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IMAGE OF RUSSIA IN DOCUMENTARY FILM TEXT: TRANSCULTURAL FOCUS

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Abstract

The relevance of this study of the country's image formation by means of multimedia in the media discourse is determined by the objective domination of visual means of communication. The analysis of the means of creating a transcultural image of Russia created by means of video text in two documentary projects of *ZDF* (German TV channel): *Russland von oben (ZDF, 2018)* and *Russland! (2018 Doku, ZDF)* is given in this paper (Russland von oben (5/5)..., 2019). On the one hand, the selected research material is a polycode phenomenon that has a synthesis of elements of various semiotic systems; on the other hand, it is characterized by contrastivity in the presentation of facts about Russia, "foreign" linguoculture from the point of view of the German linguoculture. The authors analyze the creators' implementation of an "unbiased, free from attitudes and stereotypes" point of view, which they have in the era of sanctions, negative propaganda, and cliché domination. The article provides a linguoculturological interpretation of the complex process of presenting Russia, which has become a kind of historical protagonist, and the alter ego of Germany, so the verbal, visual and audio tools used in documentaries reflect different aspects of self-knowledge. Researchers turn to the discourse theory, genre theory, and apply the methodology of intent and content analysis. As a result of this study communication techniques that relieve the process of forming the image of Russia in the German-language communication space from one-sidedness and tendentiousness were indentified.

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1. Introduction

The media discourse role in shaping the image of individuals, as well as non-governmental organizations, companies, government agencies, and a country has increased significantly: the use of modern multimedia tools and technologies allows the media to maximize the creativity and instrumentality of this discourse as a socio communicative phenomenon.

1.1. Modern media as an information filter

Modern media is a kind of "filter" that selects some facts from the overall information flow. At the same time, some facts are eliminated, while others become crucial. These are informative and orienting media discourse functions. Information sharing is the selection of events, their interpretation and information encoding, which often creates a mirror image of reality, generates a new subjectively colored image, sometimes misrepresenting the reality. The media image of Russia from the linguistic perspective was considered in the following authors' papers (Grishaeva, 2018; Milovanova & Svinkina, 2018; Mityagina, 2019; Moiseenko, 2019; Novikova, 2003).

Media has become a new quality of culture in general, because "the grammar of media, their various technological and logical schemes have become the basis of modern culture, and its key strategy is to translate texts into media form" (Polonski, 2019, p. 32).

1.2. Communicative intention at the heart of textual activity

The information flow of modern media is primarily multimedia content of online magazines and television broadcasting, so the modern image of a country is a complex of ideas, stereotypes, and clichés formed by media text. The issues of the text dependence on the discursive space of its functioning are relevant especially against the background of the formation of new formats of communication and information transfer paths and are considered in numerous books and papers (Albuquerque, 2019; Burger, 2005; Ionova, 2018; Linell, 2019; Pastukhov, 2019; Wengeler, 2011). The text as a linear chain of signs that show the means and causes of its emotional impact is a product of the verbal and cognitive process of its author, who is a journalist, while it can be interpreted in a different way when it is perceived by the recipient. Texts seem to take on a new life, arising from the needs of social activity and functioning in social communication and transforming in a variety of interpretations. The heart of textual activity is a communicative intention, and the text itself is a functional system in which linguistic constructions are used to implement certain communicative and cognitive tasks.

This article offers a description of the means that form the image of Russia in the documentary TV-film produced by *ZDF* (German TV channel).

2. Problem Statement

The media image of Russia in the minds of German society is the result of the philosophical, political, historical and many other perspectives of humanitarian understanding of the country, with which the Germans have a complicated relationship in the opposition of attraction and rejection for several centuries.

Many stereotypes and features of the image of Russia come from the depths of centuries, their formation was influenced by various factors. Analysis of media text, in this case, a documentary TV-film, can explain the role and functions of interaction between verbal and nonverbal (visuals and audio) elements in the explication of objective data and subjective evaluations that are important both for expressing and creating a certain image of Russia.

3. Research Questions

The solution to the problem of establishing the formation technology of the actual image of Russia by means of a documentary TV-film is connected with the answer to the following questions:

1. What tools (subjects, actors, linguistic units, audio and visuals) are foregrounded in the documentary to create a set of objective knowledge and neutral ideas about the country that is both an antagonist and a partner?

2. What means (tonality, verbal and nonverbal means of expression of evaluation) explicate the subjective attitude of the author(s) of the documentary to the country that is both an antagonist and a partner?

4. Purpose of the Study

Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine the means of creating an image of Russia in the transcultural focus proposed by the German authors in their adherence to common stereotypes and overcoming them, in an effort to show objectivity and to express their personal attitude to the country with which Germany has a long history of the common cultural and civilizational development.

5. Research Methods

The research methodology is based on the communicative and pragmatic approach to the analysis of the text in the entirety of its modus, genre, stylistic and lexical-grammatical features. The method of content-analysis allows us to consider the content component of texts that differ in stylistics and genre performance of documentary films selected as the empirical material. The authors of the study use the intent-analysis technique to identify the pragmatic potential of the analyzed texts about Russia.

5.1. Polycoding of documentary film text

The documentary is a polycode, semiotically heterogeneous author's text. Pronin (2016) defines documentary film text as "a publicistic film narrative, a coherent inter-media narrative that is carried out by a journalist as a translator of narrative discourse" (p.113). Manskova (2010), building a genre hierarchy of television documentaries, rightly characterizes the modern era as "a period of explosion of documentalism, the emergence of a new concept of man and a new authenticity" and predicts the stability of the genres formed today.

Each text, here it is a documentary film text, is motivated and individual. The nature of textual activity is intuitive-imaginative rather than abstract-logical, regardless of the nature of the text and the

form of the idea implementation. In the course of generating a text, the author's idea takes on clearer forms and acquires the outlines of the visible content goal of this particular text. In order to achieve its goal, to implement a certain communicative intention, the author points out both the subject of description and a series of techniques implemented by means of language. The author needs to organize the text in such a way that the communicative intention is adequately interpreted by the locutionary target, so he needs to make the text informative and effective. The absence of a text intention suggests that the communicator failed to complete the task of creating the text. A text, being a complex structural and integral phenomenon, serves to cover a certain subject, the structure of the specific text will depend on the nature of the subject, on the genre in which it is written, in accordance with this, the author decides which communicative units will fill the text. Huck (2012), a German researcher, reasonably draws attention to the role of performance in documentaries and notes that the desire to fully implement the author's idea with all available techniques leads to the violation of authenticity.

5.2. Pragmatics of documentary film text

The documentary film text is a wide field of research. In the representative aspect, it is presented in the form of dialogical and monological texts (Figure 01).
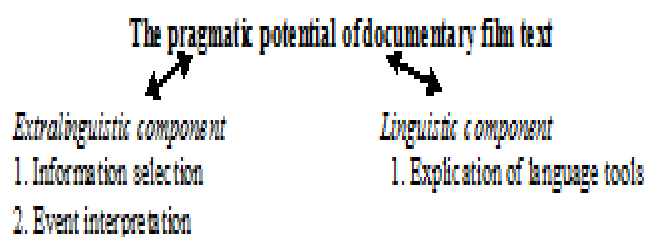

Figure. 01. Pragmatic potential of documentary text

The journalist can vary the information in such a way that the recipient retains the perception setting desired for the author, and thus influence and form stereotypes. It is important to note that the impact is difficult to predict in advance and the pragmatic effect on different recipients will differ.

In accordance with this, the authors of documentary films, in order to achieve a pragmatic goal, make a selection of sign forms, choosing those that correspond to the type of recipient – the audience. This selection is focused on the programmed linguistic and cultural "code" that is used to communicate with the audience. Within this "code", it is possible to implement pragmatic presuppositions when forming programmed stereotypes, images and representations based on them.

6. Findings

The complexity of the media text of the documentaries selected for analysis is due to the fact that it is quite difficult to determine the dominant of their genre. They combine the features of an article and an essay, the presentation of information by the author, using many artistic techniques. The transcultural

"narrative program" determines special forms of presenting objectively and subjectively "coloured" information.

6.1. Objective narrative of film text

In the author's documentary which is called *"Russland von oben"*, Part 5/5 *"Kaukasus und der tiefe Süden"* (Russia from Above. Caucasus and The Deep South) when analyzing information about events, socio and geopolitical realities of Russia, the following thematic blocks were identified:

- nature / natural resources;
- religion;
- multinationality;
- link of times;
- weather and climate;
- flora / fauna;
- industrial capacity.

Objectivity of the view on foreign linguo-and social culture provides a narrative of the film text, a detailed description of the elements of the presented world: this is the physical appearance of objects and subjects, event loci captured by the camera in a certain period of time, i.e. complemented and described by means of visual text. The author tells about Russia from the birds' eye view (swans, pelicans), whose habitat is located in the South of Russia, so the video series of the text in most cases is formed from this perspective.

The desire of the filmmakers to ensure objectivity implemented by choosing lexical units that express a positive or neutral connotation should be noted. In this case priority belongs to the vocabulary with a general value, which is used as much as possible in the explication of the following features of Russia:

1) Mysterious Country: *Russland ist voll von Geheimnissen von den Bergen Pakistans bis zu den Öl Inseln im Kaspischen Meer und den Schwänen im unvergleichlichen Wolga Delta; Über Russland sagte der große Brite Winston Churchill Russland ist ein Rätsel, innerhalb des Geheimnisses umgeben von einem Mysterium.*

2) Resource-rich Country: *eine Landschaft die jetzt zehn Millionen Vögel beherbergt und über 200 Fischarten; gleich vor den Toren von Astrachan liegt ein Erdgasfeld mit einer Raffinerie die unter anderem zehn Prozent des Weltbedarfs an Schwefel produziert.*

3) Large Country: *Ganz im Norden am Ladogasee jedenfalls kaum einen Vogel überwintern. Für die Zugvögel ist Russlandsweite ein Geschenk, nirgendwo in Europa haben sie so viel Platz wie hier. Russland ist das mit Abstand größte Land der Erde. Doppelt so groß wie die riesigen USA, fast 50-mal größer als das kleine Deutschland.*

4) Multinational and Multilingual Country: *In manchen abgelegenen Dörfern wird eine eigene Sprache gesprochen. Allein in Dagestan mit seinen drei Millionen Einwohnern gibt es 30 Sprachen und 80 Dialekte. Keine Republik Russlands hat mehr Muslime als Dagestan 90 Prozent gehen hier in die Moscheen.*

5)   Country with a lot of Large Transportation Hubs: *Kaum ein Land nutzt seine Wasserstraßen so massiv als Transportweg wie Russland. Die großen Tonnagen der Rohstoffe wären anders kaum zu bewältigen.*

There are no estimates of historical or political events in the text, however, the author occasionally points out some of them:

Nicht weit weg liegt die Industriestadt Wolgograd an der Wolga. Das Mutter-Russland- Denkmal erinnert an die Schlacht von Stalingrad, dem früheren Namen der Stadt am großen russischen Fluß.

Das ganze Dorf wurde Anfang der 50er Jahre auf Befehl des Sowjetdiktators Stalin aufgelöst und die Bewohner wurden komplett umgesiedelt ins benachbarte Aserbaidschan, das damals noch zur Sowjetunion gehörte.

Mit den Olympischen Winterspielen 2014, die in Sotschi und seinen Bergen am Kaukasus stattfanden, kam die Vergnügungsindustrie mit Riesenrädern und Hotels.

Um Astrachan wurde still in den Zeiten der Sowjetunion bis Öl und Gas kamen.

6.2. Subjective narrative of film text

This detailed documentary TV-film is like a journey around Russia and it complements the author's another film created in 2018 with the participation of one of the leading journalists and moderators of *ZDF* Markus Lanz *Russland! (2018 Doku, ZDF)* very logically (Markus Lanz - Russland!..., 2018). The film was created in cooperation with Silke Gondolf and became one of the parts of the current project about interesting countries for the Germans (to see films about Iceland, the USA, England, etc., please visit *https://silkegondolf.de*).

In this media product the potential of a documentary film is totally unlocked, because the stated agenda (Russians and Germans during the cooling of relations, what Russians actually think in different parts of the country) is far from being creative, and possible questions and answers can be boosted only by the presenter's charisma, his willingness to be surprised by transcultural experience.

The film is accompanied by a slightly awkward subtitle: *Gespräche mit ziemlich fremden Freunden* / Conversations with rather strange friends. The journalist begins his journey around Russia with rhetorical, almost basic questions about whether the peoples have a common future and whether they feel threatened:

- *Können sie sich eine Zukunft mit uns vorstellen?*
- *Und fühlt man sich gegenseitig bedroht?*
- *Russland und Deutschland verbindet eine jahrhundertelange gemeinsame Geschichte. Doch wie schauen heute die Russen auf Deutschland?*

These questions are a verbal background-base, which in combination with the visuals (Moscow Kremlin Towers, the Winter Palace, Mamayev Kurgan, Red Square, subway, ladies in fur coats) creates the foundation of the narrative, which, of course, begins with takes of different years with the faces of Stalin, Hitler, Gorbachev, Kohl, Putin (Der kalte Krieg ist vorbei – a fragment of a speech in the Bundestag in 2001), Schröder and the staff of the military parade on May 9. All this, according to the

plan, reflects the background of events, impressions, on which Markus Lantz will set a new transcultural focus.

The subjectivity of the journalist's evaluations is realized against the background of objectively existing socio-cultural and communicative clichés and biases. The method of intent analysis determines our attention to the questions that M. Lantz addresses to his interlocutors (translation is ours): (Table 01).

Table 01. Implementation of sociocultural and communicative cliches in journalist issues

Questions	Dialog partner
How does Germany look from the Russian perspective? *What should I understand first to understand Russia?* *How important is Putin to the Russian system?* *Is Russian society split?*	Dmitri Trenin — Russian political expert, Director of Carnegie Moscow Center
What is the biggest misunderstanding of Russia? *Do Russians think they are being treated unfairly in the world?*	Stranger, who was "accidentally" met on the street, she studied in Germany
What is the biggest German prejudice against Russia?	Andrea von Knoop, Honorary President of the German-Russian Chamber of Commerce
How do you interpret the fact that 15% of youth in Russia want to leave the country?	Evgenia Obraztsova, Prima ballerina of The Bolshoi Theatre
What do you think of Putin?	Roman, homeless; Stefan Duerr, Main Shareholder of EkoNiva, leading agricultural holding in Russia
Do you feel like an oligarch?	Stefan Duerr, Main Shareholder of EkoNiva, leading agricultural holding in Russia
What happened between the Russians and Germans?	Felix Komarov, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist
Are you happy with your life?	Lidiya, Former Milker, retired
What do you think about the relations between Russia and Germany?	Ivan, Farmer
Can you describe Russia as a free country?	Olga, Activist of the Protest Movement
How did you manage to survive this? *(question about the Battle of Stalingrad)*	Zinaida Petrovna, War Veteran, Nurse

The journalist is eager to get straightforward answers to questions that are important and relevant to the idea of the film, and, as can be clearly seen, deliberately does not make any differences in the questions formulation depending on the status and age of the dialog partner. This shows "objective subjectivity", which in some cases is due to genuine interest, sympathy or simple human curiosity (these examples of questions are highlighted in bold). Russia appears in the film as a huge complicated country, where very different people live, and it is not always easy to understand them. The overall tone of the film is positive, respectful, and one of the final takes is a conversation with a teenager, a member of the search party, who admits that he imagines the terrible death of soldiers whose remains are to be reburied – it inspires optimism and hope for peace.

It should be noted that the communicative behavior of Marcus Lanz in different contexts of the film is built taking into account all the minimum requirements and expectations: he easily takes off his shoes when entering apartments, he sincerely surprises that a world-class pianist lives in a very small apartment in a residential area, that a migrant from Tajikistan manages to pay his son's tuition fees.

Thus, the synthetic analysis of the content of the documentary TV film media text and the authors' intentions implemented in it allows us to state the effectiveness of the tools used to solve global problems of media discourse.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The conducted analysis allows us to state that media as a leading feature of modern culture is manifested in the documentary TV film focused on transcultural understanding of the image of a foreign country, in the implementation of the "objective subjectivity" of the video narrative. The selection of tools that are used in this media genre in the interpretation of the image of Russia is subject to a special author's focus of providing information.

7.2. The study shows that the combination of the content and intent analysis methods is heuristic in establishing metatext, language, visual and audio means to ensure an objective view of another's linguistic and social culture. The instrumentality and creativity of media discourse is manifested in the genre of the documentary film in the techniques of author's solutions (in particular, a look at the South of Russia from birds' eye view, a focus on the universality of the dialog partners in the choice of questions, a clichéd and stereotypical video series). The interactive features of the film as a multimedia product ensure that the "foreign" country's evaluations are expressed in a multi-code manner, and the "forming public opinion through information" technology is implemented as efficiently as possible. The perspective of the study may be to determine the media discourse tools that form an image of a foreign country, used in video blogs and YouTube channels, which consistently and systematically represent the point of view of an individual author, independent of the policy of the company-employer.

Acknowledgments

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