Modelling of the Frame “Russia” In the French Newspaper Discourse
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Abstract

The article is devoted to the formation of media linguistics, with media discourse as its object, in scientific fields of Russia and foreign countries. The method of frame-based modelling, which is widely used in media linguistics, is highlighted. The necessity of applying this method in describing the representation of Russia’s image in French newspaper discourse is justified. The comparative analysis of the patterns of the frame-script “Russia” is conducted for two different time periods. The slots are separated out in the structure of the subframe, and the instances of their verbalization in newspaper discourse are cited. The predominance of certain types of slots over the others is explained. The conclusion that the representation of Russia’s image depends on both domestic and international current affairs, is drawn. An evaluation of a state’s image in foreign-language discourse cannot be considered as universal for foreign media reality and is reliable solely within the boundaries of a given time period.

Keywords: Language; Linguistics; Discourse; Media; Semantics.

1. Introduction

The linguistic analysis of language use in the media is media linguistics. It studies the functioning of language in the media domain or contemporary mass communication through print, audiovisual, interactive and networked media. In the process of differentiating linguistics as a general language theory, media linguistics is being developed and is a sub-field of linguistics similar to other fields such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, linguistic development, legal linguistics, political linguistics, etc. Modern media linguistics explores not just the written language of the media, but also the language of the media (A Bashkirova & I Galeeva, 2019; M Tukeshova, H Tarasova, & N Luzenina, 2019; N Prokhorova, G Voloshina, V Markelova, A Zueva, & A Bocharova, 2019). Media linguistics involves media discourse studies that investigate (1) the speech activity of mass communication participants and (2) particular areas, textures and genres of media texts. Media linguistics analyzes texts as well as their development and reception. Thus, in theory, media linguistics attempts to understand the unique case of the functioning of language—in mass communication with its complex structure and evolving characteristics—in the context of the overall patterns in language and speech culture. It studies language in relation to medium-specific aspects, such as the specific properties of media texts or channels, and also involves multimodality research. Other aims include the study of patterns of language use within some historical contexts and the identification of discrepancies between "normal" language and media language. Media linguistics is closely linked to contemporary media practices and is intended to have an effect on them, especially through media education. For example, in relation to stereotypes, researching the use of language in the media may be used to help improve critical media literacy (Brusenskaya & Kulikova, 2018; Lee & Kahle, 2016; Luginbühl, 2015).
The study of conventional mass media texts (typically, print or broadcast news) and social media and other interactive media, such as blog posts or SMS messages, involves media linguistics. In the context of media linguistics, ads are generally analyzed, amongst other multimodal media. Fictional film and television analysis have recently become an important field in media linguistics. In recent years, transnational and translocal contact, and the relationship between the culture of a country and its use of language, have shaped media linguistics. Media linguistics makes it possible to use the media as a source of historical and current data or research. Regional language and regional dialect models of media involving the representation of society and culture are critical to the examination. In understanding how the media broadcasts language ideologies, media linguistics is important and is able to improve the representation of a less popular, minority language or preserve the representation of a dominant language. Media language sources are used as learning material in second language courses because of their connection to the culture of the language and its meaning and their role in introducing students to the syntax and vocabulary of native speakers. Linguists are researching how "computer-mediated communication" (CMC) varies from older modes of media communication in the early 21st century. Although the degree of interactivity between readers and authors remains the same, CMC shows increasing signs of the media seeking to draw more and more attention from their readers (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Herring, 1996; Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013; Kramer, Oh, & Fussell, 2006). The factors that have some of the biggest influence on how language evolves over time are the number of speakers in a language and how they are related to other speakers. In social media, which has the capacity to bind multiple speakers of the same language, this is particularly apparent. CMC also demonstrates how individuals can join exclusive online groups” and form a sense of connection with these groups or other online users.

In the past thirty years, the rapid growth of mass media and emerging communication technologies has had a significant effect on the functioning of languages. Intensive development in conventional media such as the newspapers, radio and in particular, television, the advent and avalanche-like spread of the Internet has led to major changes in the situation of contemporary language. A large part of the regular functioning of language is now taking place in the media: speech and text development (Bluett-Boyd, Fileborn, Quadara, & Moore, 2013; Cameron & Webster, 2005; Leu, Kinzer, Ciro, & Cammack, 2004). Twenty-four hours of news outlets, various TV shows and web versions, continuous verbal engagement on social networks, all of which presented language scholars with a new challenge, setting new targets that require novel study formats to be accomplished. The word "media-linguistics" was made up of comparison with all related terms, which refers to new academic disciplines created at the intersection between different fields of study, such as sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, media psychology, media economics, etc. Centered on the synthesis of two main elements, 'media' and 'linguistics' from the word itself the focus of this new discipline is the study of language functioning in the field of mass communication. In other words, media linguistics deals with complicated overall study of a specific social area of language use the development of mass media expression. The rise of media linguistics as a modern field of language studies is entirely justified, taking into account the critical role played in culture by the mass media over the past 30 years. The rapid growth of print and electronic media, the rapid growth of interactive communications and the Internet have changed the lives of people tremendously, stimulating the development of the whole spectrum of theories of information society. In the world of mass media, the largest portion of daily speech activities are now being incorporated in newspapers, radio, television and the Internet. As information communication technology (ICT) continues to evolve, the total amount of texts transmitted through media outlets in different national languages in the global information space is increasing rapidly (Nord, 2005). It should also be noted that media linguistics is not the only discipline that has been defined as the study of a specific field of language use the same theory has been used to shape another new path of linguistic science, political linguistics, focusing on the study of political communication speech output.

Objective preconditions have influenced the emergence of media linguistics since the 1970s, when different journals primarily dealing with language working in mass communication started to appear on a regular basis in Russia and Europe. Within the context of different scholarly traditions, the writers of those articles studied media texts, including sociolinguistics, functional stylistics and pragmatics, discourse theory, content analysis, cognitive linguistics and rhetorical critique. The emphasis was on a broad range of issues: from defining the status of media language in terms of practical stylistics and methods of representing various forms of media texts, to the effect on mass and individual consciousness of socio-cultural influences and language techniques of media control (Wray & Grace, 2007). There are now almost two decades later all reasons to believe that media linguistics has been firmly founded and generally accepted
as a modern discipline that is increasingly growing and attracts ever-increasing scholarly attention (Dobrosklonskaya, 2013; Ibatulina & Madyakina, 2017). It complies with certain conditions and criteria, such as: 1) the presence of a fully developed theory, which would serve as a solid basis for further study in the field; 2) a more or less stable internal thematic structure; 3) methodology or a set of analytical techniques and methods; 4) terminology. The most important theoretical component of media linguistics is undoubtedly the media text principle, which is actually discussed in all studies devoted to speech production in mass communication. The essence of this term may be summed up as follows: conventional definition of a text as "coherent and integral stretch of spoken or written language" for linguistics, when taken to the field of mass communication, its scope extends significantly. The definition of a text in mass media goes beyond the formal limits of the verbal sign system and approaches its semiotic meaning when a "text" refers to a stretch of some kind of sign, not necessarily verbal. Most scholars accept that the degree of mass communication introduces new facets of meaning to the text definition, defined by media characteristics and features of this or that mass communication medium. Thus, television media texts are not limited to verbal manifestation alone, they incorporate multiple functional levels: proper verbal text, visual ("footing" in journalistic terms) and audio, which incorporates all potential effects experienced by the ear from voice to music. Radio and print texts are often distinguished by a combination of a verbal level with a collection of special media characteristics defined by technical features of this or that media source, such as sound effects on the layout of the radio or newspaper and colorful press illustrations. So, we should conclude that it is possible to consider media texts as multilevel and poly-dimensional phenomena (Dobrosklonskaya, 2017).

Modern media linguistics explores not just the media’s written language, but also the voice of the media. Media linguistics involves studies of media speech that investigate (1) the speech activity of participants in mass communication and (2) particular areas, textures, and media text genres. Media linguistics, as well as its development and reception, analyzes texts. Recent researches are characterized by a raised interest in various genres of the media (Chelysheva & Mikhailova, 2019; Kulikova, Brusenskaya, & Zhebrowskaya, 2019; Tsvetova, 2019) which has led to the emergence and development of media linguistics in scientific fields of Russia and foreign countries (Abdullina, Ageeva, & Artamonova, 2018; Atasoy, 2017; Belén-Romano, 2018; Garifullina, Gimadeeva, Giniyatullina, & Khismatullina, n.d.; Glivinska, 2017). This philological discipline is based on examining the overall complexity of media texts — the influence that the ways of forming and distributing of media texts have on linguoformational qualities, the problems of genre and functional classification, the phonological, syntagmatic and stylistic characteristics, interpretive properties, the features of cultural specificity, the ideological modality and the pragmalinguistic value. As is follows from definition, there is the variety of methods of and approaches to the media discourse analysis, among which we single out one of frame-based modeling with such concept as “frame” at the core of it (Antia & Ianna, 2016; Duan, 2015; Gray & Biber, 2013). From our point of view, the frame is a cognitive model within the boundaries of which the knowledge and conception of a certain situation interact with each other. It is customary to separate out subframes (Ogнева, 2013) in the frame structure, which, in its turn, consists of the slots (Li & Abe, 1996). Happening in the individual's consciousness, the synthesis and objectification of lingual and non-lingual knowledge of the speech situation in the form of contextual frames, or frame scripts (which serve as the core of the frame structure of utterances), are typical for media discourse. The foregoing has defined the research objective, that consists in detecting particularities of the representation of Russia’s image in the French media discourse. This will allow us “to realize the peculiarities of the linguistic consciousness of peoples” (Akhmetovа et al., 2019), because “all communicative processes are largely determined by the cultural context in which they take place, and the individuals’ communicative behavior is, therefore, determined by the sociocultural and linguistic community they belong to” (Takhtarova, Abuzyarova, & Kuzmina, 2019).

1.1. Research Objective

The article is dedicated to the formation of media linguistics in the scientific fields of Russia and foreign countries, with media discourse as its object.

2. Material and Methods

The research is based on the method of frame-based modelling (Higginbotham & Wilkins, 2001; Kendall & Dutra, 2008; Kifer, Lausen, & Wu, 1995): in the model of a frame script, levels, or subframes, of the same thematic qualities are set, and which can further be divided into the slots that correlate with their nominative fields within the frame script. Within the boundaries of the frame script, the qualities are either actualized in their meaning or predicated upon...
lexemes within the frame or subframe themselves, thereby becoming a part of the information-sense structure of a corresponding utterance.

Articles of one of the top French newspapers Le Monde published from June to November 2014 and from December 2014 to April 2015 have served as a study material.

Data gathered from general thematic analysis of the Le Monde articles dealing with Russia show that the latter, by and large, is judged from the perspective of her political actions. However, these data do not provide a full understanding of the status of the considered concept in the French media reality. To acquire the more thorough image, one should adopt the frame modelling to the concept, that will allow learning which linguistic units actualize the concept as well as to track whether Russia’s image changes during the periods.

3. Results

To begin with, we should examine the subframe level in the structure of the frame “la Russie” (Russia). Taking into consideration, only the frequency of elements met in the text is not enough for proper arraying of the level. It is necessary to turn your attention to the overall thematic picture also, because, in the case of this research, the subframe level reflects in a generalized way with which events of media text Russia is connected. Models based solely on frequency rates can lead to a somewhat distorted image, so it is important to take into account a context in which the frame “la Russie” via various subframes is verbalized. The same linguistic units can be found in articles of various subjects, yet within the scope of each context, they characterize the concept in different ways. Let us examine an identical case through the example of a well-used unit as “European Union”. The fact that this unit is often met in articles touching on Russia does not indicate yet that this subframe occupies the upper level of the structure. This seeming discrepancy results from the fact that a large number of articles published on Le Monde’s website deal with more general subjects, i.e. are dedicated to events and problems of a global scale. In such articles meeting attendees and nation-states interested in certain issues are often enumerated, then linguistic units “la Russie” and “l’ Union Européenne (l’UE)” have no direct relationship between them. Therefore, such use should not be regarded as the manifestation of subframe “l’UE”. Likewise, for instance, in articles on the topic of Ukraine, the frame “la Russie” is actualized through the subframe “l’Ukraine”, because everything is focused on the relations between two countries. The European Union can be among others referred to, but in that case, it will be regarded as a mere conciliator to the countries, which means it does not participate in concept verbalization directly. Thereby every subframe participates fully in concept verbalization only if there is a strong connection between objects (the frame and subframe). To make the model accurately reflect Russia’s image in the newspaper discourse, we first have set about analyzing articles that deal with Russia as their main topic with a view to calculating the cases of a clear manifestation of some subframe or other. As for the frequency we have singled out as the subframe four linguistic units: “Politique Russe”, “l’UE”, “Gouvernement Russe” and “Ukraine”. The thematic analysis is necessary to place the parts of a structure in the right order. Then the subframe “l’Ukraine” clearly manifests itself in 42 articles out of 110 from the first period, the subframe “l’UE” does so in 32 publications, the subframe “Politique Russe” can be found in 18 articles, and “Gouvernement Russe” is met in 13 pieces. Five articles inform about sporting events and event in cultural life, yet there is no subframe to connect them from the perspective of concept verbalization.

To build up the frame model for the concept, we use the aforementioned figures as a basis. The subframe “l’Ukraine” takes the upper level of the frame structure, which indicates that in the first period, Russia more often made the Ukrainian-related headlines. The second-frequentest subframe is “l’UE” which points to the media’s interest in the development of relations between Russia and EU countries. The subframes “Politique Russe” and “Gouvernement Russe” occupy the third and fourth level respectively suggesting that the French print media also informs readers about Russia’s activity in the international scene, and at times touches upon the state’s internal political situation.

In the second period in 24 articles out of 70 the concerned concept is verbalized through the subframe “l’UE”, in 16 articles this is done through the subframe “Politique Russe”, in 12 publications the concept manifests itself with the help of the subframe “l’Ukraine”, and in 11 articles it is verbalized through the subframe “Gouvernement Russe”. Seven articles have no common subframe. Certain structural changes that had affected the order of the subframes took place in the second period. Here the first level is occupied by the subframe “l’UE”, the subframe “Politique Russe” fills the second one, the subframes “l’Ukraine” and “Gouvernement Russe” take up the third and fourth levels respectively. In comparison with the preceding period, the alteration in the position of three subframes is evident. For instance, the subframe “l’UE”
shifted to the first level of the structure, whilst the subframe “l’Ukraine” became next to last. The subframe “Politique Russe” moved one level up, while the subframe “Gouvernement Russe” is the only element that did not change its position.

4. Discussion

Such changes in the frame structure reflect the emerging of new trends in the evolution of the relationship between two countries, as well as to characterize Russia’s status in the international scene. For example, quite a dramatic status change of the subframe “l’Ukraine” can be explained through some shift in EU’s attitude to the Russia-Ukraine situation. Despite the fact that the situation is still in the spotlight, Russia in this context less often is being identified as a party to the dispute, and less often the involvement in the conflict is being imputed to her which lead to the dramatic fall in the number of the articles with the clear manifestation of the subframe “l’Ukraine”. The subframe “l’Ukraine” should rather be regarded as a short-lived subframe (this status is the explanation for its somewhat unstable position in the structure). This element of the frame model came into existence following the Ukraine crisis. It can be assumed that the concept “l’Ukraine” used to be a slot of some settled subframe. Should be that the case such characteristic of the frame model as alterability can easily be discerned in the newspaper discourse. In our opinion, one of the reasons for the mobility of the concerned structure lies in the fact that 2/3 of the very structure are factitiously made by journalists and desk editors, and a third of it is caused by worldwide events. This results in that the number of publications dealing with any events is governed by people who have vested interests. For instance, one event can be left unnoticed in the print media, while the other is repeatedly published every time with new details emphasized, and is repeatedly depicted in a new perspective. That is the way the media influences readers’ general idea of some phenomenon or other. The subframe “l’Ukraine” demonstrates how definite the measure of dependence between the structure concept, the state’s stance on some issue or other, and goals pursued by the state. In our opinion, the structural change of the subframe can be attributed to French government’s wish to mend her fences with Russia: conflicting stances of the states on the Ukraine crisis have been the hindrance to productive relationship for a long time. A possible solution to it is, paying less attention to negative details, to concentrate on positive aspects of the relationship and on their development prospect. At the same time, this is not to say that this wish is overtly expressed in articles: the articles emphasizing the reasons for Russia’s political isolation can also be found in the corpus from the second period. However, the articles representing different viewpoints can also be met alongside, which indicates the transition to more unbiased coverage of events.

The fact that the subframe “l’UE” reached the top of the structure testifies to the increased interest of the French press in relations between Russia and EU countries. And not always the recovery of efficient partnership is a main theme of the discourse. It is more accurate to say that in the second period more attention is paid to the analysis of the current state of affairs: observers have been seeking the source of deterioration in the relationship and have been assessing possible scenarios of subsequent progression of events. It can also quite easily be explained that the prominent subframe of the second period is the “Politique Russe”: the attention of the press is riveted not only on events in Eastern Europe, but also on the situation in the Middle East, on Iran nuclear program, etc., and Russia takes an active part in the process of dealing with them.

Despite the fact that the subframe “Politique Russe” did not change its position in the structure it should be noted that according to the data of thematic analysis that the proportion of articles devoted to the domestic political and internal economic situations of Russia increased in the second period, which can be attributed to the background of contemporary events.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The comparative analysis showed that the state’s image is changeable and directly depends upon both the political background of a given period and France’s stance on the substantive questions of the international agenda. The study of the concept “Russia” in the French media discourse also allowed to draw conclusions concerning the specific characteristics of the concept in the media reality. First and foremost, we should note the changeability of the concept. Due to the fact that the mass media informs the audience about worldwide events at a given time, the media reality is constantly being renewed, inducing at the same time the change of concepts verbalized in the media discourse. The changeability of concepts is bound up with another specific characteristic, namely preciseness. Compared with other types
of discourse, in the media one concepts are used differently: dealing with those of them of which the audience has a general idea, the mass media draws attention to certain aspects of the concept through detailed specification.

Thus, the constructed models of the frame “la Russie” (Russia) attest that first of all in the French mass media Russia is regarded as “a player in the international scene”. The nature of this tendency can be described as persistent. At the same time, the comparative analysis showed that in this context Russia’s image is volatile and depends directly upon both the political background of a given period and France’s stance on the substantive questions of international agenda. It follows that Russia’s image formed by the activity of mass media is far from being unbiased and being the exact portrayal of the current state of affairs. It rather serves as a means to an informer’s end.

5.1. Contribution

An assessment of the picture of a state in foreign-language discourse cannot be regarded as universal to the reality of foreign media and is accurate only within the limits of a given period of time.

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