



Precedent Texts in Journalistic Style (On the Basis of English and Russian Newspapers)

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to study precedent texts on the material of English and Russian newspapers. Based on the research purpose the following tasks were solved: 1) to give the essence of «precedent phenomenon» and «precedent text» notions; 2) to reveal precedent texts in English and Russian newspapers; 3) to make the analysis of researched lexical units. The hypothesis of this research is the assumption that the study of precedent texts allows fostering a fuller mutual understanding of different culture representatives. The research is based on the following methods: semantization, contextual analysis, generalization and method of simultaneous analysis of linguistic facts. As a result of the study, the proposed hypothesis was confirmed, and data were obtained to complement and clarify the role of precedent texts in intercultural communication.

Keywords: Precedent Text; Precedent Phenomenon; Precedency; Linguistic Culture Studies; Linguistic Cultural Community.

1. Introduction

Anthropocentrism is the idea that value is human-centered in its original connotation of environmental ethics and that all other beings are means to human ends. Authors concerned with the environment have stated that anthropocentrism is ethically wrong and at the root of ecological crises. However, some environmental ethicists claim that anthropocentric opponents are mistaken or even misanthropic (A Belyaeva, I Aydarov, G Minzaripov, & A Sakhbullina, 2019; A Drygina, A Kuptsova, V Lyashenko, V Mashkova, & M Shevchenko, 2019; A Kalevich, 2019; Baghana, S Blazhevich, N Prokhorova, L Kuksova, & S Yakovleva, 2019; R Gagarina, V Shelestova, P Sheinina, & R Leake, 2019). They argue: first by failing to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate human interests, criticism of anthropocentrism may be counterproductive and misleading. Second, human beings vary significantly in their effect on the environment and thus, resolving human differences should be a precondition for protecting the environment. Third, since ecosystems constitute the human life-support system, anthropocentrism can and should be a strong incentive for protecting the environment. Fourth, as a starting point for loving others including non-humans, human self-love is not only normal, but beneficial. We discuss these points here, agreeing with parts of them as four counter-arguments are advanced. Second, it seems that redefining the word anthropocentrism is an effort to disregard actions in which humans concentrate on themselves at the planet's danger. Second, if resolving human inequality is a precondition for preserving the ecosystem, for an infinite period of time, the conservation of biodiversity would remain out of the reach of ethical consideration. Thirdly, only in circumstances where humans are aware of a clear gain to themselves can anthropocentric motives make a beneficial contribution to the setting. Fourth, self-love alone is an insufficient justification for consideration and action towards the world.

The anthropocentric paradigm has firmly entered the sphere of linguistic research at the turn of the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries (Abuzyarova, Takhtarova, & Ionova, 2018; Gordienko, 2020; Lee, Tumanova, & Salkhanova, 2016; Sedykh, Ivanishcheva, Koreneva, & Ryzhkova, 2018; Tadzhibova, 2019). This “orientation of modern linguistics determines the steadily increasing interest of researchers in the problem of the relationship of language



and culture – two global systemic entities that regulate the life of an individual and ensure the existence of society” (Slyshkin, 2004).

Linguistic culture studies that stand out in the light of this paradigm are engaged in “studying the ways in which language embodies in its units, stores and translates culture” (Maslova, 2001). One of the branches of this trend is the precedence phenomenon. The following scientists made the research of precedence in linguistics: (Bortha & Mills, 2012; Dmitrieva & Golomidova, 2020; Dyer, 2008; Gudkov, 1998, 2003; Gudkov, Krasnykh, Zakharenko, & Bagaeva, 1997; Karasik, 2002; Karaulov, 1987; Khayyat & Khayyat, 2016; Raspaeva, 2017; Suprun, 1995) and others.

In this paper, we focused on the issues of studying the diversity of precedent texts in various sources of English and Russian newspapers, ways of understanding them and their impact on the process of intercultural communication in general (Indarti, 2019; L’Nyavskiy, 2016).

The topicality of this study lies in the fact that the study of precedent phenomena is associated with the problem of participation in intercultural communication, which is one of the main problems of linguistics. Precedence is seen as a phenomenon, without which understanding of the meaning of the text is often impossible. In addition, studying the traces of the presence of the most significant texts of the past in newspaper and magazine articles of our time helps to identify patterns of cultural transmission from generation to generation.

1.1. Research Objective

The aim of the research is to review previous texts on English and Russian newspaper materials.

2. Material and Methods

In this paper such theoretical methods have been used: descriptive method including observation, semantization (Achaeva, Daurova, Pospelova, & Borysov, 2018), contextual analysis, generalization and method of simultaneous analysis of linguistic facts.

Observation involves observing and collecting data about an activity: what happens, what the object of research does, or how it works. Visual observation: you use your own eyes, perhaps helped by a camera or other recording tool. Descriptive observation suggests that you do not want to alter the operation in any way; you only want to register it without your intervention as it will take place.

3. Results and Discussion

The scientists’ interest in linguistic culture studies is not random – “a science that arose at the intersection of linguistic and cultural studies, and exploring the manifestations of the culture of the people, which were reflected and entrenched in the language (Linan-Thompson, Lara-Martinez, & Cavazos, 2018; Maslova, 2001). In-depth analysis and certain developments in this area gave rise to new research products, among which precedent phenomena took a special place as units of reflection of the relationship of “language and culture”.

The Longman dictionary of language and culture gives the interpretation of the term “precedent” as “an action or event that took place earlier and serves as an example or justification for subsequent cases of this kind.” (Murphy, 2005). D.B. Gudkov emphasizes that the precedent is a fact (in the broadest sense of the word), it has exemplary character (serves as a standard, an example) and imperative (based on which subsequent actions should be modelled). Thus, precedents in the broad sense of the word may include exemplary facts presented in the speech by certain verbal signals that actualize standard content that is not recreated but reproduced (for example, language cliches and stamps of different levels, stereotypes, frame structures, etc.) (Gudkov, 2003).

The concept behind the terms “national-linguistic-cultural community” (or, according to DB Gudkov, the “linguistic-cultural community” (LCC)), in many respects, comes close to the concepts of “ethnos” and “nation”, the main sign of a group of people designated by these words is the community of culture of the individuals included in it. Moreover, one of the main components of culture and, therefore, signs of ethnic differentiation is language. D.B. Gudkov uses the term linguistic-cultural community rather than ethnos since in this case, it is not so much the biological, genetic, and geographical aspects of such a community that it is associated with the concept of an ethnos with any understanding, but the linguistic and cultural unity of its members (Gudkov, 2003).



In other words, precedent phenomena are separate blocks of information that cause certain national-specific associations that are common to members of a particular LCC when they appear in the text or in speech. By representatives of other communities, such signals can be perceived only superficially, and sometimes even cannot be understood.

For example, in the heading “*Kogo lechat Dumskiy Aybolit?*” (Translated from Russian: “*Who is the Duma Aybolites treating?*”) a reader who does not belong to the Russian LCC will not immediately be able to “grasp” the meaning of the content laid down under the word (precedent name) “Aybolit,” which, in the minds of representatives of the Russian LCC, has become entrenched as a fictional character in the children's story of Korney Chukovsky, Dr Aybolit, ready to help anyone in need of medical care. The use of Aybolit in this heading certainly did not imply medical assistance, but most likely, it was even used on the contrary to express a certain irony with the opposite connotation.

Or, for example, “*James Bond v Rossii. Evgeniy Primakov – shpion, kotory vernulsya iz lesu.*” (Translated from Russian: “*James Bond in Russia. Evgeniy Primakov is a spy who returned from the forest.*”). In this case, the “lining up” of the spy’s appearance is ensured by the case name of J. Bond (a fictional English spy from the books of Jan Fleming and numerous adaptations of these books).

Let us dwell in more detail on precedent texts (PT). The definition of a precedent text was first given by Yu. N. Karaulov. Following it, the concepts of precedent utterance, precedent name (Gudkov et al., 1997), precedent phenomenon and precedent situation were introduced (Krasnykh, 2002).

The concept of “precedent text”, according to Yu. N. Karaulov, means a text well known to the individual and his wide circle, including predecessors and contemporaries, the appeal to which is repeatedly resumed in the discourse of this linguistic personality (Karaulov, 1987).

PTs are considered as a verbal phenomenon, but in the cognitive base, it is stored in the form of an invariant of one’s perception, which is a kind of structured set of minimized and nationally determined representations of PTs (including connotations, with related text) (Krasnykh, 2002).

V.V.Krasnykh explains that the invariant of one’s perception accumulates not only knowledge of this particular text, but also all the previous experience of a particular national-linguistic-cultural community, presented in the form of already existing knowledge and ideas and a certain system estimates (Krasnykh, 2002). The PT case reflects and forms a scale of value orientations of the LCC. Based on the study of these texts and, first of all, the analysis of the invariants of one’s perception stored in a cognitive base, we can draw conclusions about actions, deeds, character traits, etc. that are encouraged/condemned in this community (Gudkov, 2003).

It should also be noted that some PTs can both quickly acquire and lose their status of precedent (e.g., the text of an advertisement), while the texts of the literature of past centuries are more “stable”, that is, in a different way, less subject to change.

Under the influence of changes in the life ideology of the nation, the corpus of national precedent texts is constantly changing, and old texts are supplanted, new ones come in their place. Not only the composition of precedent texts is subject to ideological influence. The attitude to the way they function in discourse can also change. For example, the process of general democratization of literature in the 1860s and 70s was reflected in the widespread use of proverbs and winged expressions as titles of works of art. Prior to this, proverbial titles were considered relevant only in dramatic works. In Soviet Georgia, there was an increase in quotations of prayers and other religious texts in toasts, which are one of the most significant genres for Georgian culture. Researchers attribute this fact to intellectual resistance to the regime and the desire to strengthen their own value system.

PTs include works of fiction, lyrics, songs, films, advertisements, political and journalistic texts, etc.

Here are some examples of PTs, which were found out in our research. The body of the studied vocabulary included PT from newspaper articles and headlines in the English and Russian language press.

For semantization of the selected lexical units, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries were used, including vocabulary with pronounced national-cultural semantics.

Due to the fact that the majority of considered PTs are secretive, “encrypted” in nature, it is necessary to preliminarily explain the nature of PT in the headings or content of the article.

“*Otradno osoznavat, chto myshkov (smotrite russkuyu narodnuyu skazku “Repka”) vystupila nasha gazeta.*” (Translated from Russian: “*It is gratifying to recognize that our newspaper was the mouse (see the Russian folk tale “Repka”)*”).

An article was stating that after publication, the prosecutor’s office began to take certain actions. However, the “direct” naming of the text, as in the example given, is usually not required.

“*Neulovimy Joe. B.Berezovsky i ego ubiytsy.*” (Translated from Russian: “*The Elusive Joe. B. Berezovsky and his killers.*”).

A reference to the text of the joke about the “elusive Joe”, which is elusive because no one needs and no one catches him.

“*Without a tongue*”.

“Without a tongue”: the novel by writer and publicist Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko (1853 - 1921), written in 1895, is imbued with democratic and humanistic ideas (Prokhorov, 2002).

What difficulties of a linguistic nature a foreigner may encounter in another country (namely, literally being left “without a language” due to his lack of knowledge) is described in this article. An appeal to PT causes a comic effect.

“*Mission Impossible-III offers action-packed ride*”.

“*No Mission Impossible*”.

“Mission Impossible”: television series of 1960-70s about a group that performed secret government missions. The next episode always began with the words: “Your task, if you agree to complete it ...” [“Your mission, should you decide to accept it ...”], recorded on tape; after listening, the recording was erased (Tomakhin, 2001).

In both headings, the author resorts to the help of one and the same PT. In the first case, in order to attract attention, the text is all-inclusive; in the second, this PT is used to save speech resources.

“*The Avengers were taking aim at the age of Clinton*”.

“The Avengers”: a multi-part television detective, where the main characters are Englishman from high society John Stead and attractive woman Emma Peel fought with criminals and tried to prevent crime (Murphy, 2005).

The article talks about George W. Bush and Dick Cheney in the election campaign period. Avengers, they could be called for their willingness to fight for the creation of better living conditions for the country, which is somewhat reminiscent of the activities of the Avengers, but, of course, on a smaller scale. In this case, the password function of using the PT is traced.

“*Steel Wars*”.

“Steel Wars”: in this title, there is a quasi-title of the famous film “Star Wars”.

Star Wars (1977) is a popular science fiction film (directed by J. Lucas), which had several sequels. About the struggle between the hero of the film by the brave Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader, the personification of cosmic evil. Unusual technical effects were used in the film (Tomakhin, 2001).

The word “war” in this headline one should understand the disagreement between the steel working companies Severstal and Arcelor. PT performs the function of saving speech resources.

“*A Star-Spangled Banner Weekend*”.

“The Star-Spangled Banner”: US National Anthem. The text was written by Francis Key. During the war of 1812, when he saw the US flag proudly fluttering over Fort McHenry (Maryland) after many hours of shelling by the British fleet. The music was a popular English song of the time. The anthem begins with the words:

Oh, say, can you see by the dawn’s early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?

Whose broad stripes and bright stars, thro' the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly (Tomakhin, 2001).

The headline of the announcement, typical of newspaper style, brings the reader to American culture, in which everyone is invited to take part in activities of national colour. Using the name of the anthem in the title itself, a certain expression effect is achieved.

"One man in a boat".

The title reminds the reader of English literature of the name of the famous novel "Three men in a boat".

"Three men in a boat, To Say Nothing of the Dog" (1889) is a novel by the famous comedian writer Jerome Klapka Jerome (1859-1927) (Tomakhin, 2003).

The article tells about the sailor Fyodor Konyukhov, who intends to make a trip around the world, sailing on a boat alone. By "planting" in the PT title of a known work in an amended form, it can be assumed that the author used the PT to create a comic effect.

"... the guest list was veritable who's who of the British upper crust ..." from the article "British Pomp for Iron Lady's 80th"

Here, the famous phrase "who's who", which can be defined as PT for its frequency of use, and the implication content under the name of a well-known reference book, are of interest.

"Who is Who" - a directory giving information about outstanding personalities (with a brief summary of biographies, the most important achievements, etc.) (Tomakhin, 2001).

Using the well-known "who is who", the author replaced the names of famous and wealthy people. PT, in this case, is presented to save speech resources.

"Lord of the Brands".

The presented expression refers the reader to the famous novel "The Lord of the Rings", which gained popularity through an adaptation. "The Lord of the Rings": a novel by the English writer J. R. Tolkien in six books and three parts. Published in 1954-1955 by the London publisher George Allen & Unwin. Translated into many languages of the world, it is very popular. For convenience, they were combined in pairs by the publisher in three parts, which were called "The Fellowship of the Ring", "Two Towers" and "The Return of the King" (Murphy, 2005). The prosperous businessman (the hero of the article) was chosen the image of the "lord" through the mention of the name of the famous film in the new "environment". The reader needs to correctly decipher this heading in order to grasp this meaning; thus, we can talk about the password function.

"A Brave New Age"

"Novy Mir in Brave New World"

In both of these headings, the name of the famous novel, which we define as PT, is "planted".

"Brave New World" (1932): a novel created by modernist writer Aldous Leonard Huxley. A line from William Shakespeare's tragicomedy "The Storm" is taken out in the title. The pages of the novel describe the world of the distant future (the action takes place in London), in which people are grown in special embryo plants and pre-divided into five castes, different in mental and physical abilities, that perform different jobs. People in this "World State" do not age, although the average life expectancy is 60 years. Regularly, in order to always have a good mood, they use the drug "som", which has no negative effects. The main characters are people who cannot fit into society and who all their life have dreamed of falling into a beautiful world where everyone is happy (Tomakhin, 2003).

In both of these headings, the same PT is observed. If in the first case in the rephrased version, then in the second - without any change. A tautology emphasizes the "beauty" of the world in which we live – the effect of irony.

"From Finland with Love".

In this version of the title with a precedent “inclusion”, there is a quasi-title of the famous song of an American singer Sarah Connor “From Sara with Love”, which became a hit in the late 90s of the XX century (Murphy, 2005).

Newspaper report on a musical group from Finland. The mention of the famous song by Sarah Connor apparently performs an expressively decorative function.

“Moscow and Washington: Lost in Translation”.

“... No Looses in Translation ...” from the article “British Drama on Russia’s Stage”.

“Lost in Translation”: a film by Sofia Coppola released on the screen in the USA on October 3, 2003. Externally, the film presents a concussion of cultures between East and West, which at the same time seems to be a metaphor for the themes of alienation, loneliness and companionship, which are intertwined at different stages of the life of the heroes of the novel (Murphy, 2005).

In this case, “translation difficulties” are understood as a certain degree of misunderstanding of representatives of different LCC, with different cultural and mental potentials. The first example emphasizes the “cooling” of relations between Russia and the United States, the second one, on the contrary, – a certain understanding of the theatre values of various peoples.

“Sequel to Basic Instinct Fails to Impress”.

“Basic Instinct”: an American film released on March 20, 1992, and having great success, a thriller with elements of eroticism (directed by Paul Verhoeven). Starring Sharon Stone, Michael Douglas and Jenny Triplehorn (Murphy, 2005).

In this example, we can talk about the allusiveness of the use of the name of a famous film, to attract the attention of the reader to the article.

“The Frog Prince”.

“The Frog Prince” is a fairy tale in which the prince, turned into a frog by an evil witch, tries to persuade the princess to kiss him and be able to return him to his former appearance. At the end of the tale, this is what happens, he turns into a person, and they get married (Murphy, 2005).

Calling the main character of the article by the name of the character of an English fairy tale, the author, perhaps, wanted to emphasize the whole real picture of the world in which the person to whom the newspaper article is dedicated lives. The title clearly shows the “strings” of irony.

“Vanity Fair”.

“Vanity Fair” – the name is taken from the work of John Banyan “The Pilgrim's Journey” – 1678-84; the title of Thackeray’s novel is 1848. It is used to designate a world, place or society where everything is permeated by frivolity and an empty display of oneself, virtues, material wealth, etc. (Walsh & Burkov, 2002).

In a newspaper article under this heading, it is about a meeting of a political nature, where, apparently, it was not so much about politics, but about things of secondary (household) importance, based on the definition of what is meant by the “vanity fair”. Functionally, this PT is used to give the irony and comic nature of the events described in it.

“Some like it hot”.

“Some like it hot” (1959) is a USA comedy that is still popular, directed by Billy Wilder. Starring: Marilyn Monroe, Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis. The film tells about two men who accidentally saw how gangsters kill people, try to hide from them; they dress up as women and join a group of female musicians (Murphy, 2005).

Although this title bears in itself the name of a comedy film, its content is more serious and does not cause a smile. We are talking about the persistent summer heat, covering some areas of Russia. Used in expressive-decorative function.

4. Summary

After analyzing the actual material of the press, the composition of the studied vocabulary was determined, which includes 75 precedent texts of the English and Russian language press. Among which: 23 universal precedent and 52 national precedent phenomena (13 PT was reflecting Russian culture and 39 PT – English). Particularly frequent PTs were: movie titles (“Lost in Translation”, “Mission Impossible”); designations of situations of perestroika, catastrophes and terrorist acts (Chernobyl, Pearl Harbor, Beslan, Nord-Ost); which, apparently, are caused by urgent problems of our time.

Carrying out the semantization of these phenomena, we focused on determining the vocabulary portrait of these language units, on their significance in terms of transmitting the national-cultural component. As a result, it turned out that not all precedent phenomena are obvious, and sometimes the reader needs to analyze the text, statement, situation or name in more detail, or, in another way, to recognize and then try to interpret it for an adequate understanding of the message in the article.

At the stage of contextual analysis, an attempt was made to find out why the author found it necessary to use one or another PT for the transmission of information, and what associations this interlacing of PT with the text of the article may cause from the reader. It was found that PT can be used to decorate speech, give it brightness, express irony, comic effect, meanings that are unpleasant for a communicative partner by allegory and, in general, contribute to a laconic expression of thought. There have also been cases of their use in a password (“encrypted”) function.

5. Conclusions

The study of precedent texts can contribute to a complete understanding of two participants in a communicative act belonging to different cultures; because knowing the background of the encrypted phrase, phenomenon or name, the communication process becomes livelier, more voluminous and colourful. From the perspective of this work, we found out that in order to understand these phenomena, it is necessary to have certain background knowledge, culturally marked and specific for a particular language. That is, one should obviously speak not only about linguistic and speech competencies as components of communicative competence but also about the third component of the latter - about cultural competence, which is equally necessary for adequate communication of representatives of different national-linguistic and cultural communities.

Thus, the significance of the phenomenon of precedence in intercultural communication is very high, because it not only ensures the mastery of new knowledge in the field of a foreign language but also reveals the interaction of different languages on the traditions and culture of the countries that speak them.

5.1. Contribution

It was found that PT can be used to decorate speech, give it light, convey irony, comedic effect, meanings that are negative by allegory for a communicative partner, and contribute to a laconic expression of thought in general. In the password ('encrypted') feature, there have also been instances of their usage.

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