Media Discourse as a Research and Media Educational Problem: Approaches and Scientific Schools

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Abstract

The article provides an overview of scientific approaches to interpreting the concept of discourse in order to identify research trends and clarify the interpretation of the concept of "mass media discourse". By specifying this concept, the authors of the article identify its essential features: scale – presence in all top mass media, large response and coverage in social media, involvement of public opinion leaders (experts) in the topic of discourse; duration – at least a year; thematic versatility – the presence of thematic branches – "subdiscourses"; ideological nature and impact on society – the presence of ideas and the promotion of a certain kind of values that can influence public consciousness.

Attention is focused on the concept of dominant media discourse, approaches that study this phenomenon are systematized. With the development of digital formats and the involvement of a large number of people in online communication, mass media discourses play a decisive role in the formation of society's values, influence the choice of activity trajectories of the masses and often have a mobilization character. Identification of the dominant mass media discourse with its themes, speech techniques and transmission of values will make it possible to describe the current state of society. In the article, studies of mass media discourse are grouped according to three bases: mass media discourse with reference to the region; mass media discourse as a phenomenon and object of research; mass media discourse of individual events.

The authors of the article propose to connect the theory of media discourse with educational practices: both specialists in the field of media and their audience, comprehending the type of mass media discourse and its components, can analyze the situation in society through the prism of this phenomenon. The material included more than 100 scientific publications in specialized journals and on the websites of scientific schools related to the study of media discourses.

Keywords: professional media education, discourse, mass media, mass media discourse, research approaches.

1. Introduction

The relevance of the research approaches analysis is related to the fact that media today, in essence, is a social navigator. This fact is confirmed by an increase in media consumption during periods of crisis (such as a pandemic and sanctions), when the bulk of media messages circulate

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around key topics of modern society, touching on the most relevant and contradictory agenda in terms of values.

The work includes an overview of approaches to the study of media discourse aimed at obtaining a general picture of this area of the humanities. Today, the analysis of research approaches, which can be used in teaching practice, is pushed by the increasing competition of media discourses, the demand for the ability of professionals to join the existing one and initiate a new media discourse, scaling their media practices.

2. Materials and methods

The main sources for writing this article were, firstly, scientific articles with the keywords "media discourse", "mass media" (more than 100), as well as the results of applying the project-based learning model in three universities, during which students created their own channels in the online environment.

The comparative method allowed the authors of the article to compare the research results from various media scientific schools and identify the types of these studies.

3. Discussion

In modern science, the term "discourse" is applied to different objects and is used with different meanings. Researchers, explaining the essence of the concept of "discourse," touch on analytical philosophy, stylistics and social linguistics, linguistic anthropology, contextualization theory, cultural studies, sociology and ethnomethodology, which undoubtedly indicates the versatility and breadth of this concept. It is no coincidence that V.I. Karasik argued that "the concept of discourse has become broader than the concept of language" (Karasik, 2002: 189).

The multiplicity of approaches to interpreting the concept of discourse indicates the versatility of this phenomenon. To achieve the goal of our work – to clarify the new term "mass media discourse", we consider it productive to focus the review on the formal, situational, functional and ideological interpretations of the term. Since the understanding of the term "media discourse" is based directly on the understanding of discourse in general, it is logical to briefly dwell onthe history and interpretations of the latter. According to some sources, the term "discourse" was proposed in 1952 by the American scientist Z. Harris, who also introduced the method of discourse analysis in his work (Harris, 1952). Others consider the French scientist E. Benvenisteto be the author of the term. The field of discourse research is rich in theoretical works, but this issue remains relevant to this day and arouses the interest of researchers.

In any case, the birth of the term "discourse" dates back to the 50s of the last century, and the research works of philosophers, linguists, and sociologists are devoted to discourse as a phenomenon. It is enough to mention such famous scientists as Teun A. van Dijk, N.D. Arutyunova, V.I. Karasik, E.S. Kubryakova, M. Foucault, V.E. Chernyavskaya, whose research works focused on the "discourse" category. The formation of discourse and its practical implementation were of interest to such linguists as S.A. Danilova, V.V. Dementyev, A.A. Karamova, O.V. Kosonogova, I.B. Rupert, P. Serio, M. Stubbs, Yu.S. Stepanov et al.

The phenomenon of discourse has been studied by science in a variety of aspects. In the social and human sciences, discourse theory is represented by interdisciplinary philosophical, cultural and linguistic studies.

Thus, "discursive psychology," which emerged as a separate area, examines speech interaction (Potter, Wetherell, 1987); the study of crisis communication situations determines the creation of "activity-oriented theories of discourse" in American conflictology (Tracy, 1995); within the framework of sociolinguistics, the study of discourse focuses on the analysis of the introduction of socio-cognitive practice into cultural texts (in particular, film texts) that form key categories of human existence (Gee, 2014). In sociolinguistic theories, the functional interpretation involves the analysis of discourse as a way of language functioning in a social context (Harder, 2003; Laclau, 1996; Tracy, 1995).

The European school demonstrates attention to the problems of semantic memory and the development of cognitive models of understanding text and discourse (Van Dijk, Kintsch, 1983). According to the works of Teun A. van Dijk, the sociocultural specificity of texts allows us to consider them as a separate type of linguistic use, and the contextuality of discourse creates the prospect of expanding approaches to the processes of production and perception of texts (Van Dijk, 2001).

Another direction of the European school is associated with the synthesis of political science and linguistics – deconstructivist models of linguistics and criticism of political relations. The result of interdisciplinary synthesis is the formation of a separate direction of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Laclau, 1996; Van Dijk, 2006; Wodak, 1996).

For the development of the theory of critical discourse analysis, the works of Shi Xu, a professor at Zhejiang University (ZJU), are significant. In her interpretation, linguistic communication is understood as "the construction of meanings through linguistic symbols," and the placement of linguistic communication in a cultural context will determine the discourse itself (Shi Xu, 2005). The problem of intercultural communication is called by the researcher one of the main problems of critical discourse analysis, which is associated with the functionality of modern intercultural communication, which "not only does not help to bring together a divided world, but, on the contrary, removes different cultures from each other" (Shi Xu, 2005: 43). According to researchers working within the framework of critical discourse analysis, ideas about the meaning-forming and meaning-transmitting roleof linguistic communication should be significantly rethought and can already be considered as key for building intercultural communication (Lee, 2017; Machin, Mayr, 2023).

From the position of formal interpretation in linguistic theory, discourse is considered as a relatively complete (in meaning and structure) speech work of natural oral or written speech (Coulthard, 2014; Schegloff, 1987).

Within the framework of pragmatic theories, the situational interpretation of the term "media discourse" allows us to study the implementation of sociocultural and psychological features of statements. This interpretation is applicable for linguistic (De Saussure, 2007; Segerdahl, 1996), sociological (Chalaby, 1996) and psychological (Potter, Reicher, 1987; Wetherell, 1988) studies.

In philosophical, sociological and political science theories, discourse is considered within the framework of critical approaches as a set of meaning-making rules/requirements for expressing social facts (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2006). Analysis of the ideological interpretation of discourse allows us to identify the key elements of the meanings transmission and determine the role of the media context in the meaning formation (Mouffe, 1995). Notable in this regard is the description of discourse proposed by the Swiss researcher P. Serio. He analyzed the political context of Soviet reality through the prism of language and came to the conclusion that discourse is the use of language in a system of ideologically determined restrictions. The content of P. Serio's definition of discourse includes several points that describe the main characteristics: a specific speech utterance; a unit of language larger than a sentence; impact on the recipient in a certain situation; conversation as the most common speech form; statement from the speaker's position; a set of various communicative means actualized in speech (Serio, 1999).

Researchers from Wuhan and Tianjin Universities (China) Yujia Zhai, Jiaqi Yang, Hezhao Zhang, Wei Lu focused their work on understanding public perception of artificial intelligence through media discourse (Zhai et al., 2020). Scientists Amy Sahmeni and Nur Afifa (Indonesia) based on the theory of T.D. Van Dijk conduct a discourse analysis of ways and methods of identifying the true identity of social actors. This work shows how media discourse studies reveal the hidden ideologies of the existence of power (Sahmeni, Afifah, 2019). M. Kopytowska, a researcher from the University of Lodz (Poland) in her work presents a theoretical point of view on discourse in social networks, understood as a product and as a process. The author identifies the paradigm of discourse in social networks, emphasizing both horizontal (industrial) and vertical (social) aspects of digital communication (Kopytowska, 2022).

In this article we would like to focus on a part of the discourse – mass media discourse, which has become the object of research in the humanities mainly in the last two decades and mainly among linguists. Thus, N.N. Boldyrev and T.N. Efimenko, using a cognitive approach, consider the problem of media discourse "in the context of the linguistic interpretation of scientific knowledge in the media" (Boldyrev, Efimenko, 2022: 355). A significant contribution to the study of media discourse was made by the works of E.N. Basovskaya, T.G. Dobrosklonskaya, M.R. Zheltukhina, A.A. Kibrik, N.I. Klushina, A.V. Polonsky, M. Talbot, N. Fraklo and others. In Russia, entire scientific philological schools have emerged that study mass media discourse. However, it should be noted that clarification of the difference between the concepts of "media discourse" and "mass media discourse" could not be found in scientific publications.

It is important to point out the results of work in the study of mass media discourse by the Belgorod media scientific school, which has been holding the International Conference "Discoursology and Media Criticism" since 2006 and has dozens of publications on media criticism and discourse theory. The works of E.A. Kozhemyakin consider two approaches to defining the concept of "media discourse". According to the first one, media discourse is associated with institutions (branches of government, organizations, other subjects of communication), the second approach proceeds from the fact that it is the mass media that are the basis for the creation of media discourse, which appears as a complex of related institutional discourses (sports, medical, etc.). E.A. Kozhemyakin understands media discourse as "thematically focused, culturally determined speech-thinking activityin the mass media space" (Kozhemyakin, 2010: 16).

On the one hand, media discourse is studied as thematically specific, such as pedagogical, scientific, religious, political, etc. On the other hand, media discourse is interpreted as "any type of discourse implemented in the field of mass communication" prepared by the media (Kozhemyakin, 2010: 16). This point of view is supported by Moscow linguist N.I. Klushina: "the space of media discourse consists of areas of intersection of media and politics (political media discourse), media and science (scientific media discourse), media and law (legal media discourse), media and religion (religious media discourse) and etc." (Klushina, 2014: 68).

The study of mass media discourse is also carried out on the basis of the St. Petersburg School of Media Linguistics and the publications of the International Scientific Journal "Media Linguistics", established in 2014 by St. Petersburg State University (indexed in Scopus). The magazine contains more than ten articles with the word "media discourse" in the title. Special mention should be made of the publications by L.R. Duskaeva, the scientific editor of the journal, who considers the communicative framework of media solidarity with its addressee as a resource for the development, scaling of media discourse and its influence on society. In particular, we are talking about speech etiquette as a linguistic tool for the self-organization of online communities (Duskaeva, Ivanova, 2020: 16-18).

In turn, the Ural School of Media Discourse Analysis headed by E.V. Chepkina (Chepkina, Lemeseva, 2017), Ural Federal University explores the conflict media discourse to find the identificationsof Russians in journalistic discourse using a text-generating system. The basis for the emerging theory was the works of French and Russian structuralists and post-structuralists (R. Bart, Y. Kristeva, Y. Lotman, B. Uspensky, etc.). The theory of discourse of this school was directly influenced by the works of F. Guattari, J. Deleuze, P. Serio, M. Foucault, etc. The works of this scientific school are united by an interest in non-functional discourses (journalism, advertising, politics, memories), reliance on post-classical, post-structuralist concepts of language, text, discourse. The principle of organizing discursive identity in first-person speech was studied by L.V. Enina, who belongs to this school (Enina, 2016).

Speaking about publications representing thematic discourses in the mass media that influence the society, it is necessary to mention the review made by the authors of the National Research University "Higher School of Economics". However, this review concerns research done by American scientists on the material of English-language network media for 2021, and it identifies the dominant discourses of racism, the COVID-19 pandemic, feminism and the representation of women (Vazhenina et al., 2022). It is interesting that the authors of this review, speaking about dominant media discourses, do not define dominant mass media discourse and its differences from non-dominant one. There are no survey studies of dominant mass media discourses based on Russian-language media resources, however, there are some works related to individual mass media discourses that have the characteristics of a dominant one. For example, environmental mass media discourse, which can be called dominant due to its duration, scale and great influence on the transformation of values, especially of young people (Kaminskaya et al., 2019).

Systematization of the research paradigm of mass media discourse and the identification of the dominant mass media discourse as a phenomenon seems promising not only for the scientific community, but also for the practice of media education in the conditions of mediatization and digitalization of reality. Thus, Nikolay Khilko and Nina Genova, considering the development of competencies in the context of student training, note: "Basic competencies come to the cognitive component of media literacy" (Khilko, Genova, 2023: 425). In the works of A. Fedorov, the discourses of media education and media criticism in the domestic educational process are closely studied (Fedorov et al., 2017) and the concept of means of attracting and retaining the attention of the audience is developed in detail (Fedorov, 2015).

4. Results

Thus, the listed main directions of this research prove the interdisciplinarity of discourse as a subject of scientific analysis.

Based on the studies that mention the concept of "dominant media discourse," the authors of the article identify the following properties of dominant mass media discourse as a phenomenon:

1. Scale – presence in all top mass media, large response and coverage in social media and involvement of public opinion leaders (experts) in the topic of discourse;

2. Duration – at least a year;

3. Thematic versatility – the presence of thematic branches – "subdiscourses";

4. Ideological nature and influence on society – the presence of ideas and the promotion of a certain kind of values that can influence public consciousness.

Institutional discourses that are implemented by institutions through the media (for example, judicial media discourse) are least often considered in Russian philological science due to the fact that they are aimed at a narrow target audience. Most studies are focused on thematic discourses that are born at the intersection of the media efforts of many social actors, involving more and more new adherents, reflecting social trends and value meanings of modern Russian society.

Research on mass media discourse and mass media discourse can be grouped on three grounds:

1. Mass media discourse with reference to the region (Gizdatov 2015; Polyakova, 2021; Pushkareva, 2017);

2. Mass media discourse as a phenomenon and object of research (Alefirenko, 2016; Ivchenkov, 2018; Terskikh, 2009);

3. Mass media discourse of individual events (Bushev, 2019).

Since media is broadly interpreted by most researchers not only as a channel of mass communication, but also as a channel of interpersonal communication, it is appropriate here to clarify the definition of mass media discourse and distinguish between two terms – "media discourse" and "mass media discourse". Obviously, the latter will be closely connected with the broader concept of "media discourse," which, in the context of this study, we define by referring to M.R. Zheltukhina. She understands media discourse as "verbal or nonverbal, oral or written text in combination with pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological and other factors expressed by the mass media, taken in the event aspect, representing an action participating in sociocultural interaction and reflecting the mechanism of consciousness of communicants" (Zheltukhina, 2016: 293).

At the same time, most researchers focus their attention precisely on mass media discourse as the central, most significant part of media discourse, considering, following T.G. Dobrosklonskaya that important directions of its research today are approaches formed within the framework of cognitive linguistics (Dobrosklonskaya, 2014: 185). It is important to note that T.G. Dobrosklonskaya, highlighting mass media discourse as an object of scientific description, does not define this concept. We propose to understand mass media discourse as verbal and non-verbal, thematically focused speech and mental activity carried out in the space of mass media and reflecting the mechanisms of communicants' awareness of the subject of the mass media message.

Mass media discourse is closely connected with the values of society, with political, economic and other spheres. Considering it as a holistic entity associated with various fields of activity, we classify it as an interinstitutional phenomenon.

Mass media discourses postulate certain values that are supported/not supported by target audiences: the scale of discourses, their distribution and impact on society are associated with discussions about values and assessments of phenomena. The formation of society's values occurs with the direct participation of the mass media. Today it is an indisputable fact, which stimulated discussions in the academic environment and among practicing journalists about the mission of a journalist in this process and even the emergence in the 21st century of a new research branch in the theory of journalism – the axiology of journalism , which considers "journalism as a source and retransmitterof the values of society in all their subject-semantic diversity, as well as journalism itself as a social value" (Sidorov, 2016: 14).

The devaluation of the previous value system in the 1990s and the uncertainty of the new one stimulated the study of mass media discourse in the context of the value paradigm. The epochal break in Russia was characterized by value uncertainty and disorientation of a large part of the population, and the main result of this period was axiological pluralism, the emergence of several axiological paradigms and increasing their distance from each other.

Not only humanities, but also Russian journalistic practice faced the challenge of formulating value meanings. Today, power structures are also striving to formulate values that are important for preserving the stability and integrity of the country. Thus, according to the Presidential Decree (Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 809), traditional Russian spiritual and moral values include, first of all, life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, strong family, creative work, priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and continuity of generations, unity of the peoples of Russia. The document emphasizes that traditional Russian spiritual and moral values unite our multinational and multi-religious country. Mass media discourse transmits and shapes values. The transmission of values in mass media discourse often occurs not directly, but through the interpretation of events and the creation of images, many of which have an archetypal basis (Zvereva, Shesterina, 2022). Images allow us "to form the national-cultural specificity of discourse" (Boldyrev, Dubrovskaya, 2015: 14).

The materials for identifying the values transmitted by mass media discourses are, first of all, journalistic texts. Thus, V.V. Antropova, who belongs to the Chelyabinsk scientific school of media research, through concept analysis, identified three value models reflected in the leading media of the last decade, which are associated with a certain type of media addressee (Antropova, 2021).

High-quality press, according to the results of research by V.V. Antropova, demonstrates a commitment to the innovative-reflexive model, in the center of which is the image of a "reflective innovator." This type of addressee as an "active rationalist intellectual" correlates with the "innovative-conservative" model of the press, while the mass press forms a "conformal consumer" model, creating a "mentally mobile value consciousness" (Antropova, 2021: 38).

However, with regard to the study of values in mass media discourses, as a rule, social media material is outside the scope of research attention, although it is through network technologies that media discourses have a great influence on society. Likewise, A.V. Baychik, developing the ideas of the St. Petersburg axiological school of media research, in her dissertation presented the mass media space as a space of value conflict (Baichik, 2022). The focus of A.V. Baychik's attention is on the value conflict associated with the political confrontation between various forces and movements. At the same time, the dissertation deals primarily with registered media.

The functioning of the mass media is comprehensively shown in the works of structural functionalism (Luhmann, 2005). The features of the information society, generated by the total influence of the media and the trajectory of the civic activity formation in the information age, are covered by Manuel Castells, who sees the principle of networks in the organization of society itself, in which today each subject is interconnected with others (Castells, 2000: 62-63). Digital communications play a leading role in coordinating the actions of subjects. At the same time, although digital technologies have decentralized information flows, they can be managed to scale social processes. M. Castells explains the entire transformation of social processes through the transformation of communicative practices, "since it is through communication that human consciousness interacts with his social and natural environment. This process of communication occurs in accordance with the structure, culture, organization and technology of communication in a given society" (Castells, 2016: 20-21). In the concept of M. Castells, the strength of power correlates with its ability to control communication and thus influence public consciousness, be it state power or the power of various organizations.

It is these circumstances that make the study of media discourses important for media educational practice: it is necessary not only to teach students to get involved in the media process, but also to comprehend it in its entirety in the context of social processes.

5. Conclusion

To summarize the above, it should be noted that Russian philological science has developed various approaches to the study of mass media discourses that reflect the mental state of Russian society, since mass media communication is a space in which not only events are reflected, but also their meanings, contexts and interpretations.

One of the promising approaches, reflecting the social trends of recent years, is the approach from the point of view of studying the values broadcast in the mass media. This approach should take into account communication theories that allow us to reveal the specifics of technologies

affecting society. Comprehensive studies of the dominant mass media discourses in Russia today seem to be a prospect not only for modern Russian humanities, but also for media education.

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