

**AMURCON 2021**  
**AmurCon 2021: International Scientific Conference****BUSINESS COMMUNICATION GENRES IN THE MEDIA OF THE  
1930S IN RUSSIA**

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**Abstract**

The state media policy in Russia in the 1930s created a special genre paradigm. The key task facing Soviet journalism was the organization of propaganda and organizational work, fading the information function into the background. The necessity of meeting party and economic objectives and educating the working people in the spirit of socialism had a direct influence on the specifics of the genre and style system of the Soviet press of those years. As a consequence, directive, instructive and reporting materials: orders, instructions, resolutions, summaries, reports, statements, challenges to socialist competitions, etc. took the main part in the pages of the regional, district and local newspapers of 1930 in the Amur Oblast. They stimulated the production process in collective and government-run cooperative farms, machine-tractor stations, enterprises, strengthened labour discipline, reported on the arrangement of five-year plans, grappled with poor management and carelessness, supervised holding of various kinds of socialist competitions, etc. The purpose of this study was to investigate the specifics of business communication genres in the newspapers published in the Amur region in the 1930s, the peculiarities of their presence in a particular socio-cultural context and their functional role. The main research methods were content analysis, methods of comparative and historical analysis and comparative analysis.

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*Keywords:* Amur region, business communication, directive genre, newspaper, soviet journalism

## 1. Introduction

The 1930s in Russia were characterized by a significant strengthening of party control over the mass media. The media task was not so much to inform as to propagandize and educate the class of workers in the spirit of Soviet ideology. Specific content was being developed and, therefore, the system of journalistic genres experienced transformation. In particular, business communication genres such as orders, instructions, reports, summaries, obligations, and resolutions took an active part in the printed press.

It should be noted that the study of the genre-specific features of the media of the Stalin era in Russia is far from being complete. Nevertheless, several pieces of research elucidated the point. Media genres from the point of view of media linguistics are studied by Voitak (2014), Gusev (2013), Dobrosklonskaya (2020), Duskaeva (2014, 2018a, 2018b), Duskaeva and Konyaeva (2017), Pastukhov (2020), Shmeleva (2018). The features of the media of the first half of the twentieth century, including genre uniqueness, are considered in the papers of Vinogradsky and Kunitsina (2016), Zhirkov (2017), Klinova (2020), Kostyakova (2020), Nikishina (2017), Sarycheva (2018). Basic information about the newspapers of the Amur region is presented in the reference book 'Newspapers of the Far East (1917-1987) (Vasilyeva & Kasyanov, 1989).

## 2. Problem Statement

In the 1930s, state media policy in Russia resulted in a situation where the genre and stylistic distinctness of printed media began to be determined not so much by intra-journalistic factors but rather by the sociopolitical circumstances and the aims that the state set for the media of that epoch. In the period of strengthening of the Soviet regime, the essential task of journalism was the organization of propaganda and arrangements which faded the informing function into the background. The need to implement party and economic objectives and educate the working people in the spirit of socialism had a direct impact on the specifics of the genre and style system of Soviet journalism of those years. Publications initiated by political and administrative authorities did not correspond to journalistic standards.

The lack of professional journalist staff in regional and the so-called 'lower' media (district, collective farm, media of enterprises, agencies, tractor depots, etc.) also had an effect. The newspapers supervised by party organizations (district committees, district executive committees, political departments, etc.) published directed 'from above' materials and often did not process them in any way.

As a result, the directive, instructive and reporting materials: orders, instructions, resolutions, decisions, summaries, reports, circulars, etc. took the major part in the pages of regional, district and local newspapers of the 1930s in the Amur Oblast. They were to stimulate the production process in collective and state farms, machine and tractor stations, enterprises, strengthen labour discipline, cover the implementation of five-year plans, fight against mismanagement and negligence, supervise the arrangement of various kinds of socialist competitions, etc.

## 3. Research Questions

The objects of the study in this paper are the regional, district and local newspapers of the Amur Oblast in the 1930s.

The subject of the study is the specifics and peculiarities of functioning of business communication genres: orders, instructions, reports, summaries, resolutions, etc.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to examine the specifics of business communication genres in the newspapers of the Amur region in the 1930s, their distinctive features in a particular socio-cultural context, and their functional role.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The main methods of the study include content analysis, comparative and historical analysis.

#### **6. Findings**

Genres of business communication took a significant part in newspaper pages of the regional, district and local media in the Amur region in the 1930s. They are orders, instructions, resolutions, decisions, circular letters, etc. The main purpose of the study is to develop a functional communication style. The ability of these genre styles to organize and stimulate production processes made them in demand by the party leaders.

##### **6.1. Directive and administrative genres**

Directive genres were represented by orders, instructions, decrees, circular letters, etc. Their purpose was not only to convey information but also to be an active device.

The orders and instructions issued by the authorities were a frequent phenomenon in the columns. They were often given explanations when they became headlines. For example, in the publication ‘Higher class vigilance in the call-up of the 11th year’ of the newspaper ‘Red’ railway man’, the decree of People’s Commissar of the Navy People’s Commissariat for Military and Maritime Affairs Voroshilov on the calling up for military service into the Red Army of the citizens was brought up to the readers’ notice.

According to the order of Comrade Voroshilov, People’s Commissar of Defense, on calling up the citizens born in 1911 to the Red Army from September 1, 1933, all party, trade union and especially Komsomol organizations have to hold a mass sensitization campaign among recruits born in 1911 in this short time. The Komsomol must have become a driving force of this activity.

*An army conscript entering the Red Army [Author’s note: all grammar and spelling have been left unedited from this point on] must be fully prepared and disciplined. To achieve this, a recruit must be a model top-quality staff member in a plant department or a brigade, and achieve good results in work of his brigade and his own, because the best gift an army conscript can receive from the Red Army is a good reference from the plant or factory about his work. Party, Komsomol and*

*trade union organizations, as well as the conscripts themselves, need to check the social availability of those going to the army, so that no ideological backslider, such as the son of a kulak, a priest, etc., can get there.* (Vyshe..., 1933, p. 7)

The genre of this text should be defined as an order. Made based on an order, it was a document aimed at solving urgent issues and kept all the intentions of the genre of an order. Verbs, short forms of adjectives and state words with an imperative modality were used: to put in place, must be, need to become and need to check. At the same time, the publication contained elements of newspaper discourse, such as “Komsomol must take the lead of this campaign”, “the best present for the Red Army”, standing for an attempt to adapt the text to the newspaper format. However, these efforts cannot be called sustained: the imperative modality dominated the text.

The publication, as well as other texts of the kind in newspapers of the time in question, was not signed. This allows considering it the group genre, whose author is a group of people; in this case, it is the staff of the political department of the station Bochkarevo. By not signing the order, it was as if they were making it clear that the instructions came from the party as a whole and were not the subject to discuss.

It is noteworthy that there was an attempt to refer conscription to the production process: according to the publication, the best workers with good results should have joined the Red Army. There is one more interesting fact: along with an appeal to raise awareness among conscripts, the article contained a call, typical for the 1930s, for “class watch”, to search for the “class-alien elements”, i.e., the children of “kulaks, priests, etc.” who are not allowed in the Red Army.

An example of the decree is found in the newspaper of the Partizan state farm Lenin's Cause in the publication ‘On the weeding of grain, weeding and regrowing of industrial crops and vegetables’. Like the publication quoted above, it was aimed at solving specific administrative and economic problems:

Making weeding sense in the struggle for high yields of cereals, row crops, industrial crops and vegetables, the regional committee and the regional executive committee resolve: To oblige the district committees and district executive committees, directors and chief political departments of collective and state farms, chairmen of collective farms and village councils to conduct manual weeding of all varietal crops of wheat and oats...To pay special attention to the need for the most careful identification and use of all able to workmen and women in weeding, involving also teenagers and the elderly). (O propolke..., 1934, p. 6)

The publication of such materials was not simply a way of informing, but a means of exerting pressure on the population. In this case, the involvement of not only people of working age but also old people and children in heavy manual labour required a special administrative pressure, a demonstration of the power of the speaker. The importance of the process was emphasized by the use of such definitions as "decisive", "high", "special" and "thorough". The long chain of enumerations of the addressees of the directive was also meant to increase the degree of influence on the readers.

The directive genre may also include all kinds of lists published in the 1930s media. The genre of the publication ‘The best 13 prominent men from the collective farms of our MTS are heading for the

regional meeting of best workers' may be defined in the modern world as a fact-sheet presenting a list of participants in an event, but in Soviet times it is more a decision by the political department containing a list of participants in the meeting and a short description of each mentioned person:

Comrade Beletsky. Tractor brigade leader of the collective farm 'Red Order', he is also the Komsomol organizer of the primary Komsomol organization of the collective farm. Struggled tirelessly for brigade's superiority, for the superiority of the collective farm in the spring sowing. His brigade knew no idleness on sowing, neither on pairings. During the sowing season, the brigade has ploughed, harrowed and sowed 1610 ha. They saved 22,5 centners of fuel. For the fallow campaign, they ploughed 360 hectares. The whole brigade was awarded bonuses. Com. Beletsky goes to the regional meeting for the first time.

<...>

*Nyura Popova. Kolkhoz 'Amur Partisan'. Best tractor driver. She is joyful and cheerful as the flower of May. You can never see Nyura sad or gloomy as it is not her style and spirit.*

*- This is our nightingale – that is the way the tractor drivers call her.*

*During the sowing season, Nyura ploughed and sowed 250 hectares. She earned 97 labour days. She saved 3.84 centners of fuel. She ploughed 46 hectares of fallow land.*

*Nyura is going to the regional meeting for the first time..." (Georgiev & Popov, 1934).*

The publication is characterized by an official formal style, typical of the genres of business communication, but in some cases, the author outsteps the boundaries. When describing one of the participants of the collective farmer meeting, Nyura Popova, the stylistics of the text change and the text acquire artistic features. The reference "comrade" has disappeared and the name of the participant has appeared. The structure of the text was transformed: personal characteristics took the first place, while the performance figures became secondary. In addition, figurative comparisons were used in the description: "the flower of May, our nightingale", which are uncommon in a text of this kind.

## **6.2. Reporting materials: genre diversity**

Various kinds of reports were no less popular in the press. And the variety of this genre was rather wide: from reports by the authorities, enterprises, collective and state farms to reports on personal achievements. For example, the newspaper of the Amur grain farm 'Leninist' published a material entitled 'To Political Department, Directorate and Working Committee. Report' as follows:

*The community of workers, female workers and leading workers from the third department finished harvesting wheat. As of August 31, we harvested 1001 hectares and turned to harvest oats. Under your leadership, we won more than once and from now on, we declare, we will keep up the momentum going till the end of all the agricultural works, we will be the first to leave the field. On behalf of the workers: manager Metlyaev, mechanic Bosoy, trade unionist Ryabukhin. (Politotdelu..., 1934)*

Such publications were intended to provide a model to be followed by all citizens. The text, defined by the author as a ‘report’, contained a numerical rating that encouraged competition. The role of the party leadership and the desire not to give up, but only to improve current achievements, were particularly emphasized. The ‘national character’ of such appeals was created by identifying a person from a working-class profession among the authors of the publication.

Another report with elements of demand was published in the newspaper ‘Avantgarde’. The article “State farm must fulfil the first commandment, i.e., deliver bread to the state” (Sovkhoz..., 1934) summed up the results of the harvesting campaign, describing its shortcomings. It concludes with an appeal, “Only a few days left before the final deadline for handing over the bread to the state. The state farm can and must fulfil the first commandment, i.e. to hand over the bread to the state”. Such slogan-like statements have been a necessary element in many publications. The demand made was characterized by its categorical, unquestioning and direct nature. The phrase “the first commandment”, referring to religious beliefs, was used as a binding regulation. During the epoch of socialist atheism, the reference to religiosity as a means of emotional influence on the peasants and an attempt to speak their traditional language and appeal to their primordial values so that achieves their own goals.

We can define the genre of the material published in Leninist, “Surrendered grain by our grain farm” as a symbiosis of report and demand:

*Our grain farm gave 6,492 centners of grain as of the seventh of September 1934. The pace of grain delivery is extremely slow. August plan has not been fulfilled until now, September delivery of grain is also delayed... Managers, drivers and the production department must put an end to this guilty slippage and make up for it during these five days. (Sdano zerna..., 1934, p. 13)*

The numerical rating, typical of the report genre, were combined with the obligatory-prescriptive character of the text and the emotional impact, a demonstration of the gravitas of the speaker, natural to imperative genres, in particular, demands. In a small piece the accusation ‘guilty’ was heard twice and the verb ‘delayed’ indirectly indicated that someone was deliberately delaying the process and, therefore, punishment for the guilty would be imminent. The social roles were shown: the addressee was not just pointing; he was expressing extreme dissatisfaction and threatening the addressee in case of non-compliance.

Reports on the sowing and harvesting campaigns, etc., were a frequent genre of formal communication in newspapers. We think that summaries, due to their ability to summarize information, can be considered a type of reporting material. By presenting data for a certain period, by a certain date, according to certain criteria, and by systematizing the data, the summary often became a basic component of the report. In addition, it often provided information in tabular form, which allowed the data to be ranked, making it a ranking of achievements. In this form, the material did not simply information about the current situation, but also acted as a means to stimulate a process.

The genre of “Red Board” and “Black Board” can be called a unique feature of its time. Labour successes and failures, both of teams and individual workers and collective farmers, were recorded on

“boards”. Being something in between a report, a summary and a rating, the genre served as a means of moral encouragement or punishment for the work done.

### 6.3. Feedback: commitments, challenges, statements

One of the requirements imposed by the authorities on the press was the establishment of ‘feedback’ to the population, so the articles written by the workers and collective farmers were given an important part in the newspapers. The most frequent genres addressed by the readers of the newspapers, working reporters and village reporters were commitments, calls for socialist competition, and all sorts of statements and demands. In the period of the Soviet regime, these genres, theoretically, personal and free from the requirements of formal style, acquired the features of business communication genres. They reflected labour processes and were precise, specific and obligatory.

Genres typical of the Soviet era included obligations and invitations to socialist competitions. These genres had a direct connection to the production cycle as they assigned people to particular kinds of work (individual persons or teams in general), specified deadlines and output norms and anticipated a subsequent report on the result, i.e., they had features that helped to classify them as business communication genres. At the same time, like genres of journalism, such as open letters, they had a strong moral and emotional impact: they declared, urged, persuaded, stigmatized and so on.

*We have learned sorrowfully of the dastardly murder by an agent of foreign powers of the class enemy of the best Bolshevik of our Party, Comrade S.M. Kirov. We will answer to the heinous attack of the class enemy by fulfilling the tractor repair plan of December in time and giving half a day's wages for strengthening the defence of our country. In addition, we agree to repair one tractor in December above the plan. (Vozmushcheny..., 1934, p. 10)*

As is well known, Kirov's death was the trigger for the start of mass repressions in Russia. A large number of publications appeared on the pages of newspapers stigmatizing the murderers and pledging to answer the class enemies using high-powered labour. It can be assumed that some of these publications were initiated by the political departments of newspapers to show the unity of the Soviet society and its readiness to fight the enemies. The workers and peasants, whose names were used to sign the publications, were not the initiators but rather the executors of the plan from above. When they were published, such statements reflected a commitment to common political and ideological values, emphasized the unity of opinion and the determination to fight for socialist values.

In this case, it is a genre symbiosis, combining the genres of publishing an open letter and that of a commitment. Public condemnation of the murder (“heinous attack”), free definition of the guilty (“agent of foreign powers of the class enemy”) were transformed into a quite utilitarian commitment to execute the tractor repair plan and the payment of salaries. The precise and detailed narrative style (the December tractor repair plan, the half-day wage), and its standardized style indicated the elements of business communication in the text.

The calls for socialist competitions published in the media were a sign of the times. Newspapers, being “not only collective propagandists and collective agitators but also collective organizers”, by

Lenin's messages, supported and often initiated various kinds of competitions between labour teams or individual workers / collective farmers (Lenin, 1967). They provided a kind of role model and developed certain forms of audience behaviour.

The newspapers published challenges to the competitions, monitored the progress of the work and identified the winners. The Cereal-grower newspaper publication "Competition with the Borisoglebsk state farm" listed the figures and standards to be achieved, indicating deadlines for work: "... Plan of sowing of cereals: 3350 ha of wheat, 1380 ha of oats to finish in 14 working days. To collect grain harvest at 10 centners per hectare..." ("Cereal-grower", May 1, 1937). The workers' staff, on whose behalf the publication was written, appeared at the end of the text, "The team of workers of the state farm requests the editorial board of the district newspaper 'Bolshevik Truth' to be a referee and cover regularly the progress of competition with the Borisoglebsk state farm" in its pages (Sorevnovaniye..., 1937). The focus on the production process, the way it was carried out and optimized, the binding, proper, factual nature of it, suggest that they are not just an open letter to a newspaper, but a public statement of labour intentions, i.e., a genre of business communication.

## 7. Conclusion

The analysis of regional, district and local media in the Amur Oblast in the 1930s suggests that business communication genres took an important part among other genres on newspaper pages. Their use allowed the authorities to put forward a system of demands to different strata of the population. Genres based on willfulness not only contributed to shaping the desired behaviour of the audience but also created a certain picture of the world in which the values of Soviet society, its attitudes and demands prevailed over all others.

Moreover, the authors often deviated from genre canons: the features were blurred, and there was a synthesis of forms. The genres of business communication, intertwined with each other, merged with the genres of open letters, newspaper letters, memos, etc. Besides, the degree of directiveness and normativity decreased, increasing the personal element and growing expression. It allowed diversifying the ways of influencing the audience and accelerating the attainment of the goals. But there was no loss of genre identity, genre styles remained recognizable and their features were easily recognizable by the addressee.

Most of the genres had an explicit practical purpose and were used for a specific purpose. Public business communication allowed them to solve propaganda and production objectives: they clarified the position of the party for the masses, formed its positive image, and, according to the principle of "watch", detected and fought class-alien elements as well stimulated the operating process. The appeal to the genres of business documentation in the media reflected the peculiar spirit of the times.

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