

FEATURES OF LINGUISTICS AND CONTENT OF RUSSIAN RADIO BROADCASTING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract: The article is concerned with Russian radio broadcasting during the period of specific social conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic in respect of the aspect of the dynamics of linguistics and content of radio programs. The paper elucidates the features of the thematic content of broadcasting programs, their vocabulary during the lockdown imposed in the Russian Federation. It presents the calculations that perfectly summarize the movement of broadcasting content and its specificity in this unprecedented period for the new millennium. The basis of the empiric material of the study was made up of daily news on network radio with the federal territory of coverage of the music and entertainment and information and music types.

Keywords: Radio, Broadcasting of Russia, Radio Program, Pandemia, COVID-19, Vocabulary, Content Analysis

1 Introduction

Radio with its unique properties continues to be one of the most popular media in the world, which determines the relevance of this study. For example, Russians listen the radio on average for 2 hours 40 minutes a day. In terms of outreach to audience, radio is just a little inferior to television. According to *TNS Russia*, almost everyone listens the radio at least once a week – 90% of Russians. At the same time, the audience of radio is generally younger than the audience of television (Vartanova, 2017). In this regard, it is important to follow the dynamics of broadcasting content under the specific conditions of social life, which the world fell into in the spring of 2020, - the World Health Organization has announced the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Quarantine regulations have begun in many parts of the world; the Russian Federation has made a decision on imposition of a lockdown and restrictive measures in most areas of social interaction.

For the radio of the new century, the current pandemia is an unprecedented experience: obviously, radio, like all media functionally designed to reflect the objective reality, reacted to the new conditions of interpersonal and intergroup communication in a prompt manner. The concentration of radio broadcasting content around the coronavirus pandemic during this period somewhat resembles the mobilization of radio during the Great Patriotic War: for the period of 1941-1945, only in the broadcasts of “*Poslednie Izvestiya*” (Latest News) Central Broadcasting had transmitted up to 7 thousand correspondences from the active army (Sherel, 2005). The current conditions have affected several parameters of broadcasting, undergone the most notable reconstruction – the linguistic aspect and the general content of radio programs are among them.

In the theoretical literature the empirical-functionalist and linguistic approach to the study of the media stands out from the others (Kiriya & Novikova, 2017). The first focuses on the exploration of the “transparent content of communication” (Berelson, 1952), the second proceeds from the obscurity of the language as a message code. Dutch scholar Teun van Dijk studies media discourse, including among his works there are ones dealing with the discourse of news (Hanitzsch & Karin, 2008). Despite the fact that awareness has always been considered not only an evidence of civilization and well-being of society, but also a certain guarantor of its stability (Vasilieva et al., 2004), modernity with its multimedia almost completely immerses an individual in a constant, endless consumption of information. Therefore, we consider the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic approaches to the study of language used by the media during periods such as the current pandemic to be especially important and requiring special attention (due to the

enormous influence exerted by the massive information flow on each person). The psycholinguistic approach assumes that the experience of each person is to a certain extent individual, and the development of various mental functions inherent in a person begins at the natural stage, but the structure of the personality, concrete forms of personal development in general are determined by culture and society. And the basis of this whole process, its main mediating factor, according to L. S. Vygotsky, is speech that conveys social signs (Bubnova et al., 2017). One of the aspects of the sociolinguistic approach, in particular, is described in the article by Miles Hewstone and Howard Giles: what people consider to be “real” is real in its social consequences (Hewston & Giles, 1997). Thus, in these approaches, the fact of the exceptional influence exerted by the surrounding speech on the general formation of the personality on the whole and in certain periods of person’s life is beyond doubt. This postulate became the main one in the choice of aspects of this research and its methods.

A key indicator of the Russian media system is the central role of television compared to other mass media. By the end of 1995, 8.98% of Russian households had access to television. In 2007, the media used by the Russians to cover the news were: national television about 90%, national publications about 30%, national radio, local publications and local television about 25%, the Internet about 10%, and fewer satellites. From 5%.

The combination of government and private television channels, the not-so-strong position of newspapers (which of course includes the strong position of local newspapers relative to national ones), the multiplicity of newspapers at the national and regional levels, the strong position of publications, cyberspace and Internet use, Advertising in newspapers and magazines is another feature of the Russian media system. VGTRK Holding; Is a Russian state-owned radio and television company founded in 1990 and merged into its current form in 1998. The group operates three national television channels: Russia 1, Russia 2 and Russia K, the Youth and Bibi Channel, and 89 regional television stations and radio stations.

In the post-Soviet period, the number of national, regional and foreign channels, as well as the content of programs, changed compared to the Soviet period. In Soviet times, television devoted much of its programming to culture, everyday life, economics, and debate, but now it has devoted itself to entertainment programs and television series. Another point is that during the Soviet era, a large part of foreign television programs came from the socialist countries and Eastern Europe, but today (as in many other parts of the world) a large part of foreign programs belong to the United States and Britain. For example, about 50 percent of the films shown on Russian television in the late 1990s and early 2000s were Russian or Soviet-era, and more than a third (about 33 percent) were American.

2 Methods

The study embraced the period from March 28 till April 30, 2020, then the sites of radio stations were analyzed in June 2020. The basis of the empirical base was the radio programs of seven Russian radio stations of various types of broadcasting (information, information and music, music and entertainment) with a federal coverage area (52 issues in total). Using the method of typological analysis, radio programs were divided into two main groups. The first group comprehends the programs the genre nature of which can be attributed to the analytical group, in addition, the interactive is obligatory in each of them. This group includes 10 episodes of the programs of information radio stations “*Vesti FM*”, “*Echo of Moscow*”, “*Serebryany Dozhd*” (“*Silver Rain*”), “*Radio of Russia*”. The sample includes three interactive radio programs, four programs in the

commentary and / or conversation genres, and three morning talk show programs. The total timing was 11 hours 25 minutes 48 seconds. The main parameters in the used method of observation and analysis of discourse in this group were the topics touched upon in each issue.

The second group included news on information and music radio stations and news on music and entertainment radio stations with a timing of up to three minutes. The sample is comprised of 42 issues that aired in April from 23 to 30, 2020 on the radio stations "Serebryany Dozhd" ("Silver Rain"), "Europe Plus", "Love Radio", "Avtoradio" ("Autoradio"). The methodological framework of the study in this group was content analysis, the parameters of which were: the total number of topics in the broadcasts; topics of transmissions related one way or another to the pandemic and / or the coronavirus; lexemes "coronavirus" and "COVID"; lexemes related to the topic of the pandemic and / or coronavirus (the broadcasts under consideration involve the following: virus, infection, sanitizer, epidemiological situation, infection, disease, the infected, epidemic, antiseptic, lockdown, mask mandate, quarantine, pandemic, the incidence of a disease, artificial lung ventilation apparatus).

Using the method of analysis of theoretical literature on radio journalism, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, history and theory of media, an attempt to scientifically interpret the findings of observation and content analysis was made. Another method of the present study was the comparison method which facilitated to correlate the official figures on morbidity and the content of Internet versions of radio stations one month after the lift of strict restrictions related to lockdown. The study of new media in the context of this study is determined by the fact that they generate a new culture based on the involvement of content consumers in its creation (Jenkins, 2008).

3 Results

Since March 28 (the first day of lockdown and non-working period in the Russian Federation), the thematic picture on Russian radio changed as follows. "Awareness is Our Everything" was the topic of the interactive program on the "Vesti FM" radio, the questions raised online were: *have you closed yourself off? what measures have you taken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus? how do you plan to spend this week?* At the end of the first non-working week in the final program on radio "Echo of Moscow", all topics were dedicated to COVID-19.

The second week of lockdown brought the following topics (from the programs on the radio stations "Echo of Moscow", "Serebryany Dozhd" ("Silver Rain"), "Radio of Russia"): *how the pass system works; whether it is worth talking about the end of the pandemic if the coronavirus has not yet spread across Africa; how celebrities behave on Instagram during lockdown; while people are staying at home, the earth is recovering.*

At the end of the period of lockdown (last week of April), radio was thematically presented as follows: *mutual assistance; rapid emergence of another world in the place of the present; psychology of relationships during the period of lockdown; digital passes; government actions concerning coronavirus; support for residents in different countries.* Humor on the topic of coronavirus appears on the Russian radio air near the end of the stay-home regime: *what's the difference now – whether it is Monday or Friday tomorrow?* ("Serebryany Dozhd", the program "S Privetom, Nabutov!" 04/27/20, 9:00).

Lexically, radio programs from the first study group are distinguished by the use of vivid metaphors and epithets reflecting the events in this difficult period, and in this connection, a negative connotation of most of the utterances is observed: *demonization of the virus; an amazing level of hysteria; widespread famine; collective redundancies; collapse of western markets; the first digital war,* etc. It is important to note here that metaphorical expressions were heard not only

from the lips of radio journalists, but also in interactive programs in the opinions of radio listeners.

Based on the radio reports (stories) studied on of the second study group of radio programs that got recorded is 160. The aggregation of the message in one episode is 4. The ratio of the messages on coronavirus with respect to all messages is 6 to 10, this data is relatively lower on music channels and entertainment radio – lets say 5 to 10, and on information radio the percentage is – 56%. The average number of messages with the headline of coronavirus in one broadcast on music and recreational radio is 2.2, on infotainment radio – 2.

Electronic media are playing vital role in this vein, specifically the Internet, media language needs such feature as interactivity, the ability of creolization and hypertextuality. Any written message can be hypertextual, because it has the ability to spread by attaching new information links. Online text lives a special life, as an opportunity to get information that is interesting for readers appears almost instantly, in the course of reading. Therefore, the potential hypertextual deployment is a characteristic feature of today's Internet speech. And this is not without reason. New, electronic media have an impact on linguistic characteristics of the text.

High technologies of modern journalism have become a prerequisite for the study of those qualities of media texts, which previously were not perceived as lingual. This is particularly true for the visualization, which implies the inclusion of elements of different types of codes – verbal and nonverbal – to a journalistic piece. The process of multimeditization developing very actively enforces linguists study the language of media away from the traditional, linear understanding of the text and concentrate on its actual characteristics such as the combination of verbal material and various kinds of illustrations, infographics, etc.

However, widespread journalistic rendering of text not only allows to learn the information about the fact in the variety of his qualities, but quite often leads to "imbalance" of information flow when an external component, obviously more actively perceived by an audience, so prevails over the word, often replacing it. Advertising texts and materials of mass media work unfortunately give too many samples of this "victory" over the printed word.

Media discourse emerged in the Internet also gained its specific features. It is "created by nuclear text, usually problematic, causing numerous responses, and posts comments whose authors have the opportunity not only to express their point of view on the nuclear text, but also to engage in dialogue with other bloggers" (Vartanova, 2017). Thus, another important peculiarity of speech, which is particularly evident in online discourse, is dialogicality. It is a feature of the discourse that occurs in text-based electronic versions of printed publications and media speech actual for electronic mass media. Dialogical discourse, as a rule, has a syncretic character, able to include prose or poetic text, a picture (collage, painting, etc.), links to the music you can listen with the blogger-reader, infographics, etc. It has such qualities like polyphony, polycodeness. Sometimes such discourse is only a system of links to posts of the participants of the dialogue (discussion), however, the dialogical origin of this speech of unity is obvious.

The Internet space has significantly expanded the opportunities of journalistic style in content as well as in stylistic point of view. It has created new virtual personality, which is endowed with high social activity, is able to respond quickly to topical events, expressing their stance (the development of the Twitter a social network where you can publish a small, up to 140 characters, message – looks quite natural. The brevity of these records makes sharing opinions interactive and dynamic). Online personality is obviously discursive, as she "lives" only in a state of dialogue with other participants of the virtual communication.

At the same time in the era of digital media we see the active developing of the phenomenon of rewriting – creating a text

based on another source (it is certainly not the evidence of high creativeness of modern journalism). Rewriting gives rise to the discourse, since the same fact can be interpreted in different ways in both content and stylistic aspects. The event becomes extended in time, with some alterations as new information becomes available. Sometimes these are private changes, updates, expert commentary, sometimes radically different interpretation of events. An example of the first type of event's "life" in Internet is the way how the sanctions against Turkey, whose missile brought down a Russian plane, were presented. The second type of existence of information in Internet was submitted in Yandex news, which reported about the energy blockade of Crimea: the original text was attended by the news that the Kuban energy system becomes the gateway to Crimea, but subsequent media comments contained a refutation of this fact.

According to the organization's experts, the difference between the Corona crisis and other crises for media activists is that the impact of this crisis can be seen in all countries of the world. The pervasiveness of the crisis has led Reporters Without Borders to warn of the future of media activity around the world, and to predict the coming decade as difficult years for independent media and media people.

A recent highlight of the organisation's reports on government performance against the media over the past two months relates to Reporters without Borders 'protest of some democratic governments' response to the activities of journalists to cover the coronation.

According to this expert, the field of digital activities and political communications was much talked about in the section of hateful and low-level comments on these networks. Then came the Corona crisis. "And now we see that such encounters are not standard in these networks." "A large number of people use this network to exchange with those around them in a calm and sincere atmosphere." Now the attention of the media as well as scientists is mostly focused on this part of the activities on social networks.

The counts of lexemes in the second group are reduced to the following figures. The total number of words "coronavirus", "COVID" is 103, the total number of words and phrases corresponding to the subject of coronavirus is 83. On average, in one radio transmission during the specified period, 4.42 topical words from the group of words-parameters of this content analysis have been used: "Coronavirus", "COVID", as well as the words and phrases related to the topic of coronavirus. In one music and entertainment transmission, on average, 5.2 of such words have been used, in information and music – 3.6. The episode with the largest number of words "coronavirus" (8 words) was on the air on April 28, 2020 at 15.00 on the music and entertainment radio "Avtoradio". The largest number of messages on the topic of coronavirus was recorded in the newscasts of the last week of April.

The same is true of spreading fake news, news that travels like sparks through social media. Now, with the current situation, such news and activities have been pushed back. But these activities are ongoing, and just as these activities have not diminished right now, the Challenging humanitarian activities are not entirely new. According to experts at the Media Research Institute in Hamburg, social media is neither completely ugly nor completely clean. It just has to do with how people use and benefit from these networks individually.

4 Discussion

A month after the end of the non-working period in the Russian Federation (May 12, 2020), the World Health Organization registered a record number of people infected with COVID-19 in the world per day: on June 21, 2020, the increase was more than 183 thousand people. Nevertheless, the restrictions connected with the pandemic were gradually being eased around the world. An analysis of the sites of radio stations comprehended in the

empirical base of this study shows the following. The Coronavirus menu key on the main page of the official version of the radio site is available on the three sites – "Echo of Moscow" (<https://echo.msk.ru>), "Vesti FM" (<https://radiovesti.ru>), "Avtoradio" (<https://www.avtoradio.ru>). Information about the virus in podcasts of the main programs of radio stations is stored on the radio "Serebryany Dozhd" ("Silver Rain") (<https://www.silver.ru>), "Avtoradio", "Radio of Russia" (<https://www.radiorus.ru>). News about the coronavirus in the updated feed on the home page of the version site is available on the radio "Echo of Moscow", "Vesti FM". The "Echo of Moscow" website mentions COVID-19 in blogs (as of June 21, it was the blog of Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin). The main topic on the websites of radio stations connected with the coronavirus was the topic of lifting lockdown in Russia. The sites of music and entertainment radio stations of the Contemporary Hit Radio format "Europe Plus" (<https://europaplus.ru>) and "Love Radio" (<http://www.loveradio.ru>) as of June 21, 2020 did not have any information related to the topic of COVID-19 on their version sites.

Today, cyberspace is available to all people as a powerful medium. Referring to the publication of 537 articles related to Corona in May of this year alone, said: Of these, 207 news in news agencies, 71 news in news sites, 52 news from dissident media and 100 news in media News has been published that includes various axes, including political, social, cultural, economic, and the growth and maturity of political currents.

Over the past four months, the media has tried to educate and challenge, in addition to disseminating official statistics and news, in the field of analysis, despite the challenges. He noted that more than half a billion is expected to be added to the world's poorest population, which includes 60 million children. The media can make history in such circumstances.

Thus, the findings of the study have led to the following conclusions:

1. The topic of coronavirus pandemic is the leading one in the period from March 28 to April 30, 2020 in the analytical newscast on Russian radio stations;
2. Coverage of the coronavirus topic on Russian radio stations during the period of lockdown and non-working hours varied depending on the general condition and mood of people: from mere information sharing to philosophical observation. At the same time, by the end of lockdown period, radio stations speak in jest more on the coronavirus. Metaphors and epithets used in the programs of the first study group carry mainly negative connotations;
3. In the daily newscasts on radio stations of various types and formats with federal coverage, the topic of coronavirus is of primary importance, i.e. it prevails (55% of all messages aired during the period under consideration);
4. The average number of messages on the topic of coronavirus in one newscast on the music and entertainment radio was slightly higher than on the infotainment radio and amounted to 2.2 (on the infotainment radio – to 2). The average number of all messages in one transmission for the specified period is 3.8;
5. In one news during the specified period, on average, 4.42 thematic words were used from the group of words-parameters of this content analysis: "coronavirus", "COVID", as well as the words and phrases related to coronavirus (pandemic, infection, contagion, etc.). At the same time, the highest average indicator of the use of issue-related vocabulary was recorded in the news on music and entertainment radio stations (5.2 words);
6. All newscasts with the maximum number of messages concerning coronavirus, as well as with the maximum use of issue-related vocabulary within one news, were recorded in the last week of lockdown and non-working hours – from April 24 to April 30, 2020;
7. An analysis of the sites of seven radio stations included into the empirical base of this study showed a month after the end of the non-working period in Russia that the topic

of coronavirus remained particularly significant on the three sites with their own menu key dedicated exclusively to the topic. These are version sites of radio stations "Echo of Moscow", "Vesti FM", "Avtoradio". On other sites, the topic of coronavirus is mentioned in podcasts and news, mainly in connection with the lifting of restrictions in Russia. The sites of music and entertainment radio stations of the Contemporary Hit Radio format such as "Europe Plus" and "Love Radio" do not have any information related to COVID-19 on their version sites.

5 Conclusions

Based on the foregoing, it can be argued that radio is an accurate lexical and thematical representation of the mainstream in society. At the same time, the activity of reports on the topic of coronavirus by the end of the period under consideration has not decreased but remained at the same level of high interest in the topic which has been brought up to date. The uniqueness of the current situation is also in the fact that the lockdown increased the level of people's presence on the Internet, in front of TV screens, on the waves of radio stations, respectively, it is fair to assume that the consumption of information by society during the period was on the verge of satiety, and media directly influenced the fact that the presentation of the topic of coronavirus was massive and concentrated, which, perhaps, could have a negative effect on the general feeling of people. As far as back as last mid-century, it was suggested that reaching a critical mass of information leads to malfunctions of cognitive system, which tends to reduce information overload (Miller, 1960). We can say it more precisely after a certain lapse of time referring to further research in various scientific fields.

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