

UDC 81

PRAGMATIC POTENTIAL OF NEWS MEDIATEXTS ON CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

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Abstract. The article deals with the pragmatic potential of media texts based on news from the official sites of the customs and border services of Belarus, Russia, the UK. The communicative strategies of informing and persuasion (through appeal and intimidation) are considered. The basic pragmatic intentions are analyzed – the inevitability of punishment, the formation of archetypes of law and justice, persuasion and intimidation. The category of evaluation and the method of image reinforcement are considered.

Keywords: pragmatic intention; pragmatic potential; communication; the category of evaluation; mediatext; news; customs; border protection; manipulation; archetype.

Communicative and pragmatic research in modern linguistics is aimed at identifying features of the process of speech interaction, namely, how the influence on the addressee is carried out, how the addresser's communicative intentions are realized and what pragmatic potential they acquire. The analysis of mediatexts is of great interest since these texts most reliably reveal not only the pragmatic intention of their author, but much broader – they reflect conceptual attitudes of a given society, nation, group of people.

In our paper, the methodology is based on fundamental works on communication and manipulation strategies of such scholars as A. Baranov [2], V. Krysko [4], S. Zelinsky [3], M. Manoylo [5]. In determining the archetypes and images of the law and the representative of the customs service, we refer to C. Jung [8], as well as to the research by I. Ragimov [6] and A. Stolyarov [7].

The object of our study is media texts on customs and border protection. The specific character of the customs discourse is due to

discordance of external objectivity and impartiality (purely informative pragmatics) and the very essence of communication, which presupposes certain concepts marked in society in one way or another. Thus, these impartial and unbiased news texts still are intended to prevent the addressee from offences. The customs discourse itself is inseparable from the installation of the source of information, which is the official body – the customs (border) service.

As the research and illustration material, we used mediatexts from official websites of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Belarus (*customs.gov.uk*), the State Border Committee of the Republic of Belarus (*gpk.gov.by*), the Federal Customs Service of Russia (*customs.ru*) and the UK Border Force

(*gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force*). For analysis, we selected topical media texts on a similar subject (mainly, the seizure of narcotic substances, tobacco prod-

ucts, sanction goods, wild life trafficking and smuggling).

The pragmatic potential of a text is known to be realized through the choice of the message content and the ways of its linguistic embodiment (by the author). In this case, the source selects the communicative units of the expression plan, relying both on their substantive meaning – In order to fulfil the informative function (the pragmatic task of informing) and, on the other hand, the connotation is given some value, appealing to the emotions, concepts and attitudes of the recipient.

Due to the fact that the media texts we are considering have practically no connotative units, and are hardly marked with the category of assessment, we can say that the recipient of the message is affected mainly through the subject-logical content of the media text, as well as through an appeal to the archetypical images that occurs during media text perception.

The archetype of the Law (Justice) and the Officer. As archetypes are specific images in the collective consciousness of individuals [8], certain media texts are explicitly or implicitly associated with existing archetypes and can both confirm them (as a rule) or call them in question (in the case of manipulative techniques of undermining the image). In this context, it is interesting for us that with the absence of obvious manipulation in customs media (which is undoubtedly a positive thing and testifies to their unbiased character), we still can draw conclusions regarding the existence in the Belarusian, Russian and British language culture of the archetype of the Customs Officer (Border Agent), the archetype of the Law (Justice), and – moreover – describe the specifics of this archetype through linguo-pragmatic intentions implemented in the studied media texts.

Referring to the archetype of the Customs Officer (Border Agent), we can hypothesize the existence of the archetype of an “experienced customs officer”, “customs officer-parent” in the British language culture. This is a kind of Jungian the Persona. The customs officer appears as an experienced, diligent, possessing almost divine omniscience, who

speaks to the offender, admonishes and warns him, and also appeals to all law-abiding citizens, assuring them that they are under reliable protection and can always turn to him for help or with an offer of cooperation.

Analyzing the archetype of the the Law in English texts, we come to the conclusion about the positive image of the officer-expert thanks to the lexemes with a positive assessment: *officers are experts in their field; their wildlife wildlife in their tracks; take their role seriously*. In the British news, there are often emphatic phrases, expressions of high style, and pathetic expressions: *we are determined together; we are determined to crack down on this criminality; Border Force officers; Border Force officers are doing their work*. In Russian media texts such pragma installations have not been identified.

According to Andrei Stolyarov, “Over the past century and a half, Western culture has created a comprehensive “Law university” every citizen enters almost from the moment of birth and where he imperceptibly masters the science of legality, which is then guided throughout his life path” [7]. At the end of each UK Customs and Border Force news media text there is a mention of highly qualified employees (*specialists ... are recognized*) and an invitation to collaborate: *Anyone with information about [offence type] should call ...* On the basis of these messages, an image of a “loving parent”, a custodian and instructive customs officer, omnipresent, experienced and caring is formed.

In the Russian-language media texts, we can assume the absence of the customs officer’s archetype, and state a more general categorical archetype of the Law (Justice). The identity of the customs officer is not conceptualized; the role of a message translator is that of a faceless Law, and the law is strict, punishing, and ruthless. The law does not address the offender, neither does it invite good citizens to cooperate. He simply informs and punishes. Speaking about the pragmatic potential of these media texts, we can state the presence of a strategy of intimidation.

Informing and persuasion. Referring to Gerbner’s cultivating communication theory, Zelinsky speaks about informing and persua-

sion as a means of influencing consciousness [3, p. 287–288]. A. Manoilo describes the “traditional direct method” of psychological influence on consciousness through persuasion and appeal to the mind and logic of people [5, p. 101]. This method is present in the British media texts. Here the reader is taught by a customs official, a human prototype of the law: *I would urge anyone tempted by cheap cigarettes and tobacco to think again.*

As for pragmatic intention of the Russian customs mediatexts, information prevails as a way of influencing the reader: *попытка успешно предотвращена; попытка ввоза пресечена; изъята незаконно перемещаемая продукция; по фактам нарушения судебных органы выносят решения о конфискации либо штрафных санкциях в отношении нарушителей, дается серьезная правовая оценка; таможенники разоблачили преступную группу ‘an attempt was successfully prevented / intercepted; illegally moved products were seized; decisions on confiscation or fines for violators, serious legal assessment; customs officers revealed the criminal group’.* As we can see, except for the words *successfully* and *seriously*, no evaluation lexemes have been identified, we also once again pay attention to the syntax that avoids active voice structures and the actor naming.

In the Russian media texts there still was found one an example of explicit persuasion, however, not direct, but indirect: *Далеко не все граждане, собираясь в заграничную поездку, вспоминают о предметах, запрещенных либо ограниченных к перемещению через границу ‘Not all citizens, when going on a trip abroad, recall objects prohibited or restricted to movement across the border’.* In this case, we see a warning or even advice as the pragmatic intention, rather than intimidation by punishment.

Evaluation. A communicative strategy involves the presentation of certain facts in order to influence the intellectual, volitional, emotional sphere of the addressee. The category of evaluation in the media texts connotatively labelled elements contribute to the informational and psychological influence on the mass consciousness, when the media act as a “conductor

of manipulative techniques” and form a picture of the addressee’s world [3].

English media texts contain evaluative vocabulary – with negative connotation when characterizing criminals (*brazen operation, cynical business, violent and exploitative criminal activity*) and positive one for law-abiding citizens (*honest, legitimate*) and professional officers (*vigilant, expert*). It is worth noting that in the Russian-language news texts the evaluation vocabulary is practically absent, a single example: *it performed the criminal role of the courier* (the word *criminal* can be considered evaluational as it refers to basic moral categories of good and evil).

One of the pragmatic intentions of the English news texts can be formulated as follows: “criminals rob law-abiding citizens”: *a criminal operation ripped off taxpayers and honest retailers; to undercut legitimate retailers (honest traders); unsuspecting customers left out of pocket; cheats honest traders; is stealing from the public purse.*

Interestingly, the pragmatic intention “bad criminals rob law-abiding citizens” is contrasted with the another pragmatic intention “officers are smarter than criminals”, or “the officers deprived the criminals of their income”: *striped offenders of their illegal profits; starved those responsible for their proceeds of their criminality.* In the Russian-language media texts such pragmatic intention has not been identified.

The method of image reinforcement. One of the methods of psychological influence on consciousness is the method of image reinforcement, where repetition, reinforcement, simple formulations play an important role [5, p. 102]. The above-described examples of collocations, which form the image of a customs officer, help to reinforce the image in the collective mind.

In this context, we can talk about the first level of manipulation, namely, the reinforcement of attitudes, motives, values, and norms that exist in people’s minds. It can be said that there are not enough grounds for ascertaining the fact that consciousness has been manipulated by the addressees of customs news media texts, however, the rein-

forcement of existing attitudes in consciousness (through an appeal to the archetype of the law, a representative of the law) undoubtedly occurs. In this case, the question of whether the first level of manipulation is immoral proves to be quite controversial [1], however, we are of the opinion that there are no distortions of information in order to manipulate consciousness in the customs news media texts, neither Russian nor English.

Intimidation tactics. Speaking about the pragmatic potential of customs news, it is interesting to refer to the conclusions set forth by Ragimov in his study “The Philosophy of Crime and Punishment” [6]. He claims that the severity of punishment is critical for inhibiting undesirable behaviour, the purpose of intimidation is to form the motive of the fear of punishment. The author mentions the view that “deterrence by punishment corrupts people”, it is ineffective and has a negative character, therefore, “with an increasing level of development of a nation in a broad sense, the centre of gravity of the psychological impact of punishment shifts from intimidation to moral pressure” [6]. As the analysed texts show, the latter tendency is specific for the British texts, while the Russian texts tend to appeal to intimidation.

The key pragmatic intention of customs news media texts is the following: “criminals cannot escape punishment”, “punishment is inevitable”, “punishment according to merit”. This pragmatic intention is universal for both English and Russian texts, but the communicative tactics of its implementation are different.

Thus, in the Russian-language media texts such intention is realized through formal business expressions (often using legal / procedural vocabulary) describing the corpus delicti according to the code and / or preventive measure: *санкции статей предусматривают уголовную ответственность в виде лишения свободы на срок до 15 лет; за указанные преступные деяния вынесено наказание в виде 20 лет лишения свободы с конфискацией имущества с отбыванием наказания в исправительной колонии в условиях усиленного режима; ему грозит до 25 лет лишения свободы; возбуждено административное дело по ст. 16.3 КоАП*

(Несоблюдение запретов и ограничений на ввоз товаров); на товарную партию наложен арест; продукт подлежит уничтожению; за нарушение режима в пункте пропуска гражданин привлечен к административной ответственности в соответствии со ст. 23.32 КоАП Республики Беларусь в виде штрафа в размере 40 базовых величин ‘the sanctions of the articles provide for criminal liability; imprisonment for up to 15 years; sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment with confiscation of property; he faces up to 25 years in prison; administrative case under Art. 16.3 of the Administrative Code (Failure to comply with prohibitions and restrictions on the importation of goods); a seizure has been imposed on a consignment; product must be destroyed; administrative responsibility in accordance with art. 23.32 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus’.

Note that all provisions do not have a subject (actor) and are formulated as no-subject or passive constructions. In this case, the archetypical image of faceless cruel justice is created, the reader feels the impossibility of escaping punishment.

In English texts there is more evaluation, more emotional communication with the addressee. We can see the communicative tactics of influencing the addressee by convincing them with the use of emphatic expressions: *They thought this scam would avoid detection, but we exposed their crimes and they are now paying the price; this case sends a clear message that we are determined to bring cases like this before the courts; bring those responsible to justice.* The function of persuasion, which is subtle in Russian texts, is explicit in English texts, while in Russian texts a pragma intention is dominated by intimidation.

Thus, on the basis of the analyzed material, we can conclude that the British news media texts use the official style of speech, but also include some emphasis: idioms, metaphors (rarely), expressions of high style, evaluative words. In the Russian-language customs news media texts stylistic means of expression are absent with rare exceptions, the style is strictly official. The lack of eval-

uative vocabulary, on the one hand, creates a sense of information and the absence of manipulation. On the other hand, the reference to the form of punishment in every news text can be interpreted as the use of intimidation tactics.

For customs news media texts such methods of influence as informing and persuasion (through appeal and intimidation) are specific. The basic pragmatic intentions are the inevitability of punishment, the reinforcement of the archetypes of the Law and Justice, conviction and intimidation.

In the Russian-language media texts personal categories (the Subject, the actor) are minimized, personal opinion of authorised officials is rarely provided. It should be noted that the “depersonalization” of Russian-language media texts is manifested even at the syntactic level with the prevalence of passive constructions. The fact of depersonalization of the Russian law and the personalization of the law in English media texts is obvious. In the Russian media texts, the Law itself instructs – through intimidation by punishment (the archetype of Law) – in English we witness a “loving parent” – customs officer.

In the English media texts, a positive image of the customs and border service officer is created, the communicative intention is personalized, which is reflected in the use of direct speech (elements of the interview) of authorized persons in the news media text. This tactics has strong positive pragmatic potential and is aimed at interacting with the addressee, engaging them in combatting offenses and encouraging law-abiding behaviour and cooperation.

The conclusions made in the article can serve to reveal some national specificity in representing law and order, as well as can be used by translators to maintain better translation and effective communication.

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