

III PMMIS 2019
Post mass media in the modern informational society
"Journalistic text in a new technological environment:
achievements and problems"

**RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE PRESS OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE
SPACE OF DIGITAL MEDIA**

Vladimir Fedorovich Oleshko (a)*, Anna Olegovna Fomchenko (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia Yeltsin, 620000 Ekaterinburg, Prospekt Lenina,
51. Russia. vladimir.oleshko@urfu.ru

(b) Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia Yeltsin, 620000 Ekaterinburg, Prospekt Lenina,
51. Russia. annafomchenko25@gmail.com

Abstract

The scale and pace of development of the modern information society have led to the transformation of the usual personal space of representatives of many societies. On the one hand, global processes at the same time unify social and cultural life; on the other hand, mass media consumers are still looking for bonds that allow them, even in the conditions of increasing volumes of information flows, to preserve their identity. From this point of view, a unique empirical material for researchers is the Russian-language press published abroad, in particular, in the United States. In the context of globalization, the process of personal identity transformation is closely, as the authors prove, interrelated with the processes of technological changes in the media, as well as with the competition between mass media and social networks, and changing social and communicative practices. The empirical basis of the article is the results of thematic monitoring of Russian-language newspapers of the United States and content analysis of Russian-language newspapers that have been published in Texas in October through December of 2018 and January through March of 2019. The authors have identified a number of signs of integrity and connectivity violation of media texts of these newspapers. Modern media practice, as shown in the article, also shows that the Russian-language press abroad in its content is one of the forms of reflection of the collective cultural and communicative memory.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Russian-language press, multiculturalism, modernization, text, dialogue, communicative and cultural memory.



1. Introduction

The scale and pace of development of the modern information society in general and the media civilization in particular have destroyed the geographical boundaries, and also led to the transformation of the usual personal spaces of representatives of many societies. On the one hand, global processes at the same time unify social and cultural life; on the other hand, mass media consumers are still looking for bonds that allow them, even in the conditions of increasing volumes of information flows, to preserve their identity. From this point of view, a unique empirical material for researchers is the Russian-language press published abroad, in particular, in the United States. The existence and creation of such editions that develop the traditions of multiculturalism is associated today with many problems of general methodological nature. The main problem is formulated as the basis of the functional purpose of the Russian-language press outside of Russia. Most often, there are three actual qualities of the media of this typological group: a source of relevant information, a factor of socialization, and a mean of preserving the original cultural identity (Solomonova, 2019). This problem is no less relevant from the point of view of finding opportunities and channels that contribute the dialogue of cultures, spiritual and ideological modernization, which is emphasized by leading Russian and foreign researchers and media analysts (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014; McLuhan, 2007; Castells, 2016; Lindgren, 2017; Vartanova, 2018). All of this, as convincingly proved, allow expand the possibilities of modern mass media for the development of democratic processes.

2. Problem Statement

The formulation of the research problem for the authors was due to a number of factors. First of all, as a hypothesis, it was suggested that the mass media of this typological group was in a high demand by the Russian-speaking population abroad, and it was important to find out what kind of content meets their socio-cultural needs. Secondly, the problematic of competitiveness of traditional media in the context of the widespread development of the digital media environment, generally speaking, is of absolute practical importance. Thirdly, as we define it, modern media practice also shows that the Russian-language press abroad in its content is one of the forms of reflection of collective cultural and communicative memory, which the German historian Assmann (2004) called "registers of the past". Communicative memory is formed by memories of the recent past, cultural memory is formed by all the knowledge that determines the essence of the mentality of the individual. "Collective memory," Assmann (2004) wrote, "must not be misunderstood as a metaphor. Collectives certainly "have" no recollection, but they determine those of their members" (p. 36). Consequently, the cultural and communicative memory of representatives of these mass media preserves and reproduces, on the one hand, the cultural elements that are stable for those representatives, and on the other hand, more often, memories of the past of the group, usually, of a certain generation. This, in turn, largely forms the direction of their media consumption. From this point of view, it is important to describe the model of effective functioning of the editions, as for the tom-management, the involvement in market relations implies searching for specific solutions, the identification of management peculiarities in the conditions of transformation of media systems (Reich, 2013; Hepp, Hajarvard, & Lundby, 2015; Korkonosenko, 2015; Smith, 2017).

3. Research Questions

We conclude that under effective organization of creative activity Russian-language press, contextually, can be a platform for the reproduction of cultural and communicative memory, which is important for development of multiculturalism ideas and expansion of opportunities for participation of modern mass media in democratic processes. At the same time, our research task is determined by two main directions of analysis of the current media practice. On the one hand, of course, Russian-language press carries out various forms of verbal memory reproduction. But on the other hand, is it possible to talk about the interactive nature of this kind of activity? Since there are groups of Russian-language publications in many countries of the near and far abroad, this task can be defined as a general methodological one, as well as be concretized as a description of the various models of the functioning of the media, and the allocation and systematization of contradictions of development on the example of the Russian-language newspapers published in the United States.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to determine the essential components of the content of Russian-language newspapers published in the United States, and the main directions of information activities of the media of this typological group that cause the process of formation/development of communicative and cultural memory of their audience. In the context of globalization, the process of transformation of identity in the context of globalization is closely interrelated with the processes of technological changes in the media, as well as with the competition between mass media and social networks that change social and communicative practices. Because of this, an important component of the analysis is to identify and systematize signs of integrity and connectivity violation of media texts (Valgina, 2003) of Russian-language newspapers, as well as the consistently emerging contradictions that indicate the problems of the formation of professional culture of journalists (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; Oleshko, 2018) who work for these newspapers.

5. Research Methods

On the basis of current Russian and foreign literature, the theoretical constructs of the concepts of "publication model", "communicative and cultural memory" were clarified, the directions and forms of participation of traditional mass media through specific publications in the process of formation of collective communicative and cultural memory in the new conditions were determined. The empirical basis of the article is the results of thematic monitoring of six Russian-language editions of the United States and content analysis of newspapers that have been published in Texas in October through December of 2018 and January through March of 2019. Three the most popular newspapers and their websites were identified as objects of analysis. In total, 48 publications were the subject of study within the scope of the goals and objectives of the study. Also, conclusions in a number of specific cases were made on the basis of the information that was obtained from the interviews with journalists of Russian-language newspapers.

6. Findings

Globalization as one of the main trends in the development of modern media (Castells, 2016; Mosco, 2017) has led to the focus of researchers' attention to areas that, until recently, could be attributed to purely local. For example, at the junction of philology, cultural studies and psychology, according to scientists, there is a direction for the study of discursive practices of mass media functioning in a foreign language environment (Steensen & Ahva, 2017). The relevance of the work in this context lies to the fact that the analysis is subjected to a complex discourse, located at the intersection of different cultures and information environments (Romanovskaya, 2016), and transition from communicative memory to cultural memory, provided by the media, is concretized by the real examples of the mass media practice (Tolstikova McKay, 2012).

Since new information technologies, especially the Internet, are increasingly blurring the boundaries between the private and the public, the function of maintaining the identity of the individual and the broadcast of individual experience of representatives of certain societies are often taken by the traditional mass media. This applies, for example, to the foreign Russian-language press, which is often referred to "emigrant press". And in most cases, it is reasonable: the founders and owners of Russian-language newspapers and magazines abroad, in our case, in the United States are often immigrants from Eastern Europe: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus. At the same time, the creation of the press for the Russian-speaking population there is a natural process. The formation of the Diaspora as a group of people living outside of their homeland entails the formation of social institutions. To maintain the identity and community of the Diaspora, clubs, schools and, of course, the media are being created.

On the one hand, changes in modern society have led to the fact that new technologies and digitalization have caused the emergence of a new social organization that revolves around the idea of the network (Hjarvard, 2014; Fomicheva, 2017). On the other hand, the process of personal and professional identification in these conditions does not exclude the development of other forms. For example, audience consolidation, based on nostalgic memories. To maintain these memories, periodicals with "archaic" character of presentation and systematization of the content are more suitable. During research, we have found that the models of Russian-language publications abroad can be determined on the basis of the following typological features: audience, thematic characteristics, genre characteristics and social orientation. The first three features have been described in detail in the literature (Voronova, 2016). However, the social orientating media, in our opinion, as a new type of media, requires a research approach. This group of media is based on a fundamentally new technological basis that combines both print and electronic versions of the content. As a rule, these media implement not only their pragmatic and economic intentions, but also ideological and moral intentions. This is due to two reasons: the wide coverage of the audience and the professional ability of journalists to play a significant role in shaping the information agenda, and, consequently, to form public interest toward a particular topic and a newspaper in general.

To determine the specifics of the Russian-language press in the United States, we chose three most common newspapers in Texas, where one of the authors of this article now lives. Those newspapers are "The Dallas Telegraph", "Russian America" and "Russian Houston Today". Characteristically, these newspapers are distributed not only throughout Texas but also in other States, including Alaska, Arizona, Indiana, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Florida, etc. This leads to a number of findings in relation to

models of editions. We understand "the model" as a developed idea of the content and organization of materials in the edition. We are talking about the thematic areas and how they are related to each other in the newspaper, the place of publications on pages, a combination of materials of different types (by the nature of the reflection of reality, genre, authorship, the presence of dialogue elements, etc.), the use of different ways of organizing the text (individual materials, publications columnists, thematic collections, etc.). The publication model also involves the development of the composition of the publication: typical volume of materials, their interaction on the page, methods of layout and design of the publication as a whole or its parts, for example, by using infographics. The model is implemented during issuing, it can be adjusted in connection with the emergence of new circumstances, but its main characteristics are usually stable.

"The Dallas Telegraph" is a Russian-language newspaper that covers social, cultural and political news in Texas. It is issued twice a month. The newspaper was founded by Sergei and Lyudmila Taran, emigrants from Ukraine. Editorial office is located in Dallas. This newspaper, as we found out in the survey, has the highest level of popularity among the above-mentioned newspapers and a number of other Russian-language newspapers of the state. "The Dallas Telegraph" has, unlike other print media, its own television, which journalists use to create some sort of video versions of text materials. I can be video interview (for example, interview with a realtor, about whom an essay was just published), video appeals (one of them was from the principal of the "Russian school of Dallas"), current news reports, etc. "The Dallas Telegraph" issues are in completely color resolution. On newspaper pages, the reader can see a lot of photos. Two regular columns in this media are "Texas photo news" and "United States photo news". These columns are big photos with a short explanation. These photo news, presented on the pages of "The Dallas Telegraph" are the most interesting for the Russian-speaking audience news from all over the state and the country. For example, in one of the issues of 2018, there was a photo of a robot intern that appeared in one of the hospitals of Galveston. The text explained that this was done to reduce the workload on nurses. On the same page, there also was a photograph of the 85-year veteran of the Vietnam War, who just passed away and left a will of \$ 1 million to the house of veterans of the state.

Another regular column, called "Calendar of cultural events", can be directly addressed to the communicative and cultural memory of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who are often referred to "Russians". This column represents extended announcements of concerts, seminars, festivals, etc. Taking into account the people mentality, the newspaper publishes essays about successfully adapted in the United States and now living in Texas representatives of various public spheres – realtors, doctors, lawyers. Thus, through the editorial office, a Russian-speaking person living in Texas, but poorly speaking in English (this can happen), can ask these Russian-speaking professionals for help in important matters. In our opinion, it is most consistent with the model of social orienting edition. In this regard, the study concluded that the dominant components are the possibility of presenting texts in multimedia formats, and mass communication as a form of activation and organization of human activity in various fields. In this context, we see a promising direction for the study of the activities of traditional mass media that have not exhausted their resource of influence on the formation of the communicative culture of representatives of individual societies. According to Dzyaloshinsky (2019), analysis of contemporary media practices allows to distinguish three main models of this type of culture: technocratic, scientific and humanitarian. It is the

factor of opposition to the purely technocratic and often manipulative impact of modern media systems on the individual that allowed us, as a result of the system analysis of content, to distinguish this type of media as a humanistic approach to communication that is acutely demanded by the world community today.

Newspapers "Russian America" and "Russian Houston Today" were established by graduates of the journalism department of the Ural University Olga and Valery Tarasov. The editorial office is located in the capital of Texas, Houston. "Russian Houston Today" is issued once a month, "Russian America", twice a month. A distinctive feature of "Russian America" is accentuation on almost the entire range of journalistic genres of interactive nature as the main typological features. Every issue of "Russian America" presents surveys of the audience. The themes are very diverse, but the most popular are those that evoke associations with the past: "What is your most memorable gift for the holidays?", "How long did it take you to prepare for the test for U.S. citizenship?", "How would you solve the problem of illegal immigrants in the United States"? As we found out from the editor-in-chief Olga Tarasova, these surveys are very liked by the readers of the newspaper, and with these surveys, not only communicative function of journalism is implemented, but also a positive image of the publication is formed. We should also note the fact that in "Russian America", there is such a rare element for today Russian-language print media abroad as an editorial article, which reflects the position of the newspaper authors on controversial issues. The study, including through social networks, of what is the essence of public interest is an important feature of this newspaper. The professionalism of journalists and regular authors, which often includes experts on highly specialized topics, is revealed itself to focus the audience attention not only on its issues, but also to try to find ways to solve certain problems or to present the experience of solving the issue by a particular person.

Newspaper "Russian Houston Today", in its content and subject matter, is similar to what is systematically presented by the "Russian America". Both newspapers cover primarily relevant news for the audience, some of them are even duplicated. Due to the lack of texts from authors who have professional journalistic skills to create and to promote (including promotion in social networks) rating publications, both newspapers also duplicate some materials that claim to be especially successful. In 2018, the most successful publications were "Siberian health: Novomin in America", "Mother's alphabet book for bilingual children was issued". The thematic monitoring, carried out by us, allowed to reveal the fact that in this newspaper, as in those we mentioned above, information genres accompanied by creolized texts prevail, and articles of analytical genres appear in these newspapers very rarely. This happens, as we found out during the surveys, mostly due to the absence of specialists with journalistic education in the staff, since the few who have it are involved in solving purely organizational and daily managerial tasks. Internet as a factor of cultural transformations in modern society catalyzes system changes in the forms of consumption of information products, which involves the development of professional culture of journalists. Here is one example. Mediatization of the world of everyday life of the individual has led to the fact that the journalistic community is forced to "borrow" from the mass audience not only relevant topics (which was more indicative for the Gutenberg era of media development) but also certain components of user genres (feature story, mini-dialogue, consultation), and often elements of informal, reduced layer of the user language. By doing this, journalistic community implements these models as tools for building effective communication with the audience.

In general, having conducted a content analysis of current publications of Russian-language editions of the state of Texas for six months (October through December of 2018, January through March of 2019), we have identified several main thematic blocks that are systematically presented in these media, and which can be, with varying degrees of influence, considered as elements that reflect the factors of formation and development of communicative and cultural memory of representatives of the audience of these media.

Russians in America. This group includes materials that directly describe the life of Russian people in America. Among these materials, we will highlight the following publications: "Tears of Russian wives, or to be continued..." about family violence ("The Dallas Telegraph", February 15); "I helped more than 300 families buy houses" – interview with realtor Olga Hansen ("Russian America", February 15). Illustrative detail: every issue of the newspaper "Russian America" begins with an editorial letter. This genre is becoming rare in Russia, while in the United States in the Russian-language press it remains. Cultural life of the Russian Diaspora and Migration news, these two thematic blocks highlight both bright events and problematic situations in the implementation of cultural and migration policy, as well as relations between Russia and the United States. The section Latest news of the United States covers the report on events that are essential for the Russian-speaking population of the country. For example, "California vs. Texas: Why the labor market of the Lone star state is booming" ("The Dallas Telegraph", November 16). For the thematic block Headings tips, we select publications that have advice that help Russian-speaking community actively participate in the social and political life of Texas. These are, first of all, publications related to legislation, the purchase or lease of real estate, health, etc. For example, one of the most popular articles for the audiences was "Life in the United States with the children. Pregnancy" (Russian Houston Today, February 14).

We should also mention about the language of the above-mentioned and many other publications. The titles, as one can see, are not creative: they often contain either information about the event, or the quote of the character of the interview or a survey. In general, among the linguistic features of the content of the Russian-language press of the United States we have identified the following: the active use of colloquial words and slang; the use of English words written in Russian; the use of popular expressions and excerpts from well-known movies, including movies of the Soviet period; frequent use of English words, and in some cases – publications written in English language; unfortunately, the abundance of a large number of stylistic errors in the published articles; poor editing or its complete absence. A direct address to the reader, as a heritage of the press of Soviet period, appears in the Russian-language press of the United States very often. Here are some examples: "Reader, you probably met some" guru-experts" who promised to teach you..." ("The Dallas Telegraph", November 16); "Where are you now, my dear friends? Some of you are gone, other ones are far away..." ("Russian America", January 15); "For the taxpayers of Dallas (that is us, the reader), only the demolition of the monument will cost 480 thousand dollars" ("The Dallas Telegraph", February 15).

As evidenced by the content analysis, many publications in the Russian-language media are also characterized by high level of emotionality of the texts. The authors do not hide their concerns, joy, fear and other emotions, and often quite skillfully reproduce them in the publications: "I cried for ten minutes. I barely calmed down. Then I was cursing them" ("Russian Houston Today", November 16); "When I heard in court the babble of this scoundrel: "I agree to everything. I will do everything" - I was filled with pride

for our compatriots" ("The Dallas Telegraph", March 1). Emotionality is also expressed by punctuation. Often, in publications one can find the following: "... and all-all-all (!) the audience enjoyed a bright and fun entertainment program" ("The Dallas Telegraph", December 17). The protection of Russians and the cohesion, which is so characteristic for the Russian people, is verbally expressed in publications by using intentional vocabulary: "My dear friends, what happened in court proved that together we can resist any hell" ("The Dallas Telegraph", March 1); "I want to say that if any of you have such a grief, you should know that you are not alone and that you have our wonderful Diaspora" ("The Dallas Telegraph", March 1). Let us show the above conclusions with other examples. The authors of the newspapers "Russian America" and "Russian Houston Today" often use the words "illegal immigrant" or just "illegal" even for the publication titles: "The illegal immigrant was cleaning the toilets at Trump's Golf club" ("Russian Houston Today", January 17); "How illegal immigrants are eligible to pay taxes" ("Russian America", March 1). Journalists of "Russian Houston Today" once used the word "senatorsha" ("Democratic senatorshi announced their decision to participate in the elections" ("Russian Houston Today", February 14). However, they did not use this word in the meaning in which it is supposed to be used. According to Ushakov's dictionary, "senatorsha" is the senator's wife. But the authors used this word to describe female senators. One of the most typical features of the language of the Russian-language press in the United States is spelling English words in the Russian transcription. For example, "beauty hacks", "fake news". As for the quotes from the Soviet movie which are preserved in memory, most likely because of their singularity, one of the leading movies are "Gentlemen of fortune". The famous quote "Food is served, or sit down to eat, please" ("The Dallas Telegraph", February 15) was used as a title for the article about overweight. This trend, and a number of other ones, as we found out during the survey, are caused by the nostalgia factor of some members of the audience, as well as their special devotion to the media culture (which was formed in their youth).

7. Conclusion

Summing up, we can conclude that the Russian-language press of the United States performs all the basic functions of journalism: communicative, informational, cultural, educational, recreational. The thematic diversity of texts can meet the needs of their mass audience. However, from the point of view of the range of genres and quality parameters of the content, as evidenced by the content analysis of newspapers, there are many problems associated with the development of professional culture of media workers. It should also be noted that the authors of the Russian-language press do not hide their nostalgia, as well as in various forms show love for their native culture and language. At the same time, the media texts show that "Russian Americans" who have lived in the United States for many years, adopt many components of American culture. This allows us to conclude that the modern Russian-language press is, what is important, a platform where typical components of the integration of American and Russian culture are recorded, as well as what characterizes the mentality of their audience representatives, the traditions and customs that they have learned in the new environment. The factor of publicity of personal communications allows us to consider this typological group of media as relevant for media practice even in the digital age. Although a number of contradictions of development do not always meet requirements of the level of professional culture of journalists of these media, and this reduces the effectiveness of

activities. In the context of the problems of describing the Russian-language press of the United States as a form of representation of communicative and cultural memory, the most promising approach to the study of the media of this typological group should, in our opinion, be the cognitive approach. As evidenced by the results of the analysis, the use of this approach in research practice allows to understand the general patterns of describing the mentality of Russian-speaking media consumers living outside of Russia. Also, with the use of the basis of the results, the cognitive approach allows to identify typical models of establishing dialogue relations with representatives of these audience groups, which may be universal or be specific to different countries. The latter is especially important in the study of the factors of increasing the role of mass media in civilization processes.

Acknowledgments

The study was carried out at the expense of the grant of the Russian Science Foundation (project No. 19-18-00264).

References

- Assman, Y. (2004). *Kulturnaya pamyat* [Cultural memory]. Moskva: Yaziki slavyanskoi kulturi.
- Castells, M. (2016). *Vlast kommunikaziyi* [Power of communication]. Moskva: GU VSHE.
- Deacon, D., & Stanyer J. (2014). Mediatization: key concept or conceptual bandwagon. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(7), 1032-1044.
- Dzyaloshinsky, I. M. (2019). *Ekologiya kommunikaziyi* [Ecology of communications]. Saratov: IPR Media.
- Fomicheva, I. D. (2017). Mediynyi capital i ego sostav [Media capital and its composition]. *Mediascope*, 2. Retrieved from: <http://www.mediascope.ru/2294>
- Hepp, A., Hjarvard, S., & Lundby, K. (2015). Mediatization: theorizing the interplay between media, culture and society. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(2), 314-324.
- Hjarvard, S. (2014). The Mediatization of Culture and Society. *European Journal of Communication*, 29(5), 649-649. Retrieved from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0267323114539432k>
- Korkonosenko, S. (2015). Global De-Westernization Trend in Media Studies and Russian Journalism Theory. *Central European Journal of Communication*, 8(2), 175-186.
- Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2014). *The Elements of Journalism*. New York, US: Three Rivers Press.
- Lindgren, S. (2017). *Digital Media and Society*. London: Sage.
- McLuhan, H. M. (2007). *Ponimaniye Media: vneshniye rasshireniya cheloveka* [Understanding Media: extension of man]. Moskva: Kuchkovo pole.
- Mosco, V. (2017). *Becoming Digital: Toward a Post-Internet Society*. London, UK: Emerald Publishing.
- Oleshko, V. F. (2018). *Psihologiya journalistiki* [Psychology of journalism]. Moskva: Flinta.
- Reich, Z. (2013). The impact of technology on news reporting: a longitudinal perspective. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 90(3), 417-434.
- Romanovskaya, E. V. (2016). *Pamyat i zabveniye v zhizni obschestva* [Memory and oblivion in the life of society]. Saratov: Saratovskiy istochnik.
- Smith, T. G. (2017). *Politicizing Digital Space: Theory, the Internet, and Renewing Democracy*. London: University of Westminster Press.
- Solomonova, A. A. (2019). *Russkoyazichnaya pressa za rubezhom* [Russian-language press abroad] Retrieved from: [http://journal.pushkin.institute/archive/archive/2013/1%20\(236\)/93_1-2013.pdf](http://journal.pushkin.institute/archive/archive/2013/1%20(236)/93_1-2013.pdf)
- Steensen, S., & Ahva, L. (2017). Theories of Journalism in the Digital Age. *Journalism Practice* 9(1), 1-18. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2014.928454>.
- Tolstikova McKay, I. V. (2012). *Metafora v russkoyazichnoi presse USA* [Metaphor in Russian-language press USA] (Doctoral Dissertation). Moskva.
- Valgina, N. S. (2003). *Teoriya teksta* [The theory of the text]. Moskva: Logos.

- Vartanova, E. L. (2018). Menyauschayasya rossiyskaya mediaindustriya: theoreticheskiye podchody. [The changing Russian media industry: theoretical approaches]. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Yazyk i literatura*, 15(2), 186-196.
- Voronova, O.A. (2016). Pressa sovremennogo russkogo zarubezhya: mezhdru nazionalnim i globalnim [Press of modern Russian abroad: between national and global]. *Voprosi teorii i praktiki journalistiki*, 5(2), 278-292.