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The Media Text vs Media Context: Semantics of Tropes

Ella Kulikova ^{a, b, *}, Victor Barabash ^a

^a Peoples' Friendship University of Russia named after Patrice Lumumba (RUDN University named after Patrice Lumumba), Russian Federation

^b Rostov State University of Economics, Russian Federation

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the semantics of tropes used in modern media discourse, taking into consideration their elocutionary and illocutionary features.

Traditional forms of social interaction have moved into the information space, where all the types of conflicts manifest themselves. These are the conflict of ideological and value attitudes, the conflict of moral values of the information society, etc. The addressee/author of the media text uses all possible stylistic means of representation to enhance the appeal. Tropes and toposes are used to express, among other things, the conflicting intention of the addressee/author of the media text, which is the purpose of the study of this article. The article scientific novelty is to extrapolate the study of tropes and toposes in the implementation of conflict intentions for the development of media literacy, identification conflict text and conflict context marks were analyzed. The study is based on traditional media linguistic methods linguistics as well as methods of content analysis and intent analysis, which can be considered to be effective in the field of media rhetoric and media stylistics.

The empirical material is current media texts presented in different traditional and Internet-mediated forms. Media literacy education is essential for a wide readership and should be a part of school education. Teaching such subjects is very important for potential addressees/collective addressees of a media discourse/text. These disciplines should be based on the classical and modern texts. It will ensure developing not only language sense and preventing and avoiding conflicts, but it will ensure developing media literacy. Media education is extremely useful for those who write in their blogs as well as in social networks.

Keywords: media discourse, standard, media communication, media context, topos, trope, evaluation, conflict.

1. Introduction

The media space naturally acts as a platform for comparing and fighting different values. Value conflicts are always contradictions reflecting the diversity of existing points of view.

Today, traditional forms of social interaction have moved into the information space, where all the types of conflicts manifest themselves. These are the conflict of ideological and value attitudes, the conflict of moral values of the information society, etc. Value “splits” and “divisions” are directly reflected in media toposes (in comparisons) and tropes (metaphor). The processes of interpretation and conceptualization are interrelated, and tropes such as comparisons and metaphors are integrative and basic for them.

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: kulikova_ella21@mail.ru (E. Kulikova)

An important and relevant area of analysis is the study of tropes as markers of conflict/non-conflict communication (Ozbek et al., 2023; Volkova, 2018; Volkova et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2023), as well as the study of their role in the formation of contextually determined shades of semantics, taking into consideration their elocutionary and illocutionary features, important both for the addresser and addressees of media texts in terms of preventing possible conflicts. All this indicates the relevance of the study. The authors set a purpose to analyze the use of basic tropes such as metaphor and metonymy as well as toposes in media texts.

The article scientific novelty is to extrapolate the study of tropes and toposes in the implementation of conflict intentions for the development of media literacy, identification conflict text and conflict context marks were analyzed.

2. Materials and methods

The study is based on traditional media linguistic methods linguistics as well as methods of content analysis and intent analysis, which can be considered to be effective in the field of media rhetoric and media stylistics.

The empirical material is current media texts presented in various forms, both traditional and Internet-mediated. The empirical material is current media texts presented in different traditional and Internet-mediated forms.

3. Discussion

Quantitative evaluation is considered to be the evaluation of an intellectual (or rational) type, however, it is obvious that dividing evaluations (Kang et al., 2022) into emotional and rational (Brusenskaya, Kulikova, 2018) is conventional (Kang et al., 2022), because, as we can see from the examples, emotional (on the scale of good/bad) (Lane, 2020; Muzykant et al., 2023; Shin et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2022) and rational (in terms of quantity) (Brusenskaya et al., 2018; Brusenskaya et al., 2021) are closely connected in evaluation (both *ordy* (hordes) and *tonny* (tons) are unambiguous pejoratives).

The heuristic functions of the main tropes (Kayal, Saha, 2023; Langer, Gruber, 2021) and their ability to provide a broader view of the object are well known (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2015; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2018; Fedorov et al., 2019; Gálik et al., 2024; Kulikova, 2022; Kulikova, Barabash, 2024a; Kulikova, Barabash, 2024b; Kulikova, Brusenskaya, 2024; Macgilchrist et al., 2020).

The possibilities of tropes for explicating value “separations” have been less studied (Fedorov, 2001; Fedorov, 2009; Fedorov, 2010; Fedorov et al., 2014; Fedorov, Chelysheva, 2002; Stoumpos et al., 2023; Švelch, 2022). Meanwhile, the studied material proves, tropes are often used to position, compare and contrast social values and to explicate conflict.

According to G.G. Khazagerov (Khazagerov, 2020), in the field of eloquence today, due to the visualization of culture and the predominance of cyberspace, it is necessary to pay close attention to metonymy. It itself and the phenomena correlating with it (both verbal and non-verbal ones), which are close to the phenomenon of metonymy, for example, memes, semantic prototypes, model examples, etc. are extremely important for modern communication. For example, metonymy as an expressive concise unit in the media:

“Therefore, to talk about the ugliness of business is to talk about the ugliness of the whole society. Is it necessary? I think it's very necessary. Because there is nothing more useful than a direct look at things (also a wonderful expression from “Oblomov”) and at oneself. Any improvement begins with the recognition of imperfection. Starting with the compilation of the defective statement” (Voevodina, 2011).

In this context, the author expresses her intention using a jargon unit:

“But what the EGE (abbreviation used for Unified State Exam) completely destroyed it is general secondary education. He's gone! Graduates of the school in the last form, and the most prudent ones in the last two or even three ones, learn only those subjects that they will take for the Unified State Exam. The rest are simply “zabivayut”) (“scored” – jargons verb used in Present Tense, plural). A pragmatic mother mentored her daughter in front of me: “Stop doing nonsense, don't waste your time”. “Nonsense” is physics, chemistry, biology, in which her daughter did not need the Unified State Exam. And the teachers get into the position: they're not animals. Ignorance of non-Unified State Exam subjects is not strictly questioned” (Voevodina, 2017)

The author/addressee of this media text uses the plural form of the noun “woman” in the direct meaning, and the singular form to express a generalized collective meaning:

“What a magnificent irony of history! Women began working outside the home in an effort to overcome their second-rate. But it was through mass work that they demonstrated this second-class status in the most vivid way.

Everything a woman does is marked by imitation. It is probably more correct to say not second-rate, but secondary nature. All female wisdom is a rehash of male wisdom. Women turn out to be good popularizers of someone's ideas, translators - in the broadest sense of the word. They often turn out to be good translators in the true sense of the word.

In their work, women often turn out to be what nature prescribes for them. They are friends, assistants of men. If you think about it, that's exactly what they are. Every great professional man has a gaggle of female fans around him” (Voevodina, 2015).

A modern media text is impossible without the topos of comparison. Indirect comparison in modern media can form sarcasm in relation to the described phenomena:

“In general, natural science subjects are best suited for the Unified State Exam. The humanitarian ones are worse. After all, there is a lot of subjective, unsubstantiated in humanitarian subjects.

The Russian exam includes questions on speech culture: this, in my opinion, is good. But whether a student needs to know the names of different figures of speech, such as litotes, parcellations or epiphora– I am not sure. That is, it is not harmful to mention this in the classroom, but it is much more useful to develop thoughtful reading and writing skills. This is exactly what schoolchildren lack. And no wonder! Today's pupil writes very few texts and reads very few of them. How was it before? Rewrite and insert the missing letters, or underline the adverbs, and replace direct speech with indirect speech. In any case, it was necessary to rewrite, and visual memory was reinforced by motor memory, when the hand itself knows how to write. Now children have ready-made “workbooks” where they insert letters directly into the text, connect the necessary words with arrows, and do not completely rewrite everything. As a result, they don't remember how to spell words. They're just words that aren't regulated by any rules, and there are plenty of them in our language” (Voevodina, 2017).

Indirect comparison in modern media can form sarcasm in relation to the described phenomena.

4. Results

Ironic modality prevails in modern media discourse in all genres except purely informational ones:

“By the way, I am very familiar with this “generation”: these are my young employees. Yes, they often do not know what, in the opinion of the older generation, they should know. For example, how many world wars there were. They are monstrously illiterate: I keep removing misspelled ads from the wall – and this is what passed through the filter of a computer spell checker. I can't imagine what would have happened if they had written by hand. But every generation has its own knowledge.

Do you need perfect spelling today if your computer checks it? I don't know. My grandmother used to say, “If I read a misspelled text, I don't trust the content”. I admit it: me too. But how true is that? Today's young people have some knowledge, skills and abilities of their own, called “competencies” in the Western way. Which my grandmother and I probably won't have. A very unpleasant story is emerging (Voevodina, 2017)

These examples clearly show the implicit essence of the negative evaluation contained in irony, the recognition of which is based on presuppositions common to all recipients. The authors are ironic about what, in their opinion, needs criticism, and they undoubtedly have an impact on the way readers think and behave.

The figure of irony is based on the conflict “between the pseudo-positive illocution of an explicit statement and negative extralinguistic parameters” (Sleptsova, 2008: 8). Irony is not only as good as direct denunciation, invective, but also gives an increase in meaning, since the ironic narrative explicitly presents a positive (deliberate, fake, false) evaluation, and its opposite is read. In the author's point of view, it is negative, but true evaluation.

The tradition in studying tropes and toposes as an object of rhetoric is very serious based on well-known ancient and modern researches. However tropes and toposes as markers of conflict communication, their conflict ability in addressee worldview creation have not presented yet. For example, how these potencies are realized in media comparisons:

“One of the exam innovations that came out of a leaky bag under the new minister is this: at the end of the 9th form, a pupil must demonstrate the ability to verbally speak in their native language on a given topic. It must be understood that a revived essay is responsible for the ability to express oneself in writing” (Voevodina, 2017)

There is type of comparison in the nomenclature of tropes, as comparatia in which similarities are found between distant objects.

Implicitness is a universal property of linguistic signs and it is expressed through multilevel units of language/speech – from word forms, combinations of words, actual phrases, sentences/utterances, as well as texts.

As is known, the plan of content and the plan of expression (Algavi et al., 2021) act as oppositional, which correspond to the implicitness/explicitness of information, in the latter case these are implicit meanings.

When information is explicit, dictionary definitions of language units act as the basis, and new meanings/implicit information are determined by the media context.

According to V.Z. Demyankov: “It is rare for linguistic theory today to disagree with the following basic idea of the interpretive approach: meanings do not exist by themselves, they are neither “contained” in words and sentences nor “extracted” from them, but are they are “calculated” by the interpreter based on the properties of speech and its context” (Demyankov, 2006: 49). Because, as a rule, words and utterances, in addition to direct, may have indirect, figurative meanings it forms implicit semantics. Implicit semantics is decoded depending on the recipient’s worldview and background.

According to T.A. Vorontsova (Vorontsova, 2006), the technique of rejecting an identifying nomination is a frequent and regular way to implicitly express negative evaluation towards an interlocutor, for example, in different genres of media texts (interviews, talk shows, communication in the blogosphere, taking into consideration the formation of hypertext in the Internet media space through comments. In the public version of media discourse, the following types of such nominations are used: nominations by gender, by profession/occupation, by age. For example:

“A rabotnica (worker – female) in a red kerchief, a deputy, a delegate, komsomolka-vuzovka (Komsomol-member of the university – female) – these are the signs of the new age. Of course, there were many housewives, but the ideal, the example, the dream was there, at work. As they taught a woman could reach any status: become an engineer (male, standard form), scientist (male, standard form), deputy (male, standard form)<...> There was nothing to say about the medichki (medics – female, colloquial) with the uchitel’nicy (teachers – female), they were all there <...> There were a lot of tetki-inzhenershi (aunts-engineers – female, colloquial, contemptuous form) <...> My mother was a inzhener-mekhanik (mechanical engineer – male, standard form), and my mother-in-law was a inzhener-khimik (chemical engineer – male, standard form)” (Voevodina, 2015).

The complication of semantics due to the connotative components that are able to mark negative/positive evaluation can be formed due to the media context, including in the broad context of the situation.

“Modern media discourse is characterized by conflictogenicity, a tendency to violate communicative, ethical, and legal standards of communication in public discourse, the use of means of speech aggression and manipulation, and therefore issues of linguistic security and communicative ethics, especially in online media, are acute” (Kulikova, 2020: 5).

The asymmetric dualism of the linguistic sign as a universal property of the language system causes incomplete correspondence and even mismatch of the plan of expression and the plan of content. The lack of isomorphism between the signifier and the signified in language generates such a cardinal property of language as implicitness ensuring to avoid direct negative evaluation.

5. Conclusion

The complication of meanings in media discourse also occurs taking into considerations presuppositions (Shilina et al., 2023), since this concept includes different implicit meanings and shades of meanings that are outside the verbally represented units, but connected with them by the context as a whole based on linguistic connections, as well as associative ones, which determines an accurate and complete understanding of information and contextual interpretation, intentionally selected by the media text author.

Utterances with implicit semantics implement non-iconic methods of language coding. The research of evaluation in non-conflict, so-called “soft” communication is highly relevant. It is important for a journalist/author/ addresser of a media text to subtly nuance a thought, to know the so-called “soft”, non-conflicting evaluation, to know a rich palette of rhetorical/stylistic means of language for creating a pragmatic effect in media communication.

Teaching such subjects is very important for potential addressees/collective addressees of a media discourse/text. These disciplines should be based on the classical and modern texts. It will ensure developing not only language sense and preventing and avoiding conflicts, but it will ensure developing media literacy. Media education is extremely useful for those who write in their blogs as well as in social networks.

Media literacy is extremely useful for a wide readership, and, in our opinion, it should become part of school education (for example in the form of electives or integrative courses of additional education, etc.).

First education of pupils at school, teaching them in Russian and native languages, as well as in literature can prepare the important media literacy base. Since the impact of media on all the spheres is getting more and it is necessary for everyone to master media literacy, moreover socialization of personality at any stage is impossible without media literacy.

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