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PHOBIAS IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH POLITICAL MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract

In the given paper the authors consider linguistic mechanisms of formation, fixation and implementation of phobia units in the English- and Russian-language press. The authors stress that media can realize the function of society's unity or its stratification in the unstable economic and political situation, when fears and hopes of society are exposed as they are. Phobias are generated as a concept, and then broadcasted to the masses through the media texts, influencing the audience at the rational and emotional-and-psychological levels. The word "migration" is taken as the basis of the discursive practices involved in the phobias' formation. The analyzed articles form and implement phobias by representing the dichotomy of "ours"-"theirs" through the attitude towards "alien". In the articles within a political framework a political perspective is always focused on the subjective interpretation of a particular event. The authors compare and analyze the language material transmitting phobias in the Russian and American media. Analyzing contemporary authentic language material, the authors identify similarities and peculiarities in the phobias manifestation, stressing that phobias implementation and, consequently, the choice of language means of manifestation, are influenced by the political situation in the country. This means that the event in the studied discourses is described in a more uniformed manner due to the specific language employed.

Keywords: Phobia, migration, mass media, tolerance, society, political discourse.

1. Introduction

Mass media are a conductor by means of which society gets their images and sense of reality. (Simons, 2006; Hallin and Mancini, 2004) In this case media's important properties are mirroring (reality amplifying through the images thus giving a certain definition of reality), witnessing (seeing and hearing events and acting as a witness) and transmitting (adding credibility or otherwise, to an event by carefully choosing words), the importance of such features of media increases even further in times of difficulty or stress.

The present study has analyzed the texts from the central US (New York Times, Washington Post) and Russian (Arguments and Facts) published media taken as the basis of discursive practices of the "Migration" frame, i.e. hard news category texts, namely: the behavior of migrants from eastern countries in Europe (in Germany, but not in Russia and in the US, we have deliberately stopped on migration in Europe, not in Russia and in the US, since the reaction of disinterested media seems to be more objective) during the New 2016 Year celebration period. The articles form and implement phobias by representing the dichotomy of "ours"-"theirs" through the attitude towards "alien" in the European society. There is a contrast of two realities: Christmas festivities (implying joy, fun, and absence of any negative reaction) and their consequences (robbery, the bitterness, the proceedings in the police and other negative moments caused by the phobia causer – migrants from the eastern countries).

An important feature of the research is the fact that the articles are taken within a political framework, and a political perspective always focuses on the subjective interpretation of a particular event (Nedkov and Wilson, 2003; Babaeva, 2005). This circumstance cannot help influencing the formation of the content side and axiological component of the material. Both American and Russian media have an important role in the establishment of parties to the conflict. Media acts as delimiters of stakeholders depicting them as perpetrators and victims through their own representation of events (framing) and the description of the affected parties to the conflict.

2. Problem Statement

The feeling of fear is one of the strongest feelings of living creatures with an instinct for self-preservation, including humans (Zaytseva, Antonova, Ignateva, 2017). Phobias can be divided into specific, social etc. Social phobias include fear of public situations and scrutiny. In our paper we show the examples of verbal expression of social phobias transmitting fear or dislike of strangers that is Asian immigrants represented as the unknown, sometimes alien. Media successfully use, lock and implement phobias at the level of mass consciousness. (Zaytseva, Michailova., Antonova, Ignateva, 2016). Media can realize the function of society's unity or its stratification in the unstable economic and political situation, when fears and hopes of society are exposed as they are (Alekseev, 2015). Phobias are generated as a concept (our research is not aimed at the consideration of specific technologies and services manipulating mass consciousness), and are then broadcasted to the masses through the media texts, influencing the audience at the rational and the emotional-and-psychological levels. Specific media discourses are generated as a result of the so-called "reframing" that is a current interpretation of a specific frame (Konstantinova, 2010).

One of the problems, which are by no means solely confined to the present situation in the whole world, is the proximity of the mass media to society's establishment. This has been discussed and theorized about on numerous occasions, and is not likely to leave the topic of discussion any time soon either. Media are the cultural arms of any establishment. Private media relate to public authorities as the Church did to the state in medieval times. It is a symbiotic relationship of mutual dependence and tension (Raboy & Dagenais, 1992). The mass media as a source of manipulation or policy promoting is far from being a new concept.

3. Research Questions

This research deals with analyzing how and why certain statements of fear and threat come out in the mass media. The analysis foundation for how the various extracts from the mass media transmit phobias is given. Another important research question is a definition of the media's role in the fear and threat implementation, as this is the key part of the research. In the research the Western view of what could be termed as "good practice" definition is compared with another definition, which is how the Russian media view the role of the mass media in the phobia implementation. With the "groundwork" laid out, the given work analyzes various discourse examples used by various key Russian and Western media.

The paper gives examples of "normalizing" the threat of migration in Europe in the international arena. This is followed by a consideration of what can be described as the issues of understanding lack and double standards, followed by calls for unity and calm or no fear before the influx of migrants and it should be noted here that a number of extracts can contain more than one of the rhetorical frames.

4. Purpose of the Study

Mass media are a conductor by means of which society gets their images and sense of reality. Media act as an intermediary for all groups that are able to express themselves and transmit their image to the public. Serving the dual capacity as a source of information and a source of influence requires careful coordination and control over both images and discourse. The discursive practice of media texts is the object of our study.

The purpose of the study is comparing and analyzing the language material transmitting phobias in the Russian and American media; identifying similarities and peculiarities in the phobias manifestation, stressing that phobias implementation and, consequently, the choice of language means are influenced by the political situation in the country.

5. Research Methods

Semantic analysis in line with the semantic linguistics and partly pragmatics for how the various extracts from the mass media transmit phobias has been used.

Materials for analysis have been the US (New York Times, Washington Post) and Russian (Arguments and Facts) published media taken as the basis of discursive practices of the "Migration" frame.

6. Findings

6.1. Differences in Migrants' Phobia Implementation in Russian and Western Media

The word "migrant" has become a hotly contested word. One thing that has emerged clearly in the debate on migrants and migration is that it is very much in the eye of the entire world's main media. Key political actors in the world (Putin, Merkel, Trump) have spoken on migrants.

The attitude towards migrants in Russian and in English-speaking audience is laminated and layered. The analyzed articles show the attitude of ordinary citizens, police, and government representatives. In both societies the immigrants are perceived (at varying degrees) to be a threat. The Middle East and Islamic origin of refugees equates them, according to the Europeans, to terrorists. Terrorists may appear in the country, hiding among the refugees arriving by boat. Fears can be specific (fear of acts of terrorism, crime, increased competition in the labor market) and abstract (the threat to European values, morals, public order).

In phobia implementation broadcast by the Russian media, it is possible to trace the opposition parties at the local level: there are on the one hand the defenseless women whereas inactive police and public institutions are on the other hand (Blyaher, 2002). The same phobia of migrants is implemented by the US media too, but this fear is not dominant, and the choice of language shows the installing of a phobia as opposing ethnic civilized European and ethnic barbaric (migrants) origins. The following examples illustrate all we said above.

…The situation in the EU is deteriorating. Every month about 150 000 refugees from Syria and Iraq penetrate into Europe... Residents of Cologne still can not move away from the horrors of New Year's Eve ended by the attacks of Arab youth on the girls, looting and multiple rape ... group "sexual assault" occurred in other German cities as well as in Finland and Austria ... criminal ethnic groups of yesterday's refugees have formed in Europe… It is striking that the German police being firstly inactive then dispersed the spontaneous protest of local residents by water cannons ... The municipality for three consecutive days forbade any printed information about what had happened ... And then a demonstration of police impotence and insecurity of urban dwellers was followed by depression, anxiety and fear to go out in the city. As some in the European Union press say…on the New Year's Eve ... the ISIL tried out a strategy for the future seizure of the states of Europe ... They are selling drugs, raping and beating the visitors, and the authorities quietly hope that the newcomers will not break the fragile fence and run away, as has happened repeatedly. It remains to shrug and admit that immigrants "tolerance" tactics meeting with flowers, distributing free blankets, food, and "Welcome" posters has led only to the fact that all the uninvited guests are sure of getting away with the crimes, including violence and looting (Arguments and Facts 28.01.2016).

Title: "The double betrayal". … Swedish police hid the facts of attacks on women. Swedish police failed to investigate numerous cases of sexual harassment against girls ... Swedish police spokesman Varg Yillander acknowledged that one of the possible reasons for non-disclosure of cases of harassment could be the fact that some of the perpetrators were immigrants. The government, not wanting to worsen the already harsh debate about refugees arriving in the country, in any possible way avoid publishing any data about the new arrivals in the negative (Arguments and Facts 12.01.2016).

The Russian edition portrays refugees as a faceless, collective aggressive weight. There is a division of phobia implementation, when its object (German women) is portrayed as the injured party, and the fear (phobia) causer (migrants from Asia) is represented as dehumanized (aliens) subjects with a lack of human qualities (uninvited guests).

Strengthening a negative assessment of migrants takes place by describing the positive moral qualities of the Europeans, confirming that the European public has supported a welcoming government policy (immigrants tolerance 'tactics meeting with flowers, distributing free blankets, food and "Welcome!" posters).

In general, Russian media broadcast phobias that can be described as individual and social fears for a citizen's own life and material well-being, and not an abstract fear, such as a threat to European values and cultural well-being. In the Russian media emotional words with a very large imaginative ability are used (for example, water cannon to disperse a peaceful rally, the specific nomination of crimes committed by migrants), the text is often accompanied by images of civilians, making the Russian audience trust.

Both Russian and foreign publications transmit the statements of the parties responsible for the resolution of fearful situation, the proof of it being the quotations of police officials as well as the main political players – the Heads of State and Governments of Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Sweden. However, the Russian edition, describing the negative actions of migrants through quoting European journalists critical to the visitors, does not give a specific category of its source but a limited wording "As some in the European Union press say…"

US media also install phobias caused by the flow of immigrants (phobias language support is underlined).

Title: Sexual Attacks Widen Divisions in European Migrant Crisis

Across Europe, the migrant crisis that has engulfed the Continent since the summer is provoking new levels of public anxiety after the *New Year's Eve sexual assaults* in Cologne, Germany, where witnesses and the police described predatory gangs of mostly foreign men, *including some refugees*, groping and robbing young women. The Cologne police are also investigating allegations of rape.

While the details in some of those reports are sketchy… they have touched an exceptionally raw nerve as European societies face the challenge of integrating and acculturating the asylum seekers, most of them Muslims, and a majority of those single men.

Far-right political parties, which have long invoked …dark-skinned foreigners threatening European identity and security… have capitalized on the inability of the European Union to secure its external borders while efficiently managing the movement of migrants inside the bloc… the great fear is the fear of Islam.

Unless political leaders could quickly articulate a nuanced argument for migration — one that confronts fears about security and religious differences, especially in the aftermath of the Nov. 13 *terrorist attacks in Paris* — public support for granting asylum to refugees could collapse (New York Times 13.01.2016).

In contrast to the Russian edition, the American one broadcasts phobias as social fear in the national (pan-European) level, caused by the influx of migrants, with several components to be identified.

Thus, the color indication of migrants (dark-skinned foreigners) implies the opposition of the white population and the newcomers, it is a racial component. Anti-Islamic component that is Islamophobia (great fear is the fear of Islam; the asylum seekers, most of them Muslims) is also provided as well as suspicion of alien population, xenophobia (predatory gangs of mostly foreign men; fears about security and religious differences; the challenge of integrating and acculturating the asylum seekers).

Western media smooth the image of phobia causer with the help of linguistic means of propaganda (political leaders could quickly articulate a nuanced argument for migration; the details in some of those reports are sketchy) representing, thus, rational interests of the warring parties to the conflict (again, the task of the authors does not include consideration of the ethical side of the situation), implying the idea that genuine refugees and not the welfare seekers arrive in Europe (queue jumpers – wishing to get out of order).

6.2. Analyzing Headlines and Excerpts from Articles in the American Media with Discursive Practice of Migration to Europe

The following are the headlines and excerpts from recent articles in the American media with the discursive practice of migration to Europe, (phobias language support is underlined).

Reports of Attacks on Women in Germany Heighten Tension Over Migrants

Germany's willingness to take in one million migrants blew into the open on Tuesday after reports that scores of young women in Cologne had been groped and robbed on New Year's Eve by gangs of men described by the authorities as migrants… (New York Times 06.01. 2016).

Sexual Attacks Widen Divisions in European Migrant Crisis

…anxiety after the New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Cologne, Germany, where witnesses and the police described predatory gangs of mostly foreign men, including some refugees, groping and robbing young women. (New York Times 14.01.2016).

As Germany Welcomes Migrants, Sexual Attacks in Cologne Point to a New Reality

Drawing on the previous year's experience, they identified their biggest worry as pickpocketing and fireworks… (New York Times 15.01. 2016).

Cologne Mayor's Arm's Length Advice on Sexual Attacks Stirs Outcry

The mayor of Cologne has inflamed a debate in Germany about migrants and sexual harassment by suggesting that women can protect themselves from men on the streets by keeping them more than an arm's length (New York Times 07.01 2016).

Number of complaints in Cologne attacks continues to grow

German prosecutors say more than 800 complaints have now been filed in connection with assaults and robberies in Cologne on New Year's Eve that investigators have linked largely to foreigners …(Washington Post 19.01. 2016).

Germany: 1st suspect held over Cologne sex assaults

A 26-year-old Algerian man has become the first person arrested in connection with a string of sexual assault during New Year's celebrations in Cologne that sparked a debate about Germany's ability to integrate migrants. (Washington Post 18.01. 2016)

AP Interview: IOM chief: don't label migrants as threat

The head of the International Organization for Migration said Sunday that Europe must avoid viewing migrants as a "security threat" following the New Year's Eve <u>assaults</u> in Cologne and November's attacks in Paris. (Washington Post 17.01. 2016).

Swedish police investigating alleged officer-led cover up of sexual assaults by migrants

The attacks are drawing comparisons to those carried out on New Year's Eve in Cologne, Germany (Washington Post 12.01. 2016).

German sexual assaults lead to 'I told you so' claims on Muslim immigrants in U.S.

Donald Trump, Franklin Graham and other conservatives say this proves their caution right (Washington Post 11.01. 2016).

Sexual assaults challenge Germany's welcoming attitude toward refugees

"I don't want to have <u>to fear</u> those whom I actually want to help". (Washington Post 06.01. 2016).

The American media name the sources of their information very clearly, even if those sources do not approve the migration policy (Donald Trump, Franklin Graham and other conservatives ...). Very specific references, times and places are used to achieve maximum effect. Phobias source, i.e. migrants are described in the English-speaking media in the indefinite number (some) as mostly foreign men. On this background the English-speaking media depict a strong positive role of the police (after the first person arrested more than 800 complaints have been filed; as for Swedish police they are investigating crimes).

The phobia causer in both Russian and American media is constantly changing his identity (aliens, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, foreign men, gangs), the Russian edition adds to this description the non-human/extraterrestrial (aliens') features reinforcing thus a negative assessment of migrants.

The American media have also seen cases of protectionist description of migrants (Don't threat migrants as threat; Germany's welcoming attitude; whom I actually want to help; women can protect themselves from men).

The nomination of phobia causer is more intensively coloured in the negative in the Russian media (ISIL, ethnic criminal groups). Russian-language media aim at establishing contact with the reader using the methods of increasing interest due to more detailed and emotional description, a small percentage of positive information and the predominant percentage of negative descriptions. The information so presented can distract the audience from the Russian domestic problems and unite the Russian citizens in front of a possible threat (both from the east – migrants, and the west –America).

Such a pragmatic effect of the media text as manipulativeness is a characteristic feature of the analyzed articles, namely the promotion of the idea of fear in the all-human scale. Fear is caused by the influx of refugees from other cultures (American and Russian editions), religion (US editions), another color of skin (US edition) with the emotive impact on the readers through the choice of vocabulary with a strong component of "fear" and "bad" in the dictionary sense (the American and Russian edition), acceptance and support of the social and political decisions (welcoming migrants policy) in a society with multiplicity of points of view (US editions). The messages transmitted to the domestic audience are national unity (US editions) and the message to end double standards (Russian edition).

7. Conclusion

The mass media is important in establishing the identity and sides of phobias in the situation of migrants' arrival into Europe – they draw the "ours" and "theirs" aspect. As we see, the media mobilize the opposing forces in phobias provoking situation and frame the events and involved actors (Haraszti, 2004; Romanov, 2005; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). This proves that the mass media by using language tools can perform a rallying or consolidating society function in non-calm times of threat or crisis.

Targeted and controlled audience perception is reached by discursive practices aimed at implementing the chosen strategy, i.e. phobias are implemented as: stereotypes (strangers, non-whites and Muslims are fearful, whereas non-strangers, the whites and non-Muslims feel this fear), the structural peculiarities of the texts (showy headlines), means of nomination (verbal characterization of phobia causer), axiological and rhetorical means (not only negative but also implicitly positive description of phobia causer in the American sources). As a result, one particular reframing pattern of the topical frame (Migration in Europe) becomes dominant and thus phobias are implemented. This reframing pattern in the Russian media can be described as "migration abroad – it's scary". The American media texts provide the audience with the pattern "migration abroad – it's scary, but not so bad". Such a reframing is implemented as a primary means of explaining events or developments and thus of phobias implementing. A natural discourse of a particular fear of migrants is born when one particular pattern of discourse (e.g. migrant is dangerous) becomes dominant and is established as the primary means of explaining the events. And this pattern is in its turn sent to the audience, often accompanied with pictures. Although, whether or not the audience accepts the rhetoric is another matter. Through this process, a pattern of implementing phobias is established, through creating language- or words-based rules on how the afflux of Asian migrants is to be described, through the use of specialized words or phrases that come to be dominant. Outside or alien terms not in accordance with the dominant line of discourse are excluded from appearing in the mainstream news both in American and Russian media sources. This means that the event is described in a more uniformed manner due to the specific language employed.

As a final wrap up, we shall return to the issue of the mass media and examine which of the three roles (mirroring, witnessing or transmitting) suits the current situation best. Under the circumstances, i.e. tension that is characteristic to the Russian – Western relations, media is not 100 % witness whose function is to conduct democracy. The role of media seems to be transmitting because the media gives certain but not all images of the migrants' arrival, and this is from where the public takes their understanding of the situation as a result of the information that they receive. Today media tends to transmit the message to the benefit of the authorities that are expressing themselves and transmitting their message through the mass media.

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