourse as

"structured forms of knowledge and the memory of social practices, whereas 'text' refers to concrete oral utterances or written documents" (van Dijk 1985). The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs (Brown 1983). Thus, it is clear that when analyzing discourse, researchers cannot only focus on form or "purely" linguistic facts; they need to pay equal or more attention to

language use in relation to social, political and cultural aspects (Alba-Juez 2016).

With the rapid growth of media and information technology, media discourse has become a leading type of discourse that penetrates into all types of communication. Media discourse is a form of updating information through different communication tools.

A. Kozhemyakin distinguishes two approaches to the definition of media discourse, namely functional and pragmatical. The functional approach sees discourse as an all-embracing concept including the propositional, social, cultural or cognitive contents. Thus, authors such as Levinson (1983) or Cummings (2005) view one of the central concerns of pragmatics to understand the mechanisms that allow speakers to work out the implied meanings of utterances or whole texts.

Prof Dobrosklonskaya views media discourse as a set of processes and products of language activities in the sphere of mass communication in all diversity and complexity of their interactions (Dobrosklonskaya 2008). Media discourse is a multidisciplinary field. In addition to extensive interest in media and cultural studies, it is the subject of scrutiny in linguistics, particularly, conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, ethnography of communication, linguistic anthropology, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics (Talbot 2007).

Thus, the main function of media discourse is to influence mass audience through information transmitted by media channels. Media texts become significant means of forming public opinion and world perception. No matter what type it may be, every text should contain certain indicators used for a specific purpose, i.e. to present information, to amuse, to publicize etc. Different kinds of texts serve different communicative aims. They are produced for a large number of readers, but the important elements are, how and for what reason must these texts be produced and received, and what characteristics must they have in order to fulfill their communicative aims. One of these features is ellipsis, 'meaning without form' which goes against the rules in order to grasp a meaning from word form or the structure of the sentence. (Hardt 1993). Media texts are the reflections of a specific language, and the study of their language yields a considerable amount of information. However sometimes this is too much information for the reader. The ellipsis in media texts helps to avoid overwhelming the reader, while attracting their attention. Ellipsis is considered a major cohesive device, contributing to the efficiency and brevity of a text (Halliday, Hasan 1976).

The role of ellipsis in media discourse can be observed from two perspectives – linguistic and pragmatic, with the former viewing ellipsis in terms of language contents, and the latter considering a certain impact of elliptic constructions on the addressee. The linguistic aspect generally applies only to written discourse, and pragmatics considers both spoken and written statements.

Pragmatic features of elliptic constructions in media discourse can be characterized by the following indicators:

1. **"Thought viruses".**

"Thought viruses" are information that exists in the minds of people on the basis of the virus principle, i.e. which is stored in their memory, performing some functions. It spreads naturally and proves more resilient than competing ideas.

'Fasten your seat belts!'

The use of the **second person singular pronoun** in the appeal to the audience in order to decrease a communicative distance.

'Protect your life from drugs!'.

2. **Hyperbole** (exaggeration) serves to emphasize the problem, underline its severity, and the need for resolution.

'A drop of oil is enough to kill yourself and your family!'
'Drug-driving kills!'

3. **Presupposition** is a particular belief that must be held for a particular rhetorical structure to be understood as correct in a given context. Both the speaker or writer and the listeners or readers must share this background belief in order to communicate.

'Think! Don't use your cell phone while drive or you'll kill conversation.'

4. **Address** to an authority whose influence is based on audience trust, such as numerical data, or a celebrity. This is a favorite method of deception, and is used by all mass media. References to nonexistent authority

emphasize their own trustworthiness in the minds of the target audience.

'Kids should not watch too much TV – Lego.'

5. **Incorporation** as a way of language economy due to the use of pronouns and/ or verbs in the first-person plural.

'Don't treat others the way you don't want to be treated.'
'Stop Global Warming. You Can Help.'
'Preserve your world. Preserve yourself.'

6. **An elliptic echo-question** is used for the purpose to get mental reaction of a dialogue partner towards the previous utterance. This mental reaction can make the addressee answer the question by him or herself, change the subject, evade the question, express the emotions, specify information and win time.

"How much?" Ben asked flatly.
"Seventy-five."
"Seventy-five? Seventy-five thousand? Dollars?"
            "Real estate's at premium in Georgetown."
"Georgetown? Christ on a raft, this isn't Georgetown."

Conclusion

The analysis of ellipsis phenomena in media discourse shows the universal character of this definition. The concept of ellipsis in modern English occupies an uncertain place in the fields of stylistics and semantics, and, unlike context and communicative situation, may vary. The revealed linguistic and pragmatic features of elliptical constructions, such as hyperbole, thought viruses, incorporation, and speech presupposition, prove that the communicative problem of any media text or statement can be solved only through the functional use of the ellipsis. Thus, the use of ellipsis in media texts reduces time and effort in perceiving important information, avoiding repetition. The main reason of implication of elliptical constructions in media text is emphasis on the concrete part of the sentence. Both written and spoken languages show considerable examples of elliptical constructions. In spoken language, ellipsis saves time, in written speech it stands as a stylistic

device. This device helps avoid repetition and what's more important influence reader's thoughts and emotions.

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