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THE PRAGMATIC ROLE OF INTENSIFIERS IN AMERICAN MEDIA POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The intensity category is one of the debatable categories in modern language science. It is in a complex relationship with objective and subjective categories. The intensity category also correlates with the concept of intensification, which is a quantitative qualification of a feature and a kind of assessment in a broad sense. The aim of the work is to identify different-level intensifying means related to the expressive means of the English language. The relevance of the study of intensifying means in the language is quite high due to the ambiguous understanding of this category and its polyfunctionality. The new information and communication environment has a huge impact on changing the mechanisms of using different language means in communication and this opens up prospects for new research. The object of the analysis was the media texts of the political discourse of American online media, such as The New York Times, Bloomberg, The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal. The work analyzes graphic, lexical, grammatical (morphological and syntactic) intensifying means and their interaction for expressing amplifying semantics. Intensifiers help the author to express his subjective attitude to objects and phenomena, to form the desired emotions and assessments in the addressee. To enhance the evaluative and emotive properties, lexical units were most often used, including words - *ly*. As a rule, these are units with descriptive-emotive semantics. Of course, the category of intensity can be defined as a semantic category of a pragmatic nature.

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1. Introduction

The category of intensity is one of the basic and at the same time debatable categories in modern language science and has attracted the attention of domestic and foreign linguists for more than a dozen years. The intensity category was studied in different aspects: grammatical (Mendez-Naya, 2008), lexical (Glushak & Principalova, 2020; Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003), stylistic (Lebedeva & Pavlova, 2016; Noy & Hamo, 2019). According to most researchers, the intensity reflects both an objective characteristic (the quantitative certainty of a particular feature) and its subjective interpretation, since "the speaker's communicative task generates further subjective development of a specific situation and entails, as a rule, both assessment and expression" (Egorova, 2009, p. 226). Lebedeva and Pavlova (2016) state that intensifiers "are used to emphasize or weaken propositions and express the speaker's stance, their individual connotation depends on the quality and type of the linguistic item that is being modified" (p. 45). Consequently, intensifying means have an expressed pragmatic purpose, since the communicative-pragmatic goal of intensification is also the speaker's desire to make the statement more convincing for the interlocutor, to enhance its impact on the addressee (Reig Alamillo, 2018).

Thus, any linguistic unit, first of all, should be considered as a variable, context-dependent value. The pragmatization of linguistic analysis is increasing in discursively oriented research (Nefedov & Chernyavskaya, 2020, pp. 84-85). It is obvious that the study of the pragmatic potential of intensifiers using the example of modern political discourse is relevant and is due to the challenges of linguistic science.

2. Problem Statement

In the modern world, politics is of high importance for all segments of the population. Every day we can witness various kinds of political events, without which it is difficult to imagine relationships at the external and internal levels, which demonstrates the progressive dynamics of political discourse. Political discourse, first, is associated with "the problems of distribution and implementation of power in society and characterized by ideology and focus on a mass audience" (Troshchenkova, 2017, p. 251). At the same time, there is a very active blurring of the boundaries "between the informing discourse of the media and the influencing political discourse of the media" (Kusotskaya, 2017, p. 589).

Obviously, modern media discourse is a multifaceted and very varied formation that performs the function of not only informing (Solntseva, 2018, p. 489), and linguistic structures are a tool for realizing the speaker's communicative intentions. We agree with the opinion of many researchers that the study of media texts in the communicative aspect "sheds light on its semantic organization, including explicit information and implicit content of the text" (Golev et al., 2021, pp. 580-581). So, "language/discourse is much more than a code or some grammatical, morphological or phonological rules" (Alba-Juez & Larina, 2018, p. 10). The new information and communication environment has a huge impact on changing the mechanisms of using different language means in communication and this opens up prospects for new research.

3. Research Questions

Much has been said recently about the relationship between pragmatics and semantics - more precisely, linguistic semantics. The so-called “pragmatic turn” in semantics is associated with the name of Wittgenstein (2001), “the meaning of a word is its use in language” (p. 43). Accordingly, the meaning belongs rather not to the language, but to the speaking subject (Kotorova, 2019, p. 109).

Therefore, the research issue of this work is related to the need to consider the functioning of intensifying means as a communicative-pragmatic means in media texts and to identify strategies for their use in political discourse against the background of certain political events.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the work is to identify different-level intensifying means related to the expressive means of the English language, with the subsequent analysis of the specifics of the implementation of the function of enhanced influence on the addressee in the political discourse of American online media. The implementation of this aim is carried out with solving the tasks.

5. Research Methods

Since we are dealing with a complex interaction of discursive practice and the cognitive sphere, the analysis of which can contribute to the development of the modern cognitive-communicative paradigm. The work used: the method of component analysis, the method of modeling, as well as the identification of frequency and the method of interpretive analysis of contexts. The scientific novelty of the work also consists in an attempt to substantiate the communicative-pragmatic potential of the English-speaking intensifying means and to identify the conditionality of the use of these means in political discourse.

6. Findings

The material for the research was the online media texts of such publishers as The New York Times, Bloomberg, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal for the first quarter of 2021. We analyzed blocks of news media texts devoted to domestic political events. The US Congress impeached President Donald Trump for inciting an uprising against the government, and subsequently the inauguration of the new President Biden. A large number of intensifying means were recorded in the direct speech of various political figures who expressed their opinion on the current situation, or journalists included in the news media texts individual phrases heard from the political figures of different parties when covering events. The study revealed the presence of various types of intensifying means. The systematization of the obtained data was carried out according to the levels of the language: phonetic (graphic representation), lexical, grammatical (morphological and syntactic).

In the first place in terms of the number there are intensifying means of the lexical level, 65% of the total number of examples. The lexical meaning of a word may contain an intensifying connotation, which indicates an increase in a sign, state, emotion, action, assessment, quantity, quality, etc. Within this

level, intensifying adjectives were most commonly used. The given examples are *enormous sums of money*, *an angry mob*, *a tremendous responsibility on our shoulders*, *the violent rioting*, *a horrific assault on the Capitol*, *a deadly but failed attempt to stop Biden's rise*, etc. Against the background of these events, we observe a large number of adjectives with a negative assessment; such units combine evaluative and descriptive meanings in their semantics. In addition, it is important to note such cases as an *emotionally charged debate*, *a heavily fortified Capitol*, *the harsh ugly reality*, etc. Such examples signal the demand for emotive vocabulary and there is reason to pay attention to motivated intensifiers, which, in particular, are formed in a suffix way from an emotive adjective or adjective participle. Of course, this group can consist of a variety of words and can be replenished with new units. And this use of words with different evaluative signs is perceived as an intensification of the evaluation contained in the second word. It is obvious that emotive intensifiers of this group perform a pragmatic function. They allow the speaker to express a thought about their emotional state, but at the same time, they help to demonstrate an emotional attitude to the message, which leads to a psychological impact on the reader. Thus, intensifiers of this particular group were most often used in media texts.

Further, at the lexical level of the language, there are intensifying adverbs, for example, *extremely* distinguished lawyers and representatives, *totally irrelevant*, *absolutely* no coronavirus strategy; he *actually* won the election, *highly* organized, etc. As we can see, in the semantic features of phrases, in addition to emotionality and evaluativeness, intensity is included, that is, an increase in the connotation of adjectives, participles, and temporal forms. And also, it should be said separately, about such intensifying adverbs as: *too* late, *so* worried, to do *so*, etc. These intensifiers function exclusively as a functional word. *Too* indicates the speaker's distrust. They are not widely used in media texts; however, we can find various combinations with *very*. These can be typical and familiar *very strong* and, and *very much* needed, where *very* defines and strengthens the meaning of an adjective, and *very much* is combined with a participle. However, there are phrases, which also catch our attention, for example, *the very core* *the very foundation* of our democracy. Firstly, the use of the intensifier-adverb *very* with a noun is an unusual combination, and secondly, in this statement *very* is used twice, which is clearly motivated and is a tool for influencing the addressee.

Quantifiers and synonymous verb lines - as lexical level intensifiers - were rarely seen. We found the following quantifier words: *the flurry of executive actions Biden has signed*; *every option*; *a mammoth task*; *a massive amount of planning*; *a lot of people in the business community*; *all 100 Senators*; *any articles*; *many Republicans*; *some lawmakers*, etc. The use of quantifier words is, as a rule, a reflection of the quantitative characteristics of the subject of speech, but intensification in the cases under consideration is inseparable from emphaticization and hyperbolization, since the very idea of designating a certain size or volume is subjective and forms the modal frame of the utterance. In addition, emotionally marked nouns and adjectives that can reflect the meaning of size and volume are not inferior in the number of recorded cases to more familiar quantifier words: *every*, *a lot of*, *all*, *any*, *many*, *some*.

Rows of verbs were presented more often in pairs: *outlined ... said*; *compared... said*; *undermined...dismissed*; *burned... shattered*; *lived through, and experienced, and witnessed*. Not in all cases, it is possible to speak of complete synonymy, and each member of a particular series conveys a

different degree of expressiveness, but at the same time they complement and reinforce each other's meaning.

In second place in terms of frequency of use, there are morphological intensifiers, 25%. First of all, this is a subgroup of degrees of comparison of adjectives: *take a more muscular posture after a mob, the boldest action, the most sacred space*, etc. Media texts also contain words - intensifiers, which are formed in an affix way and by adding two bases. Despite the fact that their number is about 5% of the total number of studied intensifiers, for example, *wildly overused, to overturn the election based on bogus claims of voter fraud, a sweeping immigration overhaul, a wide-ranging conspiracy movement., live-events schedule*, etc. Obviously, thanks to the affix method, the composition and number of intensifier words can be constantly updated.

The number of intensifying means related to the syntactic level of the language is about 10% of the total number of intensifiers. In this group, the bulk of the intensifying means used is presented in the form of repetitions of phrases, not only within the framework of one utterance or two consecutive utterances. The author of the media text sometimes repeats the same idea or thought several times throughout the text, for example, at the beginning and at the end of the text. Thus, repetition emphasizes the importance of speech structure, enhances the impact both emotionally and intellectually. Duplicate items are usually found in evaluative predicates, in additions, and in various circumstances. It should also be noted that there are not rare cases of using the introductory *it* in a sentence. It is known, *it* strengthens any part of the sentence, except for the predicate. The intensification of predicates is achieved using auxiliary verbs.

Despite the fact that we examined printed texts in an online format, graphic means of intensification, such as writing an entire word in capital letters in the middle of a statement, highlighting words with italics, etc., are extremely rare. Obviously, everything depends on the intention of the author of the article, what priorities he sees, and what he would like to draw the attention of readers to when covering events. Since different publications and different journalists cover the same political events, it was noticed that sometimes some correspondents focus the readers' attention, highlighting graphically individual words uttered by politicians, while most other correspondents do not use any graphic ways to intensify the same context in their articles. Thus, the intensification of the external form is not popular with correspondents.

7. Conclusion

The specificity of using different-level means of intensification is revealed when analyzing media texts by analyzing its components. In media texts on political topics, adjectives with descriptive-emotive semantics and intensifying adverbs prevail among intensifying means. If we talk about the scale of intensity, with which the intensification of an utterance is inextricably linked, then mainly intensifying adverbs were recorded, which by their semantics directly indicate an increased degree of a feature: *extremely, totally, absolutely, actually, highly, very*. At the same time, to enhance the evaluative and emotive properties, the words - *ly* are very popular. Like most adjectives, they are negative in characterizing actions, which is typical of political discourse. It is noteworthy that both of these subgroups belong to the field of lexical means of intensification. However, it is impossible not to note the close relationship of two levels: lexical and morphological. The functional potential of intensifying means

in the language is multifaceted and reveals a complex relationship between cognitive and innovative semantic processes that motivate the formation of new intensifying means; in particular, they are formed in a suffix way from an emotive adjective or adjective participle. Intensifiers help the author to express his subjective attitude to objects and phenomena, to form the desired emotions and assessments in the addressee. According to the data, about 40% of the total number of intensifying means were found in quotes from direct speech of representatives of different political structures. Obviously, language is not just a source of information; the choice of language means is predetermined by existing political guidelines.

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