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The Language of Tolerance and the Problem of Non-Ecological Elements in Mass Media

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Abstract

Tolerance and political correctness as social regulatives also extend to the field of lingual standards in mass media. The application of the concept of tolerance to linguistic normativity (The application of the concept of tolerance to linguistic normativity seem to be undertaken for the first time by L.P. Krysin) has received wide resonance and it has been reflected in grammatical descriptions and lexicography. The article attempts to analyze the phenomenon of tolerance in relation to the lexical, grammatical and ethical-linguistic standards of the modern Russian language, as well as to investigate the correlation of the concepts of “tolerance” and “linguoeology”. The analysis of media discourse with the identification of the linguoecological essence of its fragments is carried out; the possibility of interpreting the role of linguistic substandard units in mass media based on the ideas of tolerance and political correctness is discussed. Media discourse is rightly considered to be a generalized model of the national language used by the majority of people. Using the methods of sociolinguistic and linguopragmatic analysis, the authors have studied the correlation of the concepts of language tolerance, linguoecology, substandard and normativity.

Keywords: tolerance, political correctness, linguoecology, linguopragmatics, language standard and substandard, normativity, media discourse.

1. Introduction

The category of tolerance, extremely urgent for modern interdisciplinary science, is still contradictory, “tolerance has not become a social and cultural value for Russian society. First of all, it seems to us, because of the manipulative essence of this regulatory” (Romanova, 2018: 205). Our research experience, on the contrary, presents that tolerance is much more often in the focus of attention of researchers and publicists first of all as a basic value. Another thing is that a perverse, expansive understanding of tolerance in relation to, for example, areas such as deviant behaviour or didactics, causes a natural protest. Another thing is that a perverse, expansive understanding of tolerance in relation to, for example, areas such as deviant behaviour or didactics, causes a natural protest.

To talk about the “manipulative essence” of this regulative, in our opinion, is also wrong: if we proceed from the understanding of manipulation as a destructive phenomenon, as covert influence on the speech (text/discourse) recipient in the interests of the speech (text/discourse) sender, tolerance is not connected with such an impact. The extremely broad semantics (characteristic of most terms of the socio-political sphere) is not a sign of the “manipulative essence” of tolerance.

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The confirmation of the importance of tolerance ideas in Russia is the constant expansion of the field of their application.

Textbooks for universities with such a title as “Linguistic and cultural aspects of tolerance” have appeared (Mikhailova, 2015). The concept of tolerance has begun to extend to the area of lingual standards, and this area will be in the focus of our attention.

2. Materials and methods

The study was carried out on the media discourse material. Media discourse is rightly understood to be a generalized model of the national language used by the majority of people. Using the methods of sociolinguistic and linguopragmatic analysis, the authors have studied the correlation of the concepts of language tolerance, linguoecology, substandard and normativity.

3. Discussion

Features of the modern language standard such as variability and pluralism are widely reflected in general and aspect lexicography (for example the spread of the dictionary litter “*dop.*” (permissible), as well as numerous litters marking stylistic, genre, pragmatic differences of the words). It is possible now to apply the concept of tolerance to the standard. As far as we know, L.P. Krysin was the first who used this idea relating to the language standard (Krysin, 2006).

However, a year before there were articles about tolerance of Russian word formation (Popova, 2005) and tolerance of spelling in intentional advertising texts (Dunev, 2005), but it was L.P. Krysin (Krysin, 2006) who wrote about tolerance of the language standard as a systemic phenomenon affecting all the language levels.

The concept of linguistic tolerance correlates with the ideas of linguistic ecology, focused on the including such language means of expressing into the usus that contribute to the formation of a “language of tolerance” (Boulianne, 2019; Deligiaouri, 2018; Jang, Kim, 2018; Langer, Gruber, 2021), since first of all linguistic tolerance is connected with “tolerant” attitude to variable changes, to variability in language.

Nowadays linguistic ecology, or ecolinguistics, is undergoing a stage of conceptual and methodological formation (Bang, Trampe, 2014; Bastardas-Boada, 2018; Chen, 2016; Fill, 2018; Shin et al., 2022; Stibbe, 2015; Tomaselli, 2021, etc.), but its unshakable postulates are: the language “health” is connected with the diversity and richness of expression forms, the compliance systemic and ethical-linguistic standards. The linguoecological approach to research in language is focused on the analysis of the situational use of language forms, since linguistic semantics and pragmatics are formed in actual situations (Kolmogorova, 2021: 182-201).

The following the standard may seem to be a demand of linguoecology and contradict the ideas of tolerance (Golan et al., 2019; Fitzpatrick, 2018; Kang et al., 2022; Lane, 2020), according to which diverse variation and pluralism of the standard are permissible. Indeed, some examples give reasons to think so:

“The disease rate of *COVID* has been growing for more than a month, the number of detected new *kovid* (*covid*) cases per day is approaching 35 thousand” (Latukhina, 2021: 2).

In Russian this is an example of extreme variability: in one sentence at the same time there are two variants of a new term – transliterated (*COVID*) and non-transliterated (*COVID*), declinable (*kovida*) and non-declinable (*COVID*) one. And there is no question (what variant is right?) either from the author-journalist or from readers. Both variants are accepted as equally possible. We think that this is an example of a new tolerant standard, tolerant to variants, in spite of pragmatic identity between them. Of course, also we can say that this is an example of an unformed standard (due to the novelty of the nomination), however, according to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Modern Russian Language edited by G.N. Sklyarevskaya (Explanatory Dictionary..., 2001), the coexistence of such variants is characteristic of words that have been appearing in the media for decades. That is, most likely, this is a manifestation of a new normativity.

Tolerance can be studied as an “alternative to the “forceful” solution of the conflict arising at the general language level, where the linguistic norms is considered to be the only correct. The normalization of language and the studying errors as its variable changes can be understood as tolerance in the science of language” (Belyakova, 2017: 221).

Linguistic ecology defends variation determined by pragmatic differences. Linguopragmatic and linguoecological studies are closely connected, that was emphasized by many authors, for example: (Steffensen, Fill, 2014: 6-25). In ecolinguistics, a “pragmatic turn” has been carried

out, in which, in turn, a synthesis of methodological, theoretical and terminological approaches has been carried out (Kolmogorova, 2021).

A pragmatically determined deviation from the spelling standard: Title (about the President of Ukraine V. Zelensky): “*Prozeval* (Zelensky missed, slang meaning) *everything*” (Everything was missed, 2022: 4).

The word *prozeval* is written in Cyrillic, but inside of the word the letter Z is written in Latin. In the advertising discourse, this method of playing with letters has become extremely popular.

The intention to emphasize the idea of plurality leads to a deviation from the standard in grammar restricting the pluralization of names with non-specific semantics: *Tourists massively cancel bronі* (bookings, the word *bron'* is used only in singular in Russian) *in Rostov hotels* (Lisitsyna, 2022: 7); *The use of “colored money”*. *Many biznesy* (businesses, the word *biznes* is used in singular in Russian) *that sought preferential loans at various times scrolled them through the currency exchange* (Wasserman, 2022: 7).

For example, the intentional formation of the degrees of comparison from non-qualitative adjectives: “*Not so long ago, our education was in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. When all the people are ravny (equal), but the workers are ravnee (more equal – the comparison degree from the non-qualitative adjective ravnyi) as a class*” (Odoevtseva, 2022: 1).

The media discourse actualizes significant archaisms, including grammatical ones:

“I will finish with the words by Nikolai Leskov, written a century and a half ago: “Today I spoke the word to convince myself of the need for a constant transformation of myself, to have the strength in all the *bor'bakh* (struggle; the word is used in singular in Russian) as a kind of strong and malleable metal, and not flatten like low-lying clay, drying up, preserving the imprint of the last noka that stepped on it” (Batchikov, 2022: 5).

In the media discourse, for a long time good speech has not been associated with the complete elimination of substandard units. For example, the title of the linguistic article: “*The problem of speech purity in the modern world: methods for the eradication of jargonisms, dialectisms and colloquialisms*” (Senchenkova, 2019: 140-145), where the author emphasizes the word *eradication*. The media discourse analysis shows that all these types of lexis (including the invective vernacular) is not just actively used, but often provides expressiveness, subtle nuance of thought, but, of course, in intentional use:

“The aura of the coach turns out to be enough to transform the hero from a loser into a winner (Moskvina, 2022: 15); But in paintings by Maslennikov, in principle, there are many lively and beautiful faces and the delight with their diverse play. Here in the “Bankrupt” Lia Akhedzhakova (matchmaker Ustinya Naumovna) talks-*gutorit* (two hyphenated verbs, one of them is commonly used, another one is from dialect) with Nina Usatova (kupchikha – female merchant – Agrafena Kondratevna) – it is impossible to take your eyes off. <...> “You don't look well, Sir Henry, you need to walk more” – Holmes chiselles, not without secret mockery, slightly despising Sir Henry, but not leaving the framework of his mission, because he is a knight of light and he is obliged to protect *terpily* (in jargon it is a person who suffers humiliation as long as he/she allows to another people to humiliate him/herself) (Moskvina, 2021b: 15); At the first sounds (Vek voli ne vidat' – “For the age will is not to be seen”, the song title is a slang expression used in prison) I felt like I was being pulled, as say, to *nakatit'* (to drink some alcohol, in jargon)” (Moskvina, 2021a: 15).

“I'm a rather suspicious writer. After all, all my books are an ironic confession, where there is no plot, intrigue. I have to grab irony, sadness. <...> I *prosral* something in my life (jargon meaning ‘I had, but don't appreciate it, so I lost it’), and I *nedosral* something (jargon meaning, didn't get enough, the pun is based on the use of a verb with the prefix *nedo-*, which has the meaning of incompleteness of an action, and a verb with the same root is in the first part of the sentence)” (Shirvindt, 2022: 8).

The latter case, of course, is not typical for a high-quality texts. We believe that the rough vernacular is given without punctuation and omissions, because it is a special case, a language game with the methods of verbal action formed by prefixes, this language game would not be understood with a more correct (ecological) producing the great artist utterance.

It is necessary for eradicating all the marked units to hopelessly spoil the texts. However, «as excessive tolerance can lead to anarchy and stop the progressive development of language (and linguistics), so also excessive volitional decisions can cause imbalance and/or stagnation». According

to fair opinion of N.D. Golev (Golev, 2005: 175) that it's all about an adequately interpreted, intentionally determined possibility to expand the regulatory field including the substandard.

4. Results

Critical discursive practices (critical articles and reviews, political analytics) in modern media are unthinkable without substandard units (which, precisely because of the special demand, becomes indistinguishable from the conversational style – the lowest in terms of strict normativity in the hierarchy of styles, but nevertheless the literary language style). For example, fragments of the analytical article by B. Martsinkevich – a physicist-theorist and a well-known publicist:

«After March 31, all these European politicians, American politicians can *lepiti' gorbatogo* (deceive; jargon phraseological unit, literally: sculpt a hunchback) as much as they want, because they are not responsible for their *purga* (lie; phraseological unit; literally: sblizzard). Polish politicians and Polish businessmen can any *makaronnye izdeliya na ushi veshat'* (deceive; phraseological unit; literally: can hang any pasta on somebody's ears), but why should we listen to it? Gentlemen European businessmen, you have right *nesti lyubuyu chush'* (to talk any nonsense; phraseological unit) in your press releases, show journalists at press conferences *kozu-derezu i korchit' rozhi* (make faces; phraseological unit) – we don't care about all this. This is the Ukrainian formula: show *figa* (to demonstrate a contemptuous refusal with an appropriate gesture; phraseological unit; literally: show the muzzle) to Gazprom and overpay to European intermediaries. Acting on these recipes, *Evropa okazalas' v sobstvennoi rifme* (Europe found itself in its own rhyme) (Martsinkevich, 2022: 3). For example, fragments of the film review in the *Literary Newspaper*:

“The Matron (Olga Lapshina) is shown tactfully through the curtain, the queue to her is very reliable. But the appearance of Stalin (Valery Gorin) in her room violated the truthful picture, more so at the time when the Commander-in-Chief was being decided either to be evacuated to Kuibyshev or stay in the Kremlin, the blessed Matron was not in Moscow. It turned out to be a political *zappendya* (fuss; phraseological unit): allegedly Stalin was so scared that he went to the Matron to consult what to do. And the clairvoyant reassured him: “The red rooster will defeat the black one”.

When all this is narrated in the language of realistic cinema, it is perceived as a *propagandistskaya fal'shivka* (propagandist fake; colloquial unit). And arguing with the recent film about Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya: there Stalin stayed in Moscow thanks to Zoya, not Matrona.

Screenwriters (in this case, Elena Raiskaya), *poboites' Boga!* (Fear God! – phraseological unit) And why is the scene with General Vlasik shown, who tried to arrest the boy who lived with Matrona, because he drew Stalin? *Bred* (nonsense; phraseological unit). Then the film suddenly turns from mystical into a military adventure and also completely unreliable one.

It is designed for an audience of 12+. I don't understand how this film can attract adults. Teenagers will not be interested in it, because there is neither love in the script, which is interesting for girls, nor exciting adventures that boys wait for. Young people have seen enough high-quality Western fighters and in order to attract the audience, it is necessary to surprise with quality and fiction, not with *nesurazitsa* (nonsense; phraseological unit)” (Kondrashov, 2022).

It is a well-known fact that the evaluation category is text-forming for genres such as critiques and review. And reasonable unflattering criticism, even expressed with harsh pejoratives (*bred*, *nesurazitsa* – *nonsense*, etc.) coincides the parameters of linguoecology, understood as compliance with the common communicative good. For example:

“Eduard Boyakov is a demagogue-adventurer stupidly unleashed a civil war in the theatre of Tatiana Doronina...I grew up on a beautiful grand theatre – and now I catch myself on a chronic unwillingness to go to these *goskontory krivogo podchineniya i temnykh funktsii, zaezdivshikh klassiku do polnogo izdykhaniya* (state offices of crooked subordination and dark functions broken the classics to the complete exhaustion)... So far, I'm watching theatre figures happily *skulyat* (whining): oh, what a joy, our opus has been nominated for the “Golden Mask”, that's what excites and ignites them – to get into the focus of attention of a successful theatrical *shaika* (gang)!” (Moskvina, 2021c: 19).

When T. Moskvina, analyzing the situation with domestic theatres, uses direct invectives, it does not cause rejection, but, on the contrary, it seems to be a manifestation of a civic and aesthetic position, which, naturally, corresponds to an expansive idea of the ecology of communication.

5. Conclusion

The text compliance with the parameters of linguoecology is more correlated not with the ideas of formal purity and correctness, but with the category of relevance. The appropriate is not the harm to the functioning of the language, but enriches the system by eliminating conceptual or pragmatic lacunae. In a high quality media discourse, any language form is dependent from the context, generated by a linguocultural situation; changing the situation produces more and more new means for responding to it.

“Nowadays the linguistic and ethical situation in media space has significantly improved – partly due to legal methods of regulating the speech activity of a journalist, partly due to the spiritual recovery of society beginning to take place” (Khoroshunova, 2020: 78). In our opinion the further improvement of the situation should be connected with an increase in common linguoecological awareness.

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