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Quantitative Evaluation as an Expressive Means in Media Discourse

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Abstract

The phenomenon of quantification in general and quantitative evaluation in particular is extremely important for the text content. Emotional evaluation is considered to be connected with the feature of “good”/“bad”, intellectual evaluation – with “reliability”/“unreliability”, taking into consideration not only space and time continuum, but also quantitative evaluation. Such an evaluation involves comparison with some kind of average normative indicator or corresponding to the expectations of communicants. Quantitative evaluation is characterized by the pragmatic co-meanings, including co-meanings created due to correlations of units “many/few” with “good/bad”. In the context, the use of multi-level quantifiers makes it possible to express different connotations. Quantitative evaluation is connected with the intellectual, logical and pragmatic aspects of interpretation of multilevel linguistic units. In the article, the expressive possibilities of multi-level means of quantitative evaluation are identified based on 2021–2023 media discourse. Occasional quantification of uncountable objects, non-standard compatibility with mesuratives, hyperbole and meiosis present increased expressiveness, and, consequently, perlocution of the media text. Quantitative evaluation provides comprehension and interpretation of reality taking into consideration non-discreteness/discreteness. A complicated system of multi-level units with functionally pragmatic (including stylistic and rhetorical) diversity and variability is used to express a quantitative evaluation. The media text author, nominating quantitative differences, focuses on the pragmatic amplification function typical for quantifiers. Quantitative evaluation is pragmatically oriented, that is, significant for media discourse.

Keywords: media discourse, media grammar, quantifiability, evaluation category, quantitative evaluation.

1. Introduction

Many authors (Arutyunova, 1988; Galich, 1999; Gaylomazova, 2012, etc.) propose to make difference between emotional and intellectual evaluation, although it would be rather conventional, since in real functioning both emotional and rational meanings are presented in evaluation units. As a rule, emotional evaluation is considered to be connected with the feature of “good”/“bad”, intellectual evaluation – with “reliability”/“unreliability”, taking into consideration not only space and time continuum, but also quantitative evaluation. Such evaluation involves comparison with some kind of average normative indicator or corresponding to the expectations of communicants. Quantitative evaluation is characterized by pragmatic co-meanings, including co-meanings created due to correlations of units “many/few” with “good/bad”. In the context, the use of multi-level

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quantifiers makes it possible to express different connotations. Quantitative evaluation is connected with the intellectual, logical and pragmatic aspects of interpretation of multilevel linguistic units.

It is relevant to study units with the quantitative evaluation semantics, taking into consideration the categories of definiteness/indefiniteness, discreteness/non-discreteness, as well as their role in creating the interpretation of media texts.

2. Materials and methods

In the article, the expressive possibilities of multi-level means of quantitative evaluation are identified based on 2021–2023 media discourse with the contextual and linguopragmatic analysis.

3. Discussion

“Evaluation is a subjective expression of the significance of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world, and significance is usually understood as the ability or inability to meet a person's social needs” (Belyaeva, 2009: 162). It is the evaluation that gives a “humanized’ linguistic picture of the world. According to the right opinion of E.N. Gaylomazova (Gaylomazova, 2012: 8), quantitative evaluation is largely discursive, that is, it depends on the type of discourse. In media discourse, many parameters of quantitative evaluation depend on the tasks of perlocution (Deligiaouri, 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2018; Golan et al., 2019; Jang, Kim, 2018; Kang et al., 2022; Kulikova et al., 2019; 2021; Kulikova, Barabash, 2022; Kulikova, Tedeeva, 2022; Lane, 2020; Langer, Gruber, 2021; Shin et al., 2022; Van Duyn, Collier, 2019; Wenzel, 2019).

Media use the whole palette of quantitative evaluation: substantives with quantifying semantics (including metaphorical one), numerals, evaluative numerical forms of nouns (such as the plural hyperbolic or plural sensational), word-formative means of expressing intensity and iterativity (methods of verbal action, repetitions, etc.), comparison category, discursive units (first of all, particles) and etc.

It should be admitted that not the means used for nominating quantity (e.g., numerals in their main function) are expressive, but the means of quantitative evaluation, such as words designating measure, weight, quantity, used intentionally metaphorically (Belyaeva, 2009). It may be illustrated by this example:

“The media were filled with jokes about Lukashenko's meeting with wonderfully dressed Zimbabweans, memes about a stuffed lion presented to the president of Belarus and tons of deep political analytics about the fact that now Alexander Grigoryevich is not allowed to visit important white gentlemen, so he has to go to someone you don't understand” (Zaitsev, 2023a: 2).

It is clear that this is a case of “a lot” + “bad”, that a noun with a meaning of weight creates an ironic sound. Another example:

“By the way, kilometres of books by Bykov, Ulitskaya and Rubina were sold at this festival” (Serdechnova, 2022: 13); “In the old days, such a possibility would have generated a ton of profiteering...” (Zaitsev, 2023b: 2).

As we can see, in media, the system of measurement, or mesuratives, i.e. the nominations for of units of measure, weight, length, is used in a peculiar way: they combine the signs of nouns with the meaning of quality and characteristics of numerals (quantitative meaning). To create and enhance expressiveness, they are used as a stylistic means.

For the same purpose evaluative nouns with collective semantics such as *crowd*, *herd*, *horde*, which, along with the semantics of plurality, have a powerful charge of pejorativeness:

“A horde of PR specialists, activists, employees of “urban media”, Twitter essayists and Facebook publicists scattered across Europe in in waiting for the same well-fed life...” (Zaitsev, 2022: 2).

Lexical quantifiers of this type syncretically express the quantitative meaning connected with the manifestation of pejorativeness.

It is interesting, that the units with so-called diminutive suffixes do not have semantics of reducing the number or quantity at all. For example, the joke: “Polchasika (half an hour is the diminutive from *polchasa*) is more than half an hour” (Sannikov, 2003: 526; Belyaeva, 2008: 74-78), the essence of which is a reference to the types of discourse and typical circumstances of the use: the diminutives are intentionally used in informal communication, they are gender-coloured (women use them more often), so it is impossible to expect an exact match to the nominal amount.

In addition to lexemes, some idioms are also aimed at expressing quantitative semantics: as a rule, this is due to the idea of the minimum or maximum quantity/size: *kot naplakal*, *s gul'kin nos* (it's slim pickings, the Russian idioms with the meaning “a little”), *kury ne klyuyut*, *devat' nekuda* (ten a penny, the Russian idioms with the meaning “a lot”). For example, play on words with phraseological meaning in the media title:

Title “*Kot naplakal*” (it's slim pickings, the Russian idioms with the meaning “a little”, ad verbum: cat cried)

Lead: “*There is a shortage of anesthesia, vaccines and therapeutic feed for animals in Russia*” (Kuznetsova, 2022: 14).

The author successfully updated the semantics of zoomorphism, not very relevant in the phraseological unit.

Grammatical methods of transmitting quantitative evaluation include the use of verbs of certain ways of verbal action such as cumulative, distributive, total-distributive ones. Occasional formations made up on productive models, transmitting, along with only quantitative evaluation, pejorative evaluation are especially expressive, for example, *issnimalsya* (it means: he made so many films that exhausted all possible and impossible means that he became uninteresting).

For example, formations that have become extremely popular in media are also illustrative, such as *ponaekhali* (many have arrived – dismissively, with pejorative evaluation about migrants, the verb in Present Perfect), *ponaekhavshie* (substantivated Participle: arrived)

Title: “*Pouekhali tut!*” (left; the verb in Past Indefinite, dismissively, with pejorative evaluation about the mass departure of migrants from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia to their homeland) (Andrianova, Aminov, 2022: 3).

Grammatical (morphological) means of expressing quantitative evaluation is a category of the degree of comparison of adjectives, which, in fact, “measures” the amount of an attribute. An expansive representation of this category has been accepted in media: the degrees of comparison from those nouns (not only adjectives) semantics of which even do not imply the very idea of graduality have become common: *putinee Putina* (putinier than Putin – the comparative degree made of the name), *nash tsirk tsirkee* (our circus is more circus – the comparative degree made of the noun), *tsentree* (more centre – the comparative degree made of the noun), *vechnee* (more eternal – the comparative degree made of the adjective not used in the comparative degree form), *obshchee* (more common – the comparative degree made of the adjective not used in the comparative degree form), *ravnee* (more equal – the comparative degree made of the adjective not used in the comparative degree form):

“*Not so long ago, our education took place in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. This is when everyone is equal, but workers are ravnee (the most equal – the comparative degree made of the adjective not used in the comparative degree form) as a class*” (Odoevtseva, 2022: 1). This is an example when the obvious alogism becomes a means of irony and even grotesque.

One of the most striking means of quantitative evaluation based on the morphological category of the number of anthroponyms is a special rhetorical figure – antonomasia. The source of modern antonomasias is often the phenomena of mass culture:

“*The TV channels have been filled with the most vulgar comedy clubs, calque of Western programs with Urgants, Galkins and Dibrov*” (Bravitskaya, 2022: 27).

The antonomasias made on the pluralization of the onym are an interlingual universal, based on the idea of an elliptical plural (Kuryłowicz, 1964: 149-205). The elliptical plural is characteristic of nouns with individual semantics, egocentric words, including anthroponyms. Pluralization in this case expresses the idea of a heterogeneous plurality having a marked (highlighted) sub plurality: *Urgants = Urgant* and others like him, etc. The pragmatics of the pejorative/meliorative essence of such antonomasias is created by the prototypes, the attitude of the speech sender to them. And the pejorative essence of antonomasias of this type is much more widespread than meliorative one; it is pejorativeness that underlies the cognitive mechanisms of creating and perceiving media antonomasias.

Another rhetorical figure from the addition group figures aimed at expressing quantitative evaluation is repetition. With all the variety of functions of repetition (Kulikova et al., 2023), one of the main functions is the expression of a quantitative evaluation of ‘a lot’. The repetition of nouns most often expresses simple quantitative multiplicity, the repetition of verbs expresses the duration and extent of the corresponding action, the repetition of an adjective expresses the intensity of the attribute, for example:

“No one, alas, began to find out that the Spanish newspaper spread the news bomb, was zheltaya-prezheltaya” (yellow-very yellow, the second adjective has the prefix *pre-* used in Russian as the sign of the highest degree of some attribute) (Kuznetsova, 2023: 3)

In quantitative evaluation, the “human factor” is extremely important, because the same quantity is estimated as large or small exclusively from the cognizing and nominating person’s view, this person uses discursive particles to express his/her evaluation: *vsego pyat' knig*, *tol'ko pyat' knig* (only five books – few), *tselykh pyat' knig*, *azh pyat' knig* (as many as five books – many), etc.:

“Then pro-Kremlin economists rushed to explain that our increase would be “only \$500 a year” and no one would get rich” (Guzheva, 2023: 3).

Special stylistic figures such as meiosis and hyperbole are also focused on quantitative evaluation:

“All the time we are accused of some kind of contract killings. Security services are never performers! Even if we had assumed the possibility of liquidation, isn't it possible to hire a migrant za tri kopeiki (cheap cost, ad verbum: for three coins) *for this, who will do everything in the best possible way, is it?”* (Kondrashov, 2023: 20).

“– I think it is wrong to deprive children of rest because they have careless parents. My child has never been unattended for a second, now there are a million opportunities that the state provides” (Melnikova, 2023: 2)

Hyperbole in the media text is connected with perlocation and provides ease of perception by the recipient. It is also important that with this technique it is possible to express the emotions of the writer/speaker and ‘infect’ the listener/reader with his/her mood. Even A.A. Potebnya and S.I. Kartsevsky noted that hyperbole is rarely used in calm, balanced speech; on the contrary, it is a sign of agitated and contagious speech. “When we try to convince someone, our speech is full of exaggerations and different distortions of objective truth” (Kartsevsky, 2000: 223). It follows: the advertising text (or close to it in fact) is necessarily based on hyperbolization, which, however, should not mislead the consumer. The “Law on Advertising” takes care of this.

4. Results

A special problem is the incorrect (erroneous or manipulative) use of quantitative evaluations:

“At the same time, Baku, unlike its neighbours, had one serious advantage in the form of huge reserves of energy resources (oil, gas). And it took advantage of this in an exemplary way: economic indicators udarilis' v rost (hit the growth), *vyroslo v razy* (increased significantly) the welfare of the population (Harebov, 2021: 3). It is known that all the phraseological units with the reference word *udarit'sya* (hit him/herself /them/yours/ourselves) express the intensity of the event and at the same time a pejorative evaluation *udarit'sya v slezy*, *v ambitsii*, *v begstvo* (to burst into tears, ambitions, flight), and it is hardly right to apply such a phrase to an objectively positive phenomenon – the growth of economic indicators. The phrase *Vyroslo v razy blagosostoyanie* (well-being has grown in times) is not irreproachable, too. This is an example of applying quantitative characteristics to something that fundamentally cannot be measured in this way.

“For a long time a troechnik (a student who studies poorly) *has not been able to get into our college..., – explains the director of the Energia college near Moscow (town Reutov) Nerses Nersesyan. <...> – It is v razy* (much more) *interesting for children to study with us”* (Shigareva et al., 2022: 10).

Quantitative evaluation based on the comparison category often turns out to be a means of verbal manipulation. Comparison is one of the main topos or trope of similarity; it is implemented when both components of the comparison are presented. For example, the normative implementation of the topos “comparison”:

“Experts have listed the funds available in Russian drug stores allowed for children: aqualor, irs-19 and ocillococcinium. As for the latter, by the way, it has one of the longest reception regimens: a 17-week study showed that with the use of it the incidence of acute respiratory infections was reduced by 3 times compared to the control group” (Zakharova, 2023: 15). And the example of the exclusively manipulative use of the topos “comparison” in media advertising:

“The results are encouraging – in some cases, the positive effect came 2 times faster and was 2 times more expressed” (Nauchny..., 2023: 5).

The last quantitative phrase is completely meaningless, because the effect cannot be “more expressed either 2 or 3 times.

As the analysis of media texts has shown, quantitative evaluation and the means of its expression are closely connected with the opposite categories of definiteness/indefiniteness and discreteness/non-discreteness. These categories are interrelated, it is possible to establish their correlations: certainty – discreteness and indefiniteness – non-discreteness. For such correlations, the syntagmatic aspect turns out to be significant (peculiarity of the sequence of units with quantitative semantics, for example, the sequence of units in combinations such as *v dva raza* (twice), *raza v dva* (about two times) or *v razy* (by many times).

We think that units with quantitative semantics, expressing indefiniteness, non-discreteness, are intentionally chosen by the authors to create contexts that are formally argumentative, but semantically ambivalent, it means the recipient is provided with some argument. This argument can be interpreted in different ways and with critical perception it appears to be semantically and pragmatically defective.

To create such an argumentative effect, the authors of texts use formal indicators to increase indefiniteness, for example, indefinite pronouns, units semantically close to them or constructions with such elements: *in some cases, many believe, most believe, the analysis of results by focus groups*. Such units are used as means of expressing some indefinite quantitative evaluation, which is formally expressed, but does not contain an exact substantiation. Such units, in our opinion, have a significant manipulative potential, which makes it possible to create texts that promote manipulation of any kind. Linguistic units with the quantitative evaluation semantics in media texts are represented in the position of topos, while they can be actually tropes (the main, systemic ones – traditional metaphors, comparisons, and occasional units created on their basis). In such cases, it is also possible to create a positive pragmatic effect, as well as manipulation (a negative pragmatic effect from the point of view of constructive communication).

Linguistic works evaluating manipulation as a destructive phenomenon, often present an expansive idea of manipulative means: they include all the toposes and tropes, all the linguistic means forming systemicity (synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, etc.), units of all the language levels (Zapryagaeva, Shishlyannikova, 2021: 262-266; Shagbanova, 2020: 72).

It must be admitted that the main and original function of tropes is to enhance the figurativeness and expressiveness of the text, and the incorrect use turns them into a manipulative tool (for example in the case of comparison, when either one component of comparison or the basis for comparison is reduced).

5. Conclusion

Thus, quantitative evaluation provides comprehension and interpretation of reality taking into consideration indefiniteness/definiteness, non-discreteness/discreteness. To express quantitative evaluation the author uses the complicated system of multi-level units with functionally pragmatic (including stylistic and rhetorical) diversity and variability.

The pragmatic characteristics of units with the quantitative evaluation semantics make it possible to define ambivalence as their obligatory feature, which ensures regular functioning in media texts as a means of argumentation or manipulation. Units implementing an indefinite, non-discrete quantitative evaluation are potentially manipulative. It is important to take this fact into consideration creating as well as interpreting the media text.

A significant parameter for units with the quantitative evaluation semantics is the regularity of their use as the most important element of rhetoric – tropes, such tropes can act as key media text elements determining the vector of interpretation, initially set by the author. The intentionality of such a vector is enhanced when the author uses the transformation of traditional tropes or occasional means, the perception of which is supported and actualized by the context. Multilevel units with quantitative evaluation semantics are able to implement a text-forming function, mainly in cases of their concentration in structurally significant parts of the media text (strong text positions). The media text author, nominating quantitative differences, focuses on the pragmatic amplification function typical for quantifiers. Quantitative evaluation is pragmatically oriented, that is, significant for media discourse.

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