

***Discursive Media Techniques in the Russian and British Newspapers.
Representations of National Identity***

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The paper demonstrates the theatrical model of mass media in the instance a genuine of an actual plot (formation of national identity) in the press of the examined countries. Within the framework of this model of interaction of the mass media, authorities and the public there coexist the practices of “spectacle” and “carnival”. Jan Ekecrantz examines these two forms as the ideally typical models, making distinctions, while our purpose is to check them in real practice, to find principles of their coexistence and osculation using the concrete examples.

On the semantic plane we examine the agenda-setting in the issues of formation of national identity and immigration. Imposing the agenda – the script - is a prerogative of the authority’s spectacle. We explain a discourse on national identity existing today in Russia and the UK; we show a political situation, the aims and problems of the governments in the two countries, and also the positions of the chosen newspapers on this issue; we reproduce what ordinary people say concerning their own identity; we analyze the bases of identity in two countries. The methods used are biographic interviews, the analysis of texts of newspapers, and interview with journalists and experts.

As a result the essential positions of different publications are shown, including the ways of reproduction of the agenda, the important strategy of national identity (the obvious and latent monarchic discourses, symbols of identity, national brands, distinction within the framework of the “we – they” opposition), and a probable strategy of public on assignment of the offered mass media assumptions.

The second plan – the plan of form – demonstrates how the two opposite tendencies (the basic psychological oppositions existing at different levels of social life of the person) coexist in a statement of a story by journalists and in the perception of an audience.

This basic opposition – the relationship between the child and the parents - where the audience plays the part of the child and the authorities play the part of the father who is personified by the head of the state. The role of the intermediary between the father and the child belongs to the mother, the mass media, which know the needs and desires both of the child and the father, cares for the child and forms the attitudes to the father.

The associative chain can be continued in order to specify the meaning and the form: father – child, spectacle – carnival, control – pleasure, culture – nature, function – desire, diachronism – synchronism.

The division into two planes of analysis of meaning and form has helped to clearly understand the effects of journalistic practices. The analysis has led to understanding the oppositional tendencies in the representation as well as in the formation of national identity and defining the features of the national mentalities which find their expression in the national structure of the press.

Introduction

The issue of national identity stands out in the agenda of the European countries in connection with the economic and political problems of modernity. Association of Europe actualized a task of integration of various nations and nationalities within the limits of each separate state. The United Kingdom and Russia, as well as some other countries, faced a problem of migration and immigration. The world threat of terrorism is perceived as the most serious in these countries¹.

In the multinational and multiethnic UK with its politics of tolerance and granting of political asylums these problems have some specificity and urgency though there are opinions expressed, that the British prime-minister deliberately exaggerates this question to shift public attention from more critical issues in the sphere of economy and international relations. In Russia the issues of immigration and construction of national identity acquire their own tinge.

The objectives of the project² ("Discourses of Identity and Diversity: representations of migration in the British and Russian press") are to look at the construction understanding of national identity and image of the enemy by the powers-that-are and by the mass media through the analysis of media practices, as well as identification of new meanings and ways of interaction between the authorities, mass media and the public (which are defined here either following the normalizing discourse or having alternative sights) called to promote pluralism and freedom of a choice.

The important "quality" and "popular" titles in Russia and in the UK: "The Guardian", "The Times", "The Telegraph", "The Sun" and "Rossiiskaia gazeta", "Kommersant", "Novaia gazeta", "Rjvsomolskaia Pravda" have been analyzed for the period of January - August, 2005. In the research the materials published on official sites of the two countries' governments, interviews with editors and journalists of the given newspapers and the Internet sources relevant to the subject were used. As a product of the analysis of mass media texts and photo - images the basic theses of representation of immigration and construction of national identity have been found.

The basic figures for the analysis of pictures are president V.V.Putin for Russia and Prime-minister T. Blair and Queen Elisabeth - for the UK, and they are considered as daily shown living symbolic standards of national identity and objects of identification.

The contents of pictures, repertoire of places, gestures, actions, the listed figures and background of pictures, arrangement of figures in the image space and in relation to each other, etc. were important. The revealed distinctions and similarities have allowed for comparison basing on features of national identity construction in the two countries, and showing the expressed mentality peculiarities, including those in the distinguishable forms of satisfaction of the need for national identity.

¹ There are T.Blair and V.Putin references of immigrants on sites of the governments: <http://www.kremlin.ru/commissions.shtml>; [http://www.politics.co.uk/issues/immigration-\\$2111778.htm](http://www.politics.co.uk/issues/immigration-$2111778.htm)

² This report is a part of the INTAS project research on the 'Discourses of Identity and Diversity: representations of migration in the British and Russian press'.

First we shall make an attempt to comprehend why the issue of national identity as such is vital and then we shall discuss its urgency for different political actors involved in the process of national identity construction.

Political actors are the political authority, the mass media and the public. We assume that political discourse moves ahead thanks to the mass media. The mass media design and represent the national identity in their own way, proceeding from their own criteria that are palatable for the concrete segments of the audience, as opposed to the formal official style of high politics.

Next we shall discuss the interests and needs of the three actors in the construction of national identity. The basic forms of expression of these needs for the mass media in the two countries and techniques used will be identified.

The interaction between the authorities, mass media and public on the pages of newspapers may be presented as family relations where the authorities stand for the father, the audience represents the child, and the mass media denote the mother who knows the needs and desires of others, worries about the child and influences him/her, and also forms his/her attitude to the father using their own methods.

What needs of the authorities, mass media and societies lie behind the desire for national self-determination and unification? How are the needs of an audience and a society are met with the help of the models of Spectacle and Carnival used by the mass media? Which of these strategies work better for maintaining pluralism in society?

What are the features of visual representation of the authority as the forms of expression of certain requirements of various types of the mass media and audience?

Needs of society

Social psychology lists 15 areas (categories) for satisfying the needs of the person, groups and societies as a whole. These categories help to structure the social space in which people establish mutual relations and contacts. These categories³ comprise a hierarchy from the basic needs up to the refined spiritual ones.

What categories are relevant to a wish for national identity? In our opinion, there are five needs of the population that lie behind the desire for collective identification. But it is worth noting that the nation is not the only source of collective identification considering that nation is an increasingly fluid category.

In real life these five needs are frequently bound together and do not give in to artificial separation. However for the purposes of research we shall consider them separately.

"Safety" (desire to rally before the enemy and to feel support of "we" - groups) is one of the basic needs uniquely corresponds to the desire to possess national identity that is a subject of anxiety and care on the part of the authorities and state politics.

National identity creates the special gathering «emotional climate» required by members of society which is very important for the authorities cultivating the feeling

³ There are ecology, safety, physical survival, love, emotional climate, freedom, self-determination, education, self-estimation, mutual aid, stratification, participation, openness, feeling fine, spirituality (Daniels, V.)

of patriotism and pride in their country. The emotion from a public meeting causes a feeling of euphoria, energizes people and stimulates them to actions (feats) and expressiveness.

The category of "self-determination" means a choice or its absence that is realized or not realized through the practices of national identity. This need is expressed in the ways to be independent or subordinated.

Using the results of interviews with journalists and representatives of the elite in the two countries, and of the media analysis, it is possible to assume the crisis of the post-modernist consciousness which regards the freedom of a choice as being of paramount importance. Not all people ready to maintain a burden of responsibility and independence in the surroundings of uncertainty and instability. The situation of constant choice in the conditions of plural choice undermines strength of those for whom it is necessary to have a sensation of rootedness of their own life in something external and objective true. National identity is one of the positive structures conducive to the impression of support – as a basis for anchoring different parts of identity. Both the realized acceptance of this basis and simple following the media stream (imposing schemes of behavior and thinking) provide the feeling of validity, identity and preparedness to act.

For the authorities the advantages of rallying of society on the basis of national idea are obvious – there are more opportunities for management and control as well as to oppose an enemy.

“Self-estimation and self-satisfaction” are also connected with national identity. This category is expressed in the ways that make one feel well and allow others to feel well. A special role in such a feeling is played by the symbolical capital – here we find the effect of one’s connection to a great history and culture in the two countries.

Such feelings are closely connected with a category of the needs of the highest level existing in the field of our attention in connection with the issue of identity development that category being «validity and equality». This category includes the feeling of mutual satisfaction in the relationship, measurement of equality and an inequality as regards as the authorities, privileges and well-being of people in various sectors of society and at different steps of social hierarchy.

From the interviews it is clear that even very well-educated people consider that the standard of well-being show be fair in view of mastery of culture and language of the country. Many Englishmen, for example, are indignant with those rich representatives of Arab countries buying up businesses in England who do not want to follow the traditions and culture of the country. Welsh people oppose those migrants from England into Wales who do not wish to learn the Welsh language. Representatives of the Russian population and carriers of Russian identity and culture feel superior to Russians of different ethnicity who do not know the Russian language and culture to the acceptable degree.

So, the five needs of the population lie behind the desire of identification with the nation, one of the basic form of expression of which is consumption of a discourse of national identity unfolded in the mass media.

While the official titles mostly represent the external factors (the agenda setting, the policy, normalizing discourse), the yellow titles stand for the internal circumstances (personal experience, life histories, biographies, i.e. phenomenology).

Adherence to reading some or other titles can mean the opposite things. If the person reads official newspapers among other things, to maintain one's sense of national identity one can do it by noting the influence from of the authorities and mass media in the offered materials, or one can uncritically perceive the ready-made clichés.

If the person chooses popular newspapers so that through the personal experience of other people to join national culture one can do it again either simply trusting idols or following a media story as a source of entertainment and manipulation or to be aware of creative work of journalists in the promotion of a normalizing discourse.

To realize journalistic creative work, it is necessary to know, that depending on mass media information, way of its submission and its specific understanding understanding focused for an image of the audience gets on

During judgment it is paid attention either of information or at its expressive form.

Understanding of that selection of information and its form characterizes ones intellectual capacity and determines from consumption of media materials. It is also the moment of activization of the unconscious processes and opportunities of construction of a metaphor, special individual creative comprehension, occurring synchronously with the moment of perception.

Mass-media needs and forms of their expression

The basic need for national identity in the mass media consists in our opinion in the urgent professional necessity of (loyal or oppositional) following any discourse arising on a public arena.

It is some kind of support of the process of political communications and its representation for laymen. It also provides for maintenance of communications in society, and, hence for the dynamics of its development.

The mass media look at a reality proceeding from the system, "from within", and approach them with their own measures, tools and methods. The system first of all sees itself, the reactions to the external stimuli's and thus perceives another system. According to sociologist N. Luman (1), the communications in society "proceeds are supported and amplified with the help of the mass media". The mass media examine an event in a political discourse, using the binary code – "information and non-information".

The mass-media are interested in the process of production of information by institutions more, than in the concrete content. The mass media should make the own information, observing the activities of institutions. The mass media should take thw discharged position of the observer in relation to those processes with an opportunity of entering a discourse at any moment.

Reproduction of a discourse corresponds to the issues of integration and harmony in society. The British sociologist D.McQuail, writing about public media,

marks two possible approaches here proposing either to consider media as “an implicit element of maintenance of the order” or not. On the other hand, pluralistic societies cannot be treated as having the uniform dominating order which should be supported⁴.

In our opinion, the possibility of pluralism for the whole system of mass media consists in critical recognition of a dominating discourse or existence of the alternative mass media designing alternative orders.

Designing of a picture of the world and reality means to remain in the present moment, that is the experience of emotions concerning an event and comprehension of a simultaneity of the one’s own life and life of society. One of the basic forms of realization of this project on creation of the real world for all system of mass-media, from our point of view, is construction and continuance of present time linguistically. Swedish researcher J.Ekecrantz, investigating the reporting in the Swedish and Russian press, has revealed the grammatical and the lexical units, allowing simulating “here and now”⁵ (for example, through oppositions in time and space).

The mass media support a society in the present. They are constantly ready to react to changes in systems, to grasp unexpectedness and “to live” them together with an audience. “Living” is connected to construction of a show according to some pattern, for example: outset – culmination - outcome. The result of following the script is rationalization, a constructive correcting of actions and generation of new resources and information. “Maintenance of a pressure” is created by not finishing this script or deviating from it and this is almost an absolute guarantee of that the reader will become interested in continuation of a theme and an outcome.

Use of the patterns and scripts offered by the mass media, expands the opportunities in the field of information processing, and also supplies cues on how to think, what cogitative design to prefer. It is necessary not to forget about the agenda setting phenomena. It is guaranteed that the mass media speak to us of what we should think.

So, the important component of psychological self-control of the person by means of mass media (through techniques of maintenance of a reality) is residing in the true emotions indirectly, through another's experience, without any risk for self (on the part of an audience various mechanisms can be involved here, such as identification, expectation, empathy, humor, trust etc.) and thus the social tension and discontent of people with the authorities are reduced. Also, for removal of a pressure when viewing TV news the frame of frustrating material by ordinary messages is used⁶, etc.

If the mass media directly or indirectly support normalizing discourse then what norm of national identity they bear? The problem of national identity both in the UK, and in Russia consists in that this idea is in the process of formation and updating.

⁴ McQuail D. Mass Communication and Public Interest: Towards Social Theory for Media Structure and Performance. In Nazarov M.M. Mass communication in the modern world. M., 2000. P. 187.

⁵ Ekecrantz J. Postcommunism and global culture. Mass-media and a modern society. SPb., 2000.

⁶ N.Postman « And now ... about the other ... » In Nazarov M.M. Mass communication in the modern world. M., 2000. P. 161.

Thematic issues in the conservative “Telegraph” are devoted to enlightening and creation of Britishness. “Komsomolskaia Pravda” does the same, suggesting the discussion of Russianness to the readers.⁷

It is necessary to note, that the norm (“to be British”, “to be Russian”) moves often through denying of that is “not to be”. Infringement of norms makes the norm obvious. Nobody knows the quantity of deviations from norm, and also whether there is a norm except as designated in the mass media. Violation of norms moves in the form of scandals.

The popular press, as it has already been marked, can take off pressure by comparison with norm («others are bad too» or «they are even worse than me»). The contents of the yellow press in some cases can be considered as a way of reducing deviant impulses (discharge) – “I have read about the tricks of skinheads and having extinguished the aggression, have condemned them”.⁸

Demonstration of infringement of norms is a way of a reminder on norm. Condemning violation, the audience makes common cause with norm. The audience also supports norm when shows the ignorance of deviant behavior, thus, confirming its own normality.

Estimating infringement of norms, the mass media reproduce a code of morals (good / bad). National identity is also a positive moral value. The mass media can state moral evaluation publicly and also classify rejections and infringers (how it is good and how it is bad to show national identity), frequently avoiding granting of the latent motives and the reasons behind acts.

Ways of coding of the information

Spectacle and Carnival (M.Bakhtin) are two basic forms of a variant of a discourse of national identity. We understand promotion by an official authority of the certain idea as Spectacle. Carnival is meant as everything that goes in parallel with the official process, as an opportunity of an alternative reaction, criticism and pleasure.

We list some features of Spectacle and Carnival on pages of newspapers, offered by J. Ekecrantz who has applied M. Bakhtin’ ideas to journalism: Spectacle comprises the monologue, Carnival – the dialogue; places touched upon in Spectacle are the official places and global arenas, Carnival presents daily occurrences usual places, and routine activity; Spectacle involves serious genres of quality journalism, Carnival deals with alternative and parody genres; characters in the Spectacle stories are officials, while Carnival shows, celebrities as usual people; occurrences of people in Spectacle are grandiose talking heads, Carnival presents bodies, noise, unusual and obscene gestures, companies of people, etc.

We consider these forms in the printed official mass media. The mass media alternative to the researched sample could become the oppositional titles considering that it is not necessary to form uniform national identity or that it is necessary to form it in another way or that there should be various identities in one, as well as the titles

⁷ “Telegraph” wrote about this since July, 2005 rather regularly. Komsomolskaya Pravda published two special issues on Migration (“Will Russia be empty of Russians?” on the 4th and 6th May 2005.

⁸ From interview with journalists of the Russian Federation, 2005.

unconcerned with politics and designing of national identity (press NGO, thematic newspapers).

Features of display and consumption of forms of Spectacle and Carnival are clearly represented by the official newspaper “RG” and popular newspaper “KP” for Russia and accordingly by “The Times” and “The Sun” for the UK.

Some are ready to consume the rules in the pure form of facts (“RG”, “The Times”). Some consume them in the entertaining form or simply consume entertainment (“KP”, “The Sun”). All this is ready schemes for internalization of a normalizing discourse, some of which are disguised as Carnival.

Table 1 shows the distribution and decoding of the opposition Spectacle / Carnival.

Table 1

Spectacle	Carnival
Normalizing discourse	Elements of antisocial intentions
Sociality, socialization	Deviancies
Father	Child
Control	Pleasure
Culture	Nature
Function	Desire
Diachronism	Synchronism
Rationality	Irrationality
Relationships of cause and effect	Replacement, metaphors

Official newspapers, “RG” for example, use the techniques of Spectacle. Quality and business newspapers use the techniques of Spectacle for translation of the discourse. The more popular is the press, the more Carnival techniques it uses. Spectacle can be played out in the mass-media (debates).

The Carnival techniques used in the mass media, awake imagination and start associative mechanisms. They evoke antisocial intentions and reside at the level of aesthetic and intellectual pleasure. We can consider this as a proceeding socialization process, consisting in eradication of pressure and excitation thus relating the conflict to social system.

The true Carnival is possible only in intelligent recognition of texts. A valid probability of Carnival consists in the realized creative perception, reading between lines, turning the senses upside down, in synchronous understanding of the text and simultaneous process of replacement of meaning and building of a metaphor. It provides pluralism and tolerance to innovative comprehension of a reality by others.

The process of journalistic ingenuity and reception of pleasure from creation of the text, and from its consumption consists in the use of metaphors and original stylistic construction (selection of forms and ideas).

The image of the head of state

Representation is an arrangement of an image anew. It is grasping the moment of dynamics of demonstration or self-expression. The image exists in the present

time. It is perceived as « here and now ». The image of the state leader is a work on his/her presentation by several professionals.

The head behaves and speaks “in a ritual manner in general words”. Press photographers at this time try to discover something «new, unexpected» in this official figure.

The primary goal for the press photographer as well as for any other journalist is finding of new information. The important and the unimportant in the cadre is defined automatically. Variants are possible. This involves incessant shooting with editors then engaging in selection of the pictures, or experience and skill of the pictorialist. How does the pictorialist separate the important from unimportant during a photo session?

Of great importance are an art value of a picture, potential of aesthetic pleasure and experience, an opportunity of cognitive estimations as well as supercilious and contrary projections, and also (the same as in the case of text) pleasure from comprehension of a choice and selection of a visual material.

The photo means a less conscious process of awareness than the text because there is no verbalization, and information frequently acts by passing consciousness. Visual codes are less determined, which opens an opportunity for Carnival.

Photos work as dreams in realities which always involve ambitions and aesthetic / erotic pleasure.⁹

Ambitions are an authority, implying control and domination not only above others, but also above self. The leader can be considered in this case as materialization of ideal self expectations. Erotic desires are unconscious wishes, want of pleasure and aesthetic experiences. Photos of the leader of the country and of celebrities are the opportunities for positive projections. The unconsciousness is the structure uniting meanings (signifiers) which are always ambiguous and leave room for imagination. The opportunity of co-authorship is seen and perceived.

Being guided by the little they belong to journalists understand an image and actions of the head of the country specifically. They ask questions or interpret the told, look at him under definite foreshortening. Depending on the title, static or dynamical pictures are produced. Those looks and poses which can be not unequivocally familiar are embodied. Meanings are transferred by a general impression from a picture which is perceived as an entity and as a part relating to other structural elements on a page.

The figure of the leader of the country has the direct relation to the current events on which the text informs. Designing of national identity goes as one of the levels of recognition of a figure and in parallel with an actual meaning of a picture.

For designing national identity the background of any picture with the main symbol of the country is important. Such a background, anyhow involves the theme of strengthening of national pride and loves for the native land, and also declares as values the basic needs of stability, safety and validity.

⁹ Cite of Z.Freud ideas in V.Burgin, *Seeing Sense*, in H. Davis - P. Walton, *Language, Image, Media*, Oxford 1983, p. 234.

Interaction with other people and an arrangement in space in relation to them of the leader of the country are of great importance in perception of the country on the international and internal political arenas.

Press photographers take into account the features of persons of the leaders. V. Putin's low height is compensated by close up views or his manner to speak, having bent, which forces his more tall interlocutors to bow or be inclined to support conversation. T. Blair's advantageous height frequently works not to the benefit of his environment. The queen of UK ¹⁰ and the president of Russia have staff photographers, whose pictures are distributed for the mass media regularly.

It is possible to observe visualization of the state ideology in the images of leaders in the official titles. Stability is expressed in the image of a healthy, emotionally adequate, vigorous, business-like, sober person.

Safety (and aspiration to this) is expressed in images which show the leader supervising a situation, self and others.

Patriotism (pride for the country) is expressed in the images with other leaders, through demonstration of friendship between them and conformity to a high level of presentation, and also against the background of symbols and national brands (historical and modern).

Successful photos of leaders demand special skill from the press photographer who should find a special foreshortening in the rigid frameworks of the state report and rules of the newspaper. It is necessary to search for and find in the repeating routine process of work and neutral behavior of the leader something new and unexpected; be capable to present the information and the chosen object shouted daily in the course of several years interestingly and ambiguously, to catch attention; to be able to admire the object, taking into account displays of the person as individuality. In all these an environment and a context of an event help the press photographer.

Conclusions

In the structure of discourse of the mass media, the text will not show authority in terms of direct physical compulsion or restriction, but we can find authority in representation of somebody or something in some way; this is authority to mark, designate, estimate and classify the signified symbolical authority. The symbolical authority and violence over some cases become seen through comprehension discursive techniques.

We have considered a discourse of national identity from the point of view of three areas of representation, having revealed the needs of each actor, standing up for the desire of identification and for techniques of satisfactions of the wish of national identity. All techniques are divided between Spectacle and Carnival. The authority is ever the compiler of Spectacle and norm.

The mass media help the authority to advance Spectacle. In the official newspapers one can see this in the pure way, in more popular newspapers Spectacle

¹⁰ <http://www.royal.gov.uk/>; <http://englishicon.com/>

should be masked as Carnival in order to come closer to people, to feelings, and to nature departing from rigid schemes.

The mass media create in the media space reality of a politics and the dominating order irrespective of the type of titles – they can be serious, business, yellow, pro-governmental newspaper and even the oppositional one; speaking about the order positively or negatively, they support it.

All researched newspapers use the techniques of Carnival – but certainly most of all so do yellow titles. In the British newspapers the Carnival methods are used in a more refined way (2-3 layers of meanings in one sentence and very much nuanced English humor) and are constrained in relation to the a monarchy.

The Carnival methods are used by journalists as a way of fine tuning and manipulation.

An opportunity of a real Carnival and thus pluralistic understanding of the dominating order, is seen in actions of the public and in the subjective postmodernist responsibility (comprehension of the journalistic working process and creative perception of texts with synchronous associations, metaphors, irony and up turning of meanings). However there is a tendency in the mass-media toward reduction of the use of Carnival techniques (at least in the given Russian titles). People want stability and safe Spectacle. The need for identification with the nation and the desire of belonging are observed. Does it speak of the approach of the era of post-postmodernism?

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