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PHILOLOGY

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INTRODUCING A MODEL OF INFORMATION INTEGRATION IN THE PRESENT-DAY MASS MEDIA

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Abstract

It is usually assumed that the information presented to the reader is the major factor which primarily influences him. However, this paper sets out to show that the form, the information is presented in, becomes increasingly important and starts dominating the new media discourse. We hypothesize that it is necessary to regard the whole information set-up in order to understand the influence of the news policy in the new media. Thus, the model of the news story formation, the so called “snowball” model, is introduced in the paper. It demonstrates how the integration of the form and content is being built in the modern mass media. The model indicates how different layers are added up to form the new media discourse. Four information layers are highlighted in it: topic; the influence of the journalist's worldview (interpretation of the topic); establishing contact with the audience and getting closer to the reader (the multimedia approach).

Keywords: information integration, modelling, media discourse, the snowball model.

Introduction

The evolution of the media in the first decade of the twenty-first century significantly transforms the individual's perception of the world and rebuilds his relationships and interaction with the media themselves. Traditional printed newspapers and magazines are being more and more substituted by their digital or networked counterparts. Networked journalism in the present context is not the same as the traditional journalism. The former is understood to retain such essential functions as reporting, analyzing and commenting, filtering, editing and disseminating [1]. In the case of networked journalism, throughout the process of news production, the use of digital and online technologies is at the heart of the process of newsgathering, processing and dissemination. The news process itself, however, changes from a linear to a networked process, whereby there is constant communication and interaction with information. As a result, a new separate phenomenon emerges which we may define as a "*new media discourse*" [2]. The term "new media discourse" means more than just the traditional communication of the press with its deadlines and top-down reporting. In contrast, being a key product of the networked journalism [3] "the new media discourse" is available at all hours of the day and it is interactive. The Internet and its applications, including blogs, Web sites, and online social networks or cyber communities, represent a huge change for the media. It is clear that online spaces for discussion and dialogue are playing an increasingly significant role in people's lives where they have affordable access to such spaces [4].

It is usually assumed that the information presented to the reader is the major factor which primarily influences the user. Focusing on the intensive development and expansion of the Internet technologies that provide platforms for "new media discourse", we realize that the status of the information perceived has changed in today's world. Regarding this factor we hypothesize, that the form the information is presented in becomes increasingly important and starts dominating the new media discourse. Thus, it is important to study the whole information set-up if one wants to consider the influence of the news policy in the new media.

Therefore, in this paper we introduce the model of the news story formation which demonstrates how the integration of the form and content is being built in the presentday mass media.

We call it a "*snowball*" model because it indicates how different layers are added up to form a new media discourse. Four information layers have been highlighted in the model: *topic; the influence of the writer's world view (interpretation of the topic);*

establishing contact with the audience and getting closer to your reader (the multimedia approach).

Methodology of the research

The first information layer- topic

It is widely acknowledged that the topic is the basis of the information conveyed and perceived in the media. A large variety of the most significant issues (political, economic, ecological, cultural ones etc.) are on the agenda in the media today across the globe. We share the principles of the agenda-setting theory [5], [6] and suggest that topics introduced by the traditional and new media are able “to mentally order and organize our world for us. In short, the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.” [7]. Each topic has its numerous attributes, i.e. those characteristics and traits that describe a certain object or person. For each object or person there is also an agenda of attributes because when the media and the public think and talk about an object (or a person), some attributes are emphasized, others are given less attention, and many receive no attention at all. Thus, the agenda of attributes is an essential aspect of the topic-introducing role of the media. Understanding clearly that the media never select its topical issues randomly but on purpose, it is important to recognize the twofold role of the media topic. On the one hand, they should bundle the (principally) infinite number of social issues or they can narrow those issues down to the most urgent. On the other hand, the topics taken up by the media should keep their audience from becoming too preoccupied and monomaniac about just one issue. In order to overcome this problem the media refer to their official mediators and facilitators represented by such individual media professionals as journalists. It is natural that the backbone of the information modal we elaborate is constituted by the topic chosen and the information which the writer thinks is necessary to present for this topic.

The shape the chosen information takes when processed and presented to the readers forms the second layer in the model we work out. To demonstrate it a special research was carried out.

Experimental study of the topic choice

The content analysis has been used to analyze the randomly extracted articles from Russian, French and American newspapers and magazines such as “Komsomolskaya Pravda”, “Arguments and Facts”, “Kommersant Vlast”, “Kommersant Dengi” (Russian mass

media); “Newsweek”, “The Washington Times”, “San Francisco Chronicle”, “The Economist”; “Le Figaro” (French media). The total of the articles analyzed is 216 (109 Russian articles, 67 American articles and 40 French articles). All of them were published within 2011-2015 years. Several criteria have been selected to bring out the journalist’s worldview. Firstly, the journalist’s gender (male or female) has been regarded. Secondly, we have drawn the attention to the topics raised by journalists in their articles, the linguistic tools applied there and the key words. Under linguistic tools we understand a range of grammatical, phonetic and lexical devices used by the journalist that help us better penetrate into the core idea of the context and its author’s presentation. The selection of the key words has been based on the frequency usage of certain words within the analyzed media context and a degree of importance of these words for the content of the article.

Thus, we have discovered that the proportion of articles written by male journalists is higher than the proportion of the articles published by female journalists. This tendency for the traditional and new media remains the same, although the Russian media don’t show the evident percentage difference between the male and female gender whereas the European and American media do. Figure 1 presents a comparison of the allocation of the information in the Russian, French and American media context according to the journalist’s gender.

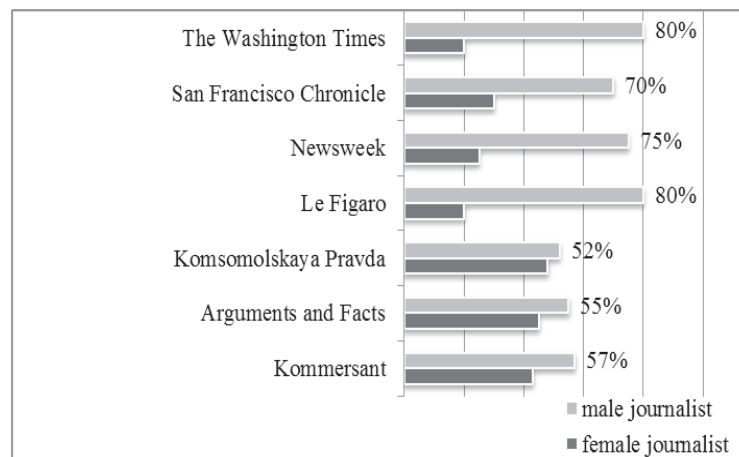


Figure 1. The allocation of the information based on the journalist’s gender in the traditional and new media of Russia, France and the USA.

These findings clearly indicate that the male journalism in the media world correlates with the topic of the media discourse and its linguistic/ extralinguistic tools (a special terminology, slang words, jargons, specific images and graphics, prevalence of irony or sarcasm as stylistic devices, specific ways of reasoning). Male journalists are more apt to write about politics, economy, science and technology. Meanwhile, female journalists usually raise the problems of education, family, healthcare and culture.

To cite but a few, the topic of economic and technological basis of Apple enterprise is covered by a Russian observer of "Komsomolskaya Pravda" Dmitry Voskoboynikov in his article "Человек, надкусивший яблоко." ("Man who has bitten an apple.") [8]; by a French journalist Benjamin Ferran in the article "Steve Jobs, le culte de la perfection." (Steve Jobs, the cult of perfection.) [9].

The problem of a severe financial crisis in Italy is raised by Steve Pearlstein, an American columnist of The Washington Post, in his online article "Italy's culture threatens its economic future" [10].

At the same time Barbie Latza Nadeau, an observer of Newsweek, introduces her news story about the difficulties of saving Italy's cultural heritage and about people who try to solve this issue. "With its economy in tatters, the country was unable to preserve its cultural heritage. Then the moguls stepped in" [11].

Furthermore, our research has also discovered the existence of "male" and "female" topic dichotomies in the media today where journalists, men and women, normally write, based on the key words that belong to the man's or woman's authorship.

The key words introduced by the male authors in the Russian media context are реформы (reforms), честные выборы (transparent elections), власть (power), город (city), страна (country), высшее руководство (top management), нефтедоллары (petrodollars), бизнесмен (businessman), экономисты (economists), стройка (construction), проект (project), рисковать (to take risks), разрушать (to destroy), война (war), армия (army), человечество (humankind); in the English media context: business property, salaries, insurance, overtime pay, absenteeism, gambling, to hit the jackpot, gun, shooting, weapon, rifles, game, to risk, news agencies; in the French media context: une puissance (power), une allégorie politique (a political allegory), l'analyser (to analyze), l'homme politique (a politician), la victim (a victim), heroism (heroism), un

commerçant (an entrepreneur), un savant (a scientist), les ressources de la science modern (resources of modern science).

The key words introduced by the woman authors in the Russian media context are: женщина (a woman), звезда (a star), мода (a fashion), красотка (a pretty woman), спокойствие (tranquility), спасти (to save), преступление (crime), теща (a mother-in-law), зять (a son-in-law), муж (a husband), культура (culture), искусство (art), балет (ballet), политика (politics); in the English media context are: business, prosperity, salaries, insurance, overtime pay, absenteeism, gambling, to hit the jackpot, gun, shooting, weapon, rifles, game, to risk, news, agencies; in the French media context are: la politique (politics), bonheur (happiness), affaire (an affair), une famille heureuse (a happy family), l'harmonie (harmony), actrice (an actrice), une robe de rêve (a dress of a dream), l'amour (love), l'humour (humour), la musique (music), la grâce (grace), l'élégance (elegance), une comédie sensible (a sensitive comedy), l'opéra (opera), le cinéma (cinema).

All these examples above demonstrate the similarities and differences in the usage of lexical units in the media discourse represented by male or female journalists.

Meanwhile, it is reasonable to mention that every theory has its own exceptions and this axiom is true for the presentation of the information according to the "male or female" topic dichotomies. It is worth mentioning that female journalists also publish their articles on politics and economy while male journalists are interested in fashion, travel, education or culture. In this matter we place emphasis on the frequency of the lexical differences and on the general regularity of this phenomenon in the modeling of the information integration. It is also necessary to understand that the existence of the phenomenon of the differentiation of the media discourse based on the principle of the "male/female" authorship proves that the role of the gender in the media presentation of the information is another significant research issue that demands a separate investigation.

The second information layer – the influence of the journalist's worldview: interpretation of the topic

Every single story can have a different angle, a different way of telling the story. That angle mostly depends on the individual who makes up this story, i.e. on the journalist. A working definition of journalism includes performing four core journalistic tasks: selecting, researching (or: gathering), writing (or: processing) and editing news more or less exclusively [12] for the traditional and

new media. Due to the fast moving evolution of the digital technologies the journalist of today does not work in “splendid isolation” anymore, particularly because of the sheer abundance of information and the fact that the publics are perfectly capable to access the information for themselves. Hence, our modern complex, changing world cannot be kept outside of journalism anymore. Therefore, the journalist of today is a professional who serves as a node in a complex environment between technology and society, between news and analysis, between annotation and selection, between orientation and investigation. He is the key mediator in the institutional media/ the audience relationships and so, his personality, his physical and psychological features, educational background and life values are a core of the information integration in the mass media today. This idea has been proved by the research based on the Russian, American and French traditional printed and online press. The influence of writer’s ideology was demonstrated in Roger Fowler’s book “Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the British Press” [13]. It is obvious that the writer’s ideology (political views and his/her system of values) results in the addition of new information cues to the basic information layer, i.e. to the layer constituted by facts pertaining to the topic chosen.

Third information layer - establishing contact with the media

Choosing the form of presenting the information of the first two layers to the reader the journalist has to consider the medium of transmitting the information first. So, she/he can choose either printed form or the Net form, thus getting closer to his reader. Therefore, it is important for the journalist to focus on his choice of media genres which are another essential detail in the modeling of the information integration. It is possible to assume that choosing a proper media genre adds a new information perspective to the two layers of the information that were discussed above.

The individual perceives and analyzes the information through the prism of various genre forms. These genre forms help to build a spectrum of pragmatic perceptions which let the mass media create the necessary social opinion and manage the audience.

Nowadays Russian and foreign research communities distinguish the following traditional information genres: commentary, editorial/leader, profile, feature, sketch, gossip, reportage/reporting, review [14], [15], [16]. At the same time new media genres have emerged recently as a result of the scientific and technological revolution. The most popular of them are *blogs* (or

weblogs), *social networks* (or cyber communities) and *readers' comments*. "The Internet and its applications, including blogs, web sites, and new online social networks or cyber communities, represent a huge change for the media. It is clear that online spaces for discussion and dialogue are playing an increasingly significant role in people's lives where they have affordable access to such spaces" [17].

The link and interaction between blogosphere, social networks (e.g. Facebook, VKontakte, Google Plus, Twitter) and journalism are the subject of numerous studies [18], [19], [20], [21], [22]. Weblogs, defined as frequently modified web pages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence are becoming an increasingly popular form of communication on the Internet. They provide an online means of creating active spaces for discussion and dissemination of information from public to. They provide platforms for human beings to participate in political debates, to criticize and correct the media. Next, the blogosphere is an effective way of managing personal knowledge. Every political, economic or social event is being discussed in weblogs today. Modern researchers tend to regard blogosphere as a "bridging" genre, i.e. the genre that unites time, space and individuals [23].

In the weblogs the information circulates between two constantly interacting poles: blog writers and blog readers (Braslavets, 2009). For this reason, the information representation is defined by a range of factors, such as a blogger's status quo, his individual preferences, time and the level of importance of the information posted online. In contrast with traditional offline newspapers and magazines and their online versions the blogosphere has undoubtedly more priorities in the information integration model. These priorities are the speed, the scale of dissemination, the number of readers' feedbacks, the ways of expression (one world, one sentence, a text, a photograph, an image, a video etc.). At the same time it is essential to pay attention to a more democratic character of the information representation in its form, content and authorship in the weblogs as compared with other online media. Despite the liberal character of the World Wide Web, the information in articles of official online media is based on certain principles and patterns established by the government's policy and a newspaper/magazine owner. The blogosphere provides an opportunity to remain anonymous in case an individual does not want to be recognized. From our point of view, the disadvantage of the blogs in their presentation of the information lays in stronger subjectivism and, hence, in blog readers' lower credibility of a

primary source in contrast with the authority of the official mass media. Nevertheless, taking into account a dynamic interaction between the new media and the blogosphere and its inclusion in online newspapers and magazines as an independent section, we recognize an increasing influence of blogs both on the journalism and the presentation and dissemination of the information in the world.

As well as blogs, *social networks* are another web genre of the new media journalism of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. They actively encourage new spaces for the information exchange, analysis and news discussion. Social networks also let journalists facilitate public debates and promote new forms of the news media. The problem of the mass media integration into social networks and their mutual influence is being discussed ubiquitously by Russian and foreign research communities in the area of information technologies, journalism, linguistics, sociology, psychology [24], [25], [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [31], [32]. The most essential question that appears here is *what* the social networks give the traditional and new media. The answer is rather simple. The dissemination of news groups in social networks (Facebook, Twitter, VKontakte, Instagram, etc.) helps to shape information profiling bringing out the focal points in the information flow. In this context the information transforms into the substance which becomes more and more difficult to control for the government and the official mass media. The modeling of the information flows is realized here spontaneously, sometimes absolutely irrationally with more unpredictable consequences. For example, one can observe how the information metamorphoses, taking place within the virtual space, may exceed the online bounds, transform into physical power and invade the life of the society. The most vivid examples of such transformation are democratic revolutions of 2010- 2011 in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya; youth revolts in London in August 2011; Russian opposition marches and protests for “Fair Elections” in 2011-2012, revolutionary events in the Ukraine in 2014.

Therefore, the information in cyber communities and the blogosphere represent a multidimensional substance that is formed by means of continuous interaction of credible information channels of the official mass media and plenty of individual comments of millions of ordinary users. The outcome of this cooperation may be the most unpredictable: from the development of new information types in the virtual space to their most unexpected realization in everyday life.

The most interesting example of the development of new information structures is the possibility of posting readers' commentaries online. Readers' comments, reactions, requests like "*share your thoughts*" change a casual individual's opinion into a new media genre. For most journalists and bloggers, comments are an important way of developing a dialogue with readers.

The presence of readers' comments at the end of an article lets its author interact actively with his readers, understand the people's reactions, manage some online thematic discussions, manipulate the views and the psychological state for his further publications. At present, every person is given an opportunity to share his (her) opinion on any question of interest.

For example, the article "U.S. Embassy and NATO Headquarters attacked in Kabul", published in an online version of New York Times [33], received 266 readers' comments. In an online version of the Russian newspaper "Arguments and Facts" 56 feedbacks were left for the article about a Russian oligarch Michael Prokhorov, a potential presidential candidate in Russia in 2012. "Для Прохорова власть более притягательнее денег." ("Power is more appealing for Prokhorov than money") [34]. A French observer "Le Figaro" received 134 comments on the article about the tension between the Russian authority and ordinary citizens. "La colère des Russes inquiète le pouvoir." ("The authority worries about Russian people's anger") [35].

It is necessary to mention that when commenting on an article, a reader does not only post a sentence or a phrase. Individuals often share their own opinions by writing independent articles on a definite topic. Moreover, every such comment can be highlighted and recommended to be read by other people. As an example we can cite a comment left by a certain user Jeff H. from Portland (Oregon, USA) left on September 13, 2011 on the above-mentioned article about a troublesome political situation in Afghanistan. His opinion was highlighted and recommended to be read 53 times.

"... Listen . No part of Afghanistan will be safe again ... Ever! After 30+ years of war, ten's of thousands of dead civilians, and untold corruption born on the backs of foreign money, you think there won't always be some contingent of radical Afghans or Taliban who will hate and attack Americans and Europeans alike with their Soviet and American made weapons? That's not complex, it's easy. Weapons are everywhere. They get in a truck, drive to a hotel, pray to die as martyrs and unload. That's it. Don't try to make it into something more by touting its complexity." [36].

Thereby, the new media transforms information flows to keep in touch with the reader, to be on the same wavelength with him and to make him its reviewer and critic simultaneously. And people's online comments and recommendations are evolving into a new media genre with its own features and functions.

Fourth information layer - getting closer to your reader: the multimedia approach

Further transformation of the form the information is presented in is effected by the multimedia which makes the fourth layer of our model of the information integration. The multimedia is the key feature of the modern traditional and online mass media. Today, in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the multimedia does not only present the information by means of various platforms like text, audio, still images, animation, video, or interactivity content forms. The multimedia is also the key technology of the information space, which covers diverse world cultures in their variety [37]. Step by step the multimedia penetrates and transforms the individual's lifestyle, philosophy, his interaction with the environment and outer world, his relation with the mass media as one of the conductors into this new world.

Due to the cutting-edge multimedia one can place briefly and effectively different fragments of a text together with graphics, images, photos and videos in traditional and online newspapers and magazines. Today's multimedia lets the journalists manage efficiently the audience's attention, inspire people to learn and analyze the news and events which are important from the viewpoint of the media while skipping the insignificant ones. Although the new media face huge information flows nowadays, it is the Internet that helps to organize and distribute the circulation of the information between the print newspapers and magazines and their online counterparts.

Another important feature of the multimedia which influences the interaction between the man and the information, is *interactivity*, which "seems to be of essential importance". Interactivity, interactive features are key elements of the new media. "Communication scholars have proposed that interactivity is one of the defining characteristics of the new media." [38]. Interactivity provides a continuous process of the information exchange in the web and the dialogue, the communication between the journalist and the reader. Therefore, interactive features do not only allow the individual to manage the incoming information, but, thus, influence the manner and conditions of its presentation. Scholars have

concentrated on three most significant interactive features such as *clicking* on a story, *sharing* it by e-mail and *posting* a comment about it [38]. “Interactive features on Websites help adults feel more informed... .Whereas e-mailing articles entails sharing content within a smaller network of known individuals (friends, family, acquaintances), commenting on stories comprises communication within a larger network of unknown people” [39].

Conclusion and discussion

The analysis of the multimedia and its key elements let us expand the borders of understanding of traditional and the new media as a system; to deeper penetrate into the modeling of the information integration and describe its layers more definitely and clearly.

Figure 2 demonstrates the summarized perception of the “snowball” model of the information integration in the traditional and online media today.

Considering the intensive development of the Internet technologies in a modern society which leads to the growing popularity of the blogosphere, social networks and networked journalism, it is possible to expect the emergence of new models of the information presentation. These new models will continue changing the traditional communication between the man and the mass media and they will define the route of the further evolution of the media discourse.

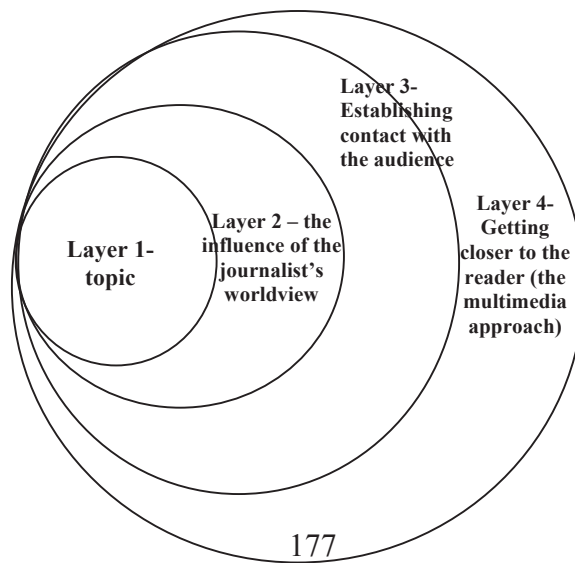


Figure 2. The “Snowball” model of the information integration in the traditional and online media.

Therefore, we can assume that new media researches are in demand and they should focus on the evolutionary character of the media discourse and its linguistic and extralinguistic features of *the journalist – reader* relationships. Besides, it is also essential to analyze the media discourse development under the influence of digital technologies in different languages to better understand the ability of building up a global universal model of the information presentation in the media discourse of the future.

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