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# Mediensprache und Medienkommunikation

im interdisziplinären und  
interkulturellen Vergleich

Mit einem einleitenden Beitrag  
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## **The cognitive paradigm in linguistics and media discourse typology**

Discourse analysis in general, and media discourse analysis in particular, are currently attracting increased attention from linguists. This interest can be seen in the tendency to apply the term ‘discourse’ to various sciences and academic disciplines. It is possible to trace its dispersion both horizontally, i.e. in different sciences, and vertically, i.e. on various linguistic levels. Furthermore, the majority of interpretations of the term ‘discourse’ appearing in the works of modern scholars have arisen as a result of the interdisciplinary nature of language study within the cognitive paradigm in linguistics.

Thus, if we turn to modern British and American studies in the sphere of discourse analysis, we see that some scholars differentiate between ‘discourse analysis’, which focuses mainly, on the one hand, on oral linguistic items such as interviews, talks, commentaries and speeches, and ‘textual analysis’ of such items as books, reviews and road signs (see, for instance, Crystal 1994 and Coulthard 1993).

According to Teun A. van Dijk and his work *Text and context – explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse*, discourse analysis is not concerned with language alone; it also examines the content of communication, who is communicating with whom and why, in what kind of society and situation and through what medium, and how different types of communication evolve, including their relationships with each other. He believes that it is not only linguistic features that make discourse properly formatted and comprehensible in terms of semantics and pragmatics.

Another approach to the problem of discourse and discourse analysis concentrates on textual coherence and cohesion, considering these features to be crucial for its adequate interpretation. For example, the British scholar Guy Cook investigates this problem in his works *Discourse* and *Discourse and literature*, offering the following definitions of discourse analysis: “[...] discourse analysis – a discipline which studies how people achieve meaning through texts” (Cook 1994, p. 19); “[...] discourse analysis – the study of what it is that makes texts meaningful and coherent for their users [...]” (ibid, p. 23); “Dis-

course analysis concerns the interaction of texts with knowledge of context to create discourse.” (ibid, p. 23). Thus, the author suggests treating discourse as an interplay of text and context which creates and passes on meaning. Many scholars consider discourse to be a social phenomenon (see, for example, Fairclough 1995).

The cognitive discourse paradigm in linguistics is being fruitfully developed in the works of many Russian scholars, such as O. Aleksandrova, N. Aroutiunova, V. Borbotko, M. Volodina, V. Dem’jankov, T. Dobrosklonskaya, V. Karasik, A. Kibrik, I. Kobozeva, V. Krasnykh, E. Koubriakova, M. Makarov, L. Manerko, E. Ponomarenko, O. Revzina, L. Cherneiko and many others.

Within the Russian tradition of discourse analysis it is also possible to trace some trends. Some describe it as a complex of texts which are thematically or culturally homogeneous (see A. Baranov, D. Dobrovolsky). Others believe it is a complex communicative event which may be characterized as meaningful, topical, connected with a particular context, and belonging to a certain genre or ideology (see Dem’jankov, Kibrik and Kobozeva). Still others identify it as mental activity connected with a certain layer of culture, social community and even a certain period of history (see for example Aleksandrova, Aroutiunova, Krasnykh and Koubriakova). Aroutiunova treats discourse as coherent text together with extra-linguistic, socio-cultural, psychological, and other factors: text in the context of events. Aleksandrova and Koubriakova consider discourse to be a multifaceted communicative event dependent on many extra-linguistic circumstances, such as knowledge of the world, opinions, and the attitudes and goals of the producer of a text.

One of the most reliable definitions of discourse is the one suggested by Krasnykh: “*дискурс* есть вербализованная речемыслительная деятельность, понимаемая как совокупность процесса и результата и обладающая как собственно лингвистическим, так и экстралингвистическим планами” (Krasnykh 2003, p. 113). This translates into English as: ‘Discourse is a verbalized speaking and thinking activity treated as the unity of process and result, and embracing both linguistic and extra-linguistic levels.’ This means that discourse should be understood as a cognitive process, as a reverberation of thinking with the help of a particular linguistic channel.

This range of opinions may be justified by the fact that discourse study presupposes a multidisciplinary approach, embracing all the tendencies in the development of such areas of studies as computational linguistics, artificial intelligence, theoretical linguistics, social semiotics, psychology, logic, philosophy, historical studies, political studies, anthropology, ethnic studies, the-

ory and practice of translation, literary criticism, etc. Moreover, discourse as a keystone of the cognitive paradigm in linguistics is a synthesis of the two leading trends in modern research: the cognitive and communicative approaches.

If we turn to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, we come across the following definition:

**Discourse** 1) a long serious treatment or discussion of subject in speech or writing: e.g. *a discourse on issues of gender and sexuality*; *He was hoping for some lively political discourse at the meeting*; 2) the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning; language that is studied, usually in order to see how the different parts of a text are connected: e.g. *spoken/written discourse*; *discourse analysis*.

It follows, then, that alongside the traditional interpretation of discourse as a long serious treatment or discussion of a subject in speech or writing, the dictionary registers a new meaning of it as “the use of language in speech and writing in order to produce meaning; language that is studied, usually in order to see how the different parts of a text are connected.”

Hence, even this brief survey of the current understanding of discourse displays the diversity of approaches.

Cognitive studies can facilitate the process of investigation in this field. While scholars continue to debate the set of problems worth studying within the scope of cognitive linguistics, one cannot neglect the fact that this trend in language research seems to be one of the most promising. It allows us not only to differentiate between various aspects of linguistic research, but also to integrate different approaches to language analysis within the idea of viewing text in its complexity as a global whole.

Summing up the discussion of the term ‘discourse’ and its interpretation in modern linguistics, it is important to mention that it is closely connected with a kind of triad: addresser of information, addressee of information, and the textual channel with the help of which this information is passed on. Ideally, the author expects the recipient to receive the message adequately. However, in real life this is not always the case, and the addressee may add some information which the original text lacks, or reduce the amount of information included.

In the case of media discourse, this approach seems extremely fruitful because it offers the researcher parameters with which to differentiate between various types of media discourse, paying attention to the cognitive background of the

addresser (i.e. the implicit ideological orientation of the text), those characteristics of the target audience which the text is aimed at, and finally those linguistic and extra-linguistic strategies for presenting information which are implied in the text.

It should be especially emphasised that journalism is viewed not only as a type of discourse but specifically of media discourse, taken as the sum total of all the processes and results of speech production in the sphere of mass communication, in all the complexity of their interaction (a definition according to Dobrosklonskaya 2000, p. 21).

It is a common belief that the principal function of mass media is to inform. However, if we treat journalism as a type of media discourse, which does not only employ various strategies of passing on information, but also presents different cognitive reverberations of reality, the function of impact comes to the fore, although of course the degree of realisation of this function will depend on the type of medium, and even on the type of article, in the case of print media.

The ways of impacting readers can be either universal or culture-specific. Thus, another aspect of the cognitive approach to mass media discourse analysis is the so called 'national identity' of media discourse. It facilitates, for example, the contrasting of media discourses belonging to different cultures.

Thus, if we try to trace national characteristics through the analysis of the linguistic means used to attract readers' attention in the headlines of media articles, we may arrive at the following conclusions. The British and American press favour phonetic paradoxes, together with allusions and connotations (see Mendzheritskaya 1999b). They also demonstrate ironic attitude towards the problems being discussed, and invite the same reaction on the part of the reader. They expect readers of quality papers to be eager to read serious analytical reports regardless of their titles, and at the same time try to attract the attention of a less professional (or less experienced) audience of popular editions by more catchy headlines. The Russian press also welcomes a critical ironic attitude to the events of our time, and often turns even seemingly unbiased article headlines into highly connotative ones in a particular political context. Phonetic play is less typical of the Russian press, while the distortion of all sorts of titles and idioms is very popular.

It is also possible to draw the conclusion that the use of allusions as part of language play is a universal feature, while the sources of those allusions are culture-specific.

Being a cognitive process, discourse incorporates the characteristic features of accumulating, storing, and presenting information, together with the characteristic features of its perception. It means that all these features may be traced within a given national discourse in general, and within an individual edition (in case of print media) in particular. In other words, the ways of presenting information in a particular edition may differ from presentational strategies of this type of discourse in general, but still they are identified as belonging to this particular culture. In order to be able to perceive information, one needs to possess some background knowledge, and have a set of concepts at one's disposal which are shared by all the members of a particular national community, and certainly we see this reflected in journalism as a type of media discourse.

Guided by general principles from cognitive and discourse analysis, we can differentiate between the following types of print media discourse:

- quality press discourse;
- popular press discourse (treating tabloids' discourse and glamour magazines' discourse separately);
- specialised editions discourse (specialised journals and popular scientific journals).

All these types of print media discourse differ both in terms of the cognitive backgrounds of the addressers and the intellectual capacities of their target audiences, which is reflected in the ways of presenting information (linguistic and extra-linguistic alike) in the texts themselves.

Finally, I would like to venture my own definition of discourse: “Discourse is the passing cognitive content of the addresser on to the addressee through a textual channel, and those strategies of presenting information which are employed in it” (see Mendzheritskaya 2006, p. 55).

Hence, concluding the overview of the cognitive paradigm in linguistics and its reflection in modern approaches to media discourse analysis, it is possible to say that the features traced seem to reflect not only the strategies of news presentation, but also features of the cognitive processing of reality in general.

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