

Phatic meanings of key words in popular science journalism

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Фатические смыслы ключевых слов в научно-популярной журналистике

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Abstract. The purpose of the research is to demonstrate the functioning of key words in the texts of popular science journalism. Modern media text is created not only to inform, but to attract the reader. This enlarges the role of contact-building means, for example – the address to the epoch key words. We consider the peculiarities of phatic meanings in popular science journalism, dedicated to the historic themes. The research contains the analysis of phatic meanings in two randomly chosen issues of historic magazines. The result of the analysis is the selection of two groups of key words, which make the journalistic text contain additional phatic meanings. The first group of words is the current key words, allowing relating the publication, containing the address to a historical event or a historical person, to the actual reality. This lexical group allows the journalist to make the publication politically critical and topical and also to evaluate the current political situation through the historical parallel. Such word usage allows including ironic subtext in the historical journalism. The second group of words is the key words of a single publication; they allow completely characterizing an event or a person, being in the center of a journalist's attention. These are the words, which relate to the acute for the Russian culture value meanings. They stay aside with the complete semantics and characterize the speech subject, the journalist's relation to it, but they do not relate the theme to the current political situation.

Keywords: popular science journalism; key words; phatics; phatic meanings; speech representation; semantics and pragmatics of word usage

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Аннотация. Целью настоящего исследования стала демонстрация функционирования ключевых слов в текстах научно-популярной журналистики. Современный медиатекст создаётся с таким расчётом, чтобы быть не только информативным, но и привлекательным для читателя. В связи с этим возрастает роль контактоустанавливающих средств, в частности – обращение к ключевым словам эпохи. Рассмотрены особенности развёртывания фатических смыслов в научно-популярной журналистике, посвящённой исторической тематике. Представлен анализ фатических смыслов в двух случайным образом выбранных выпусках исторических журналов. Результатом анализа становится выделение двух групп ключевых слов, в результате обращения к которым журналистский текст приобретает дополнительные фатические смыслы. Первая группа слов – ключевые слова текущего момента, позволяющие

соотнести публикацию, в которой дано обращение к историческому событию или историческому деятелю, с актуальной действительностью. Эта группа лексем позволяет журналисту сделать представленную публикацию политически острой и злободневной, а также дать оценку текущей политической ситуации через проведённую историческую параллель. Такое словоупотребление позволяет включить в историческую публицистику иронический подтекст. Вторая группа слов – ключевые слова отдельно взятой публикации, они позволяют наиболее полно характеризовать событие или персону, оказавшиеся в центре внимания журналиста. Это слова, которые соотнесены с актуальными для русской культуры ценностными смыслами. Они отличаются состоявшейся семантикой и характеризуют предмет речи, отношение к нему журналиста, а не соотносят тему с текущей политической ситуацией.

Ключевые слова: научно-популярная журналистика; ключевые слова; фатика; фатические смыслы; речевая репрезентация; семантика и прагматика словоупотребления

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INTRODUCTION

At present with all the twenty-year arguments on the day when the printed journalism dies, the latter flourishes, changing after the demands of contemporary society. The demands make the reader become more scrupulous: he waits to be conquered, to have the information he wants and the way he wants. This leads to the tendency of a severe fight for the target audience and a greater specialization of editions. Earlier there were popular science editions of general profile (for example, all-inclusive “Around the world”), which provided information about history, physics, astronomy, cooking, geography etc. Nowadays the preference is given to the narrowly specialized editions, which are dedicated to each of the enumerated spheres solely. If considering only historical editions, we may name more than five of them: “Amateur”, “Historian”, “War history”, “Secret councilor”, “Motherland”. We may say, that at present the market of popular science editions is formed again, which creates the research interest for defining the concepts of such journals, peculiarities of navigation, means of drawing the attention, specifics of interaction with the audience.

On the whole it is necessary to say that contemporary popular science journalism develops within the general tendencies of mass media: a special attention is paid to the phatic component of the text. Firstly, this is the imitation of hypertext construction in the printed variant: improved and largely blown system of announce-

ments which fulfill the task of contact building and further support and contact checking. Secondly, this is the increased interaction with the audience: inclusion of various entertaining elements such as tests, crosswords, sketches, calls for discussion, addresses to the expanded Internet version of the edition. Thirdly, the specifics of the speech representation of an event or a person in the text: the imitation of informal friendly communication, the address to the key words connected with a person or an epoch in the national consciousness.

THEORY

All the above-mentioned peculiarities are connected with the text balancing between two sides – informational and phatic. On the one hand, popular science journalism longs to the side of message – transfer of new knowledge. On the other hand, a journalist faces an important task to draw and hold the attention of the reader, which makes the text long to the opposite side of communication – entertainment. In contemporary world with its informational overflow the second component becomes almost dominating.

In this case it is necessary to note the basic markers of the phatic studies and the validity of its functioning in media text. They were sociologists [1], not philologists, who thought about the phatic functions of the language for the first time, defining it as an idle, empty usage of the language, which is character for the everyday

communication with a limited and replicable range of topics. Phatics was liable to linguistic analysis within the functionalism of the Prague linguistic circle [2]. In the theory of speech acts the phatic function is acknowledged as one of the determining speech influences. In the hierarchy of functions it may occupy different positions, but it is present within conditions of any speech act.

Also the understanding of the phatics – as one of the secondary, though integral, language functions – dominated for a long time, and the phatic speech interaction was mostly meant for the everyday communication and in conditions of everyday communication imitation in the fiction books. The qualitative rise in the phatic studies happened at the end of the XX century, when the first idea about the demand for the phatic speech behaviour in mass media was pronounced [3–6]. The interest for phatics grew intensely, it was studied in conditions of different discourses [7–12], and researchers studied functionality [13; 14], means [15–17], phatic genres [18–20]. The logical continuation of the scientific thought, developing in this direction, are the attempts of complex rethinking of phatics in media discourse [21]. That is why at present we may surely speak about the fact that phatics is an ontological characteristic of a journalistic text [22; 23], confronting the informing and defining the communicative informative value of the text (idea about the speaker, his speech competence, his relation to the speech subject and the communicator), also the informative value which draws from the main topic of the text [24, p. 246]. Phatics functions in media discourse include dispersion of informative flow density, the addressee's socialization (creation of “own” circle of communication) and solidarity with him, airclearing, building the atmosphere of personally oriented communication.

DATA AND METHODS

This leads to the idea that phatics is not simply an integral part of popular science journalism, but also one of its main components, which makes us say some words on the specific of phatic demand in the popular science journalism. The phatic meanings interfuse any speech interaction, but depending upon the sphere of its existence they modify significantly. This is con-

nected with the fact that any language element may become phatic [25; 26]. In its whole volume media discourse addresses phatics as a way to disperse the informational flow – in most cases to include the entertaining (humorous) component, but in popular science journalism we notice the functioning of phatics as a way to refine the informational flow with overtones of meanings – setting to make the discourse intellectual. I. e. phatics in popular science editions is present in the form of intellectual game, competition between the author and the reader.

So, the method of phatic meanings study, appearing in popular science journalism, is to be connected with the intentional stylistic analysis, based on the analysis of single lexical units, which characterize the national worldview and the language taste of the current epoch [27]. We observe that it is necessary to conduct the analyses of two lexical groups: current key words (they actualize the historical theme, link it with the current situation) and key words of a certain publication (they actualize the background, connected with an event or a person, presented in the text). The important index of the discourse intellectualization is the definition of key sources for the publication of words with meanings, character for the Russian mentality – this is one of the most important characteristics of the audience, which the journalistic texts aim at.

FINDINGS

As in most contemporary journals, popular science editions are compiled around a certain topic. If we consider historical editions, then, as a rule, the issue is connected with the anniversary of an event. Starting from the headliner of the issue, the journal is filled with phatic meanings. We shall analyze two sample journals (the issues are taken randomly) – “Amateur” (#35, November, 2018) and “Historian” (#54, June, 2019).

The topic of the analyzed issue of the journal “Amateur”: *Katherine II: the Crimea is mine*. The headline is obviously bodacious, correlating with one of the words, which is to be acknowledged as the current key word *Crimeaours*. The edition does not brave with topical political accent and do not hide the desire to create communication for the devoted – “friendly” circle of readers: eloquent language play lies

within the subtext. The headline is created after the demanded model: the precedent name + quotation. It may be perceived as simple information about the event, but the readers' consciousness, understanding the acute political situation in the country, sees the appeal to the used current key word. This parallel helps to perceive the subtextual information, refining the text with complementary meanings, actualizing the historical event, which became the issue topic. Thus, the readers' attention (contact-building) is drawn by the address to the current key vocabulary.

The same example of drawing the attention of a potential reader may be noticed in the journal "Historian" headline, announcing the following issue: *Peter and Ivan: sovereign tandem*. In the contemporary Russian reader's consciousness the word *tandem* possesses a new ironic meaning – governing the country by two politicians, changing their political roles, and one of the politicians is much weaker than the other and always takes the position of the controlled one. As we see, the current key vocabulary is also used here. It possesses the potential of attention drawing, involvement of the audience in the dialogue, loading the text with overtones of meaning, including the historical event in the contemporary context. The created parallel characterizes not only and not to any degree the gone epoch, presented in the announcement, but the contemporary political situation in the country with a clear hint at the role positions of mentally ill Ivan Alexeevich and perspective Peter Alexeevich. Here we may also notice the shock for the public, invitation for intellectual competition, because in its essence nothing is said, the reader must perceive and evaluate the ironic headline on his own.

The very topic of the issue is developed with the address to the current key words and to the concepts which accumulate the value meanings within the Russian culture. In this case we face the language play, and its peculiarity is revealed through the reserve, which we noticed in the above mentioned announcing headlines. We shall consider the development of the issue headline by the example of the journal "Historian" issue (June, 2019) *More than a poet. What is Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin for Russia?*

Most of all this is the address to the precedent texts – without the habitual change of the components: *all ours* (A. Grigoryev) – one

of the most famous expressions about Pushkin, which appeared in the so-called Pushkin's (!) epoch; *more than a poet* (N. Nekrasov) – interpretation of a known poem "Poet and citizen", which stops being politically topical in the context, having many plans and many meanings: historian, politician, thinker and others; *free mind* (A. Pushkin) – a quotation from the Pushkin's manifest of the poem "From Pindemonte" as the postulate on eternal spiritual values, opposing the material ones; *the steamboat of modern times* (V. Mayakovsky) – rethinking of roles of poet and poetry, Pushkin as a national poet in the social life, we clearly may see the appeal to the present attitude to literature on the whole and Pushkin in particular; *Boirgeois gentilhomme* (J.-B. Moliere) – a capacious characteristic of the Pushkin's history, a metaphor with no necessary explanation, which reveals the never-ending associative line due to the first source etc. All these allusions are spread about the text, concentrated in the headline, seen in the photo comments and become unique marks helping the reader to travel through the text. All of them are meant to check and constantly support the contact with the audience. On the one hand, this is the entertaining element – riddle games, on the other hand, it is an aspect making communication complex and initiating the social intellectualization, refining the journalistic text with the system of meanings from the first source – the greatest revelation of phatic settings.

Then, this is the appeal to the eternal values of the Russian and the world culture: *poet* (opposing the novelist) – the history of the world literature develops in constant opposition of high poetry and low prose; *civil poetry* (opposing the clear poetry) – the antinomy, which defines the only Russian attitude to the literature, including the journal literature: the Russian poet can not be just a poet, he must serve people, *golden ratio* – the metaphor of pure beauty, genuine perfection is percept in any context as the highest praise etc.

CONCLUSION

On the whole we may say that key words in popular science journalism are divided into two types:

1) current key words, which are used to draw and hold attention of the public, actualization of a historical event in contemporary context; phatic meanings of such words create the effect of socialization, audience selection, creation of “friendly” circle;

2) key words, connected with the described epoch, creating the portrait of a historical person, continuously presenting the new images or characterizing the person from a new side, or connected with common human values, which allows including the described event or person into the world historical context.

The selection of key words in the text greatly defines the understanding of an event and presentation of a person and accesses the refinement of the presented material, helping to

compare it with the current situation and even to evaluate it (often ironically).

The phatic nature of the address to the key words in the texts, devoted to a historical person or past events, is characterized with the richness of associative lines, making the presentation of the past contemporary and acute. The key words in the historical context bear sub textual meanings and the richness of associative lines (which is the foundation of phatically oriented communication).

It is necessary to add as the continuation of the idea, that truly deep reading of such texts demands a special lexical graphic edition – a dictionary of current key words – which allowed perceiving the finest connotations of the meanings, implemented in the text with key words, in all their multiple variety.

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