

FORMATION OF THE LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FIELD OF MEDIA HYPE IN ELECTRONIC EDITIONS

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Summary

The article is concerned about the mechanisms of impact of the linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion on the information perception by the audience of electronic editions and public opinion shaping. For this purpose, the content of newspaper articles, describing the tragedy of Genoa Bridge collapse in Italy, was analysed. The peculiarities of formation and structure of the lexical-semantic field of the media hype are determined. It was also stated that the field of the analysed sensational materials consists of four layers or levels: Collapse, Fallout, Sympathy, and Blame. The emotional background of such a field can redirect the perception of information in a certain way to shape public opinion. It is possible due to linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion. Within such suggestive methods and techniques as provocation, persuasion and fascination they are frequently used in the process of creating news content to inject additional meanings into the messages.

Key words: electronic edition, suggestion, linguistic means, stylistic means, public opinion.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of the study of linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion, which are used to present information in sensational materials of English-language electronic newspapers is due to the fact that they reach a wide audience of Internet users and have a significant impact on the formation of certain ideas and points of view on important issues for society. The influence of means of suggestion in media content is studied by such scholars as Ye. L. Dotsenko, L. F. Kompantseva, D. Rashkoff, M. M. Prysiashniuk, N. V. Slukhai, O. S. Snytko (suggestion in the Internet environment), T. Borchers, L. Pavliuk (means of persuasion in the media), O. V. Dmytruk, I. V. Sukharuk, L. L. Ilnytska (suggestive technologies in modern media discourse) and others.

The study of the impact of media news content on public opinion is closely related to the theory of media hype, which is intensive reporting of a certain sensational event over a long period of time (*Wien, 2009: 185*). The news wave that arises as a result of a key or triggering event shapes the general mood and attitude of the audience to the event and the people involved not only through facts, figures, statistics and expert opinion polls, but also through the use of framing mechanisms and various linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion that contribute to the evocation of certain images. Thus, media persuasion is complemented by suggestion, which, unlike persuasion, is determined not only and not so much by the content of information as by its external form, expressiveness, and prestige of the source (*Trubitsyna, 2013: 126*). Suggestive technologies are capable of changing the state of consciousness, which results in a change in the way a person perceives information. According to L. F. Kompantseva, suggestion is a new function of linguistics in the information and communication society

(*Kompantseva, 2011: 213*). Sensational events related to social and political life, as well as high-profile tragedies that resulted in the death of people, especially if they are caused by the negligence and mistakes of the authorities, attract the most attention of the audience.

The formation of public opinion on these events is influenced by such aspects of framing as the emphasis on the emotional reactions of the characters, the search for answers to the urgent questions “who is to blame?” and “what can be changed to prevent tragedy in the future?”, the importance of which is related to the audience's personal interest in avoiding similar situations. P. Vasterman argues that media hype creates a spiral of expanding public attention that transforms individual cases into general social problems (*Vasterman, 2005: 514*).

The purpose of our article is to identify the linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion in the content of the electronic newspapers “USA Today”, “The Guardian” and “China Daily” related to the sensational news “Genoa Bridge collapse”. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were set: to conduct a content analysis of the materials of the electronic newspapers “USA today”, “The Guardian” and “China Daily” for August 2018; to identify linguistic and stylistic means within the main techniques of suggestion used in the textual materials of the media hype to influence the perception of the event “Genoa bridge collapse”; to determine the peculiarities of creating the lexical and semantic field of sensational news by means of suggestion.

The object of the study is the content of the electronic newspapers “USA Today”, “The Guardian” and “China Daily”, the subject of the study is linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion. The material of the study is the journalistic materials of the electronic newspapers “USA today”, “The Guardian” and “China Daily” related to the sensational news “Genoa Bridge collapse”, in total 42. The period of appearance of materials on the given topic is 2 weeks (August 14 – August 27, 2018). The main research methods are theoretical research method, qualitative and quantitative content analysis, content monitoring and framework analysis.

2. Suggestive methods of public opinion shaping

In the process of creating news content, the media are guided not only by the desire to inform, but also to shape public opinion, to influence the behavioural response of citizens, i.e. to encourage them to take certain actions. For this purpose, there are suggestive methods and techniques that are used to inject additional meanings into the content of a message. Manipulative verbal influence is carried out through the methods of simplifying thinking, substitution of the system of conceptual values and rating scale, semantic worldview changes, influences on the emotional sphere, increase in the amount of information, frequency of its presentation, special forms of messages (*Klymentova, 2009: 258*). These techniques are especially effective in materials with tragic stories, where the level of emotional reaction of the audience is high. Tragic events are covered and discussed in detail in many publications, turning into a media hype, such as the news “Genoa Bridge collapse”. The peculiarity of this story is that the tragedy was caused by the negligence of the authorities. That is why its coverage in the above-mentioned media outlets received a framing that included direct and hidden accusations, condemnation of various parties responsible for the construction, control and maintenance of the collapsed bridge, condolences to the families of the victims and a symbolic representation of fate in the stories of witnesses. These aspects of the message were particularly noticeable as they received more attention in the context of the event.

To enhance the suggestive impact on the audience's consciousness, the materials of the studied publications use clichés, in particular, stereotypes and labels characterized by emotional and evaluative orientation and conservatism. An example of this is the following quote:

"The stereotype of the Genoese is that they're mean traders: they are, it's said, tough seafaring folk" (1). The example uses emotionally labeled epithets and negative stereotypes about social strata of the Genoese population.

Within the framework of suggestive methods of provocation in the studied materials, we can distinguish the most numerous group of value judgments, as well as the means of irony, criticism, intensification of statements, and rhetorical questions. Here is an example of a value judgment: "A selfie-obsessed politician, he can't resist vanity projects, such as the endlessly debated bridge over the Straits of Messina" (1). A negative assessment of the image of a vain politician is formed by the epithets "selfie-obsessed politician" and "vanity projects". As an example of the technique of ridicule, we can cite a sarcastic statement: "And it's not as if Europhobes can offer anything approaching a convincing alternative plan for their countries – apart, that is, from a jump into the void" (10). The sarcasm is realized by a combination of the value judgment "anything approaching a convincing alternative plan" and the metaphor "a jump into the void". Other means of creating a comic effect are wordplay, phraseology, and antithesis. The arsenal of criticism includes such stylistic figures as idioms (e. g. come to grief), metaphors (e. g. a malaise at Italy's heart), as well as neologisms (e. g. nimbyism) and precedent-setting vocabulary (e. g. Trump-like pledges of protectionism). The intensification of the statement is achieved by a combination of exclamatory sentences with repetitions of modal verbs and similar elliptical constructions with emotional and evaluative vocabulary: "You can't, you mustn't die for negligence! For carelessness! For irresponsibility! For superficiality! For carelessness! For irresponsibility! For superficiality!" (4). Rhetorical questions provoke reflection, hint at an answer, and give rise to doubts. For example: "And what of the hundreds of people evacuated from their houses beside the wreckage site – where will they go?" (2).

Among the suggestive techniques of disguise in sensationalist materials, we found such as assertion or disguise of the author's intention as a well-known fact and mixing facts with reasoning about them. Modal verbs (need, should) and adverbs (no doubt, definitely) with a high degree of categoricity are used to assert facts. The technique of mixing facts with reasoning about them is realized by using exaggeration (e. g. the simplest explanation), euphemisms (e. g. leaves behind (after death)), hedging (e. g. It might be easy to forget), indefinite numerals (e. g. came in their thousands) and conditional sentences.

The use of persuasion is characterized by lexical and synonymous repetition of words, phrases, and parts of sentences. For example: "It came down, everything, the world came down" (4). Here, the repetition of the phrase "came down", creating a lexical rhythm, enhances the conveyance of the experience and despair of the witness of the tragedy. Effective means of this technique include comparison (e. g. like ribbons over the rocks), contrast (e. g. physically unharmed but psychologically traumatized) and generalization (e. g. culture of corruption has led to mediocrity everywhere).

Fascination techniques, such as empathy, reflection, intimidation, and intimation, are aimed at fixing the reader's attention and weakening the effectiveness of the filters of the perception system to enhance the speech impact. The essence of empathy lies in emotional narration and description using epithets, metaphors, and vivid artistic images. The effect of direct transmission of emotional states is enhanced in the content of publications by the use of illustrative materials, photos and videos. For example: "His voice shaking with anger, Battiloro said his son was the "victim of a cruel fate"..." (4). Describing the feelings of a bereaved person encourages sympathy and empathy. A reflection contains a more direct hint, advice, or suggestion about the desired actions and emotions of the recipient. The effectiveness of reflection is enhanced by the use of appeals, personal pronouns, emotional vocabulary, and forms of rhetorical or alternative

questions, as in the following example: "You need to decide – do you keep responding to these emotions, or guarantee security?" (9). In this question, the choice of answer is obvious to the reader. The intimidation technique is based on the principle of *argumentum ad consequentiam* (argument to consequences). This technique is most clearly realized in the form of conditional sentences that may have a tinge of ultimatum or prediction: "If things don't change, there will be a revolution and Italy will be finished" (6). As part of this technique, the textual materials about the "Genoa Bridge collapse" are also characterized by the use of negative vocabulary related to death and grief, which enhances emotional and intellectual reception. The intimation technique is aimed at building a relaxed speech through dialogization, the use of elliptical constructions, short incomplete sentences that imitate a live conversation, colloquial vocabulary and personal pronouns that express the concept of "circle of friends", and include linguistic structures of commonality and trust in the discourse. For example: "Salvini is like one of us, he doesn't hide... he comes to see us, speaks to us, takes photos with us" (9). In this way, the idea of a 'circle of friends' is suggested by the first phrase "one of us" and the subsequent repetition of the pronoun "us".

3. The structure of media hype

The linguistic and stylistic means of suggestive techniques in the sensationalist materials of the studied newspapers play an important role in shaping public opinion by creating frames and forming symbolic systems. They introduce key words and phrases into the text that become key ideas and are imposed on the audience through repetition in different contexts, highlighting certain aspects and reinterpretation. The peculiarity of the lexical and semantic field of the media hype "Genoa Bridge collapse" is the abundance of evaluative vocabulary to denote emotions of high valence (immense pain and emptiness), negative keywords characterizing the consequences of the tragedy (killed, injured, victims, dead, debris, rubble, mangled wreck, funerals, national mourning, fallout) and the event itself (disaster, catastrophe, tragedy, calamity, apocalyptic scenes), the core of which is the word "collapse". It has such meanings as fall, crash, catastrophe, disaster, failure, flattening, etc. The semantic capacity of the word includes a complete description of the situation: the collapse of the bridge, falling into the abyss, flattening and failure of cars, collapse of the surrounding infrastructure, and a national disaster. The lexical and semantic field of "Genoa Bridge collapse" is heavily loaded with symbols of bridge, fate and destiny common to many cultures: "A bridge is a symbol and should never fall, because when a bridge falls, walls go up" (3), "For many, the truck at the brink became a symbol of destiny and survival" (5). The last layer of the field includes vocabulary with different shades of meanings of the concept of guilt and violation of social norms (blame, suspicion, responsibility, condemnation, punishment, corruption, mafias), which is structurally located in the second part of the publications and aims to encourage readers to think about who is to blame and should be held accountable. In this way, the field is divided into four layers or levels: Collapse, Fallout, Sympathy, and Blame.

4. Conclusions

As a result of the study, we have concluded that the most frequent linguistic and stylistic means of suggestion in the sensationalist materials of the electronic newspapers "USA Today", "The Guardian" and "China Daily" are used within the suggestive methods of provocation (value judgments, criticism), persuasion (repetition) and fascination (intimidation). The lexical and semantic field created with the help of the means of suggestion generates an emotional background that can redirect the perception of information in a certain way.

A prospect for further research in this area is a comparative analysis of the impact on public opinion of the suggestive tools of media hype of national importance (elections, natural disasters) and media-generated pseudo-news (fakes).

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