Original Article

Media-Cultural Analysis of Texts as a Method of Researching Mass Communication

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the description of a new multidisciplinary method of studying the journalistic texts - mediacultural analysis. This analysis is based on a generalized understanding of the text of mass communication as an object of study of philosophy, cultural studies, sociology, history, linguistics, psychology, journalism and mediology. The authors assert that the text of mass communication is simultaneously the result of creative activity of a journalist, reflection of the journalist's professional culture, communication space, means of forming the cultural values, norms and public consciousness in general, point of interaction between culture and society through mass communication, integral part of the mediaculture, interpretation field of meanings and codes, carrier of information, complex semantic-semiotic formation. The provisions and conclusions formulated by the authors can be used to assess expertly the quality of the texts of mass communication in the modern mediacultural space, as well as to analyze the influence processes of the mediatexts on the audience consciousness and forming a "human of culture" and a "human being".

Key words: Mediacultural analysis, Mediatext, Mediaculture, Mass communication, Journalism

INTRODUCTION

The text as a semantic-semiotic phenomenon at all times has been, on the one hand, the main carrier of social information and, on the other hand, an integral part of the spiritual culture that sublimates the experiences of the past, the constructs of the present, the models of the future. Being closed within the limits of mass communication, this text turns into a "mediatext", playing today a leading role in the dissemination of empirical knowledge, formation of mass consciousness, definition of social life forms.

Related to the publicistic type of social information, the mediatext manifests an unlimited ability to ideologically and technologically be embodied in various mass media and effectively influence the audience through the various influence methods - persuasion, suggestion, manipulation, etc.

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Hence there is the need for a deep study of modern mediatext as a human conductor in the world of meanings, which is generated by the mass media.

In the context of this work, the mediatext can be defined as a subject (result) of cognition and transformation of social reality, framed in the verbal-visual signs-symbols. The mediaculture, formed by mass communication, is a dialectic sum of an infinite number of mediatexts that become carriers of its meanings, as well as rituals, skills, techniques, methods and other communication acts and human behavior [1].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological basis of the article is represented by a set of paradigms and concepts from the works of philosophical, cultural, sociological, ethical, aesthetic nature that reveal the nature, essence and dialectics of a text as a complex mediacultural formation that has a complex ideological and technological set of semantic and semiotic characteristics.

During the article preparation we have been also using a wide arsenal of scientific and research methods, which have included various approaches to the analysis of the

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source material and the subsequent synthesis of provisions and conclusions - anthropological, semantic-semiotic, axiological, structural and functional, typological. We have been using the analysis, synthesis, deduction and modeling as the basic general scientific methods of research. The philosophical foundation of the work is represented by the dialectical, hermeneutic, metaphysical and pragmatic methods. The result of methodological reflection within the framework of social and humanitarian knowledge has become the mediacultural analysis of the texts of mass communication, the essence of which is described in detail in this article.

While writing this article, the authors have been guided by the works devoted to mediaculture and its current state (N.B. Kirillova, P.N. Kirichek), works on the text theory (V.A. Vorozhbitova, M.Yu. Lotman) and psychology of journalism (V.F. Oleshko). The philosophical basis of research has been represented by the works of outstanding representatives of philosophical thought - Aristotle, G.F. Hegel, I. Kant - on which the mediacultural analysis of the text is built to a great extent.

However, there is no generalized and total understanding of the essence of mediatext within the framework of modern information reality in the works listed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mediatext is a multi-faceted object, to study of which it is possible to apply research methods of almost all areas of social and humanitarian knowledge:
- Philosophical (dialectical, metaphysical, ascent from the abstract to the concrete, unity of the logical and historical);
- Logical (analysis, generalization, abstraction, idealization, analogy, system method);
- General scientific (comparison, description, measurement, formalization, inductive and deductive method);
- Disciplinary (sociological, culturological, linguistic);
- Interdisciplinary (cultural, philosophical, psycholinguistic, interpretative).

The authors believe that high efficiency in studying the text of mass communication can be achieved as a result of applying the mediacultural approach in conjunction with the general philosophical approach - in particular, with the main categories of philosophy.

According to Aristotle, the categories are the components of "active form", which ensure the formation of passive "matter". The philosopher distinguished ten such forms:

essence, quality and quantity, attitude, place and time, position and possession, action and suffering [2].

According to I. Kant, the similar system has categories of: quantity (unity, multiplicity and integrity), quality (reality, denial and delimitation), attitude (independence and belonging, cause and action, interaction as a relation between the acting and suffering), modality (possibility and impossibility, existence and non-existence, necessity and chance) [3].

According to G.F. Hegel such a system includes, in addition to those identified by Aristotle and Kant, such categories as being, being-for-one, measure, visibility, basis, absolute concept, judgment, idea, subjectivity, objectivity, truth, as well as "absolute idea", which is the initial and final arche [4].

The immersion of signs and properties of the mediatext in a philosophical context shows that it is in the space of being, can be given in experience and studied with the help of feelings, as well as be outside of experience and be the subject of intellectual reflection. The anthropological essence of mediatext is that it is created by a human (written, recorded, spoken); it is imprinted in the objects of being created by human (on paper, photography, TV and computer screen, in audio recordings); it is addressed to the humanity and is claimed by it.

However, when analyzing the texts, one should take into account that even with the intensive development of modern areas of social and humanitarian knowledge, research methods and the emergence of new scientific directions, it is impossible to fully understand the essence of mediatexts. In any case (as often happens in the social and humanitarian knowledge) the views on the mediatext will differ from the point of view of three acting and interacting subjects - the creator (the author-journalist), the perceiver (the representative of audience - the reader, the viewer, the listener) and the perceiver (the scientist-researcher).

The mediacultural analysis offered by the authors supplements the existing knowledge of the mediatext, because it is based on the interaction of such phenomena as culture and mass communication, and the consideration of a text as their constituent element, result, co-process.

The authors have also compiled questions that could help in the disclosure of the essence of mediatext in the context of mediaculture:
1. Does the mediatext contain practical knowledge that can be applied by the audience?

2. Does the text form certain stereotypes of consciousness?
3. Does mediatext contribute to an increase of the audience intellectual level?
4. Does mediatext bring artistic taste to the audience?
5. Does the mediatext declare high moral values and norms, or, on the contrary, level them?
6. Does the mediatext form certain behaviors?
7. Does it encourage to work, study or advise to indulge in pleasures, destruction, conflicts?
8. Does the mediatext form an image of a hero of our time and in what interpretation?
9. Does it propagate the works of mass or elite culture?
10. Does it carry a positive or negative emotion?
11. Does the mediatext contribute to the protection of public interests?
12. Are the influence methods on mind used in the mediatext and for what purpose?
13. Does the mediatext reflect the themes and functional features of the mass media? Where is it located?
14. What mediatext can tell about its author? (life position, his/her participation in this mass media, knowledge of the language norms, individual style, contact with the audience).

The proposed questions can be divided into groups and it is possible to reveal the functional features of the text of mass communication as a mediacultural phenomenon that serve as the foundation for the matrix of mediacultural analysis of mass communication texts on their basis (Table 1).

The dialectical essence of the text of mass communication is most clearly manifested in its two hypostases as part of the mediaculture - text and antitext. Due to the mosaic of texts and antitexts, the mediaculture itself acquires a dialectical nature, being the counterpoint of their unity and struggle in accordance with one of the basic laws of dialectics. It should be taken into account that the creator of mediaculture is a person himself/herself, who is also dialectical in nature.

CONCLUSIONS

The opposition of the text and the antitext reflects the essence of mediaculture as a wide complex of complex human (humanity) relations with oneself and with other people, based on the creation and perception of mass communication texts. The state, properties and attributes of this variety of general culture, as well as the text itself, are preferable to study with the help of the analysis offered by the authors. The auxiliary methods for its implementation are description, measurement, abstraction, modeling, comparative analysis, formalization, as well as content analysis.

The mediacultural analysis of the text makes it possible to examine in more detail and from different perspectives the foundations of mediaculture and to reveal the correlation of texts and antitexts in its space, which also indicates a low, medium, high level of this culture.

Table 1: Matrix of mediacultural analysis of mass communication texts

Functional mediatext characteristics	Subject of analysis	Functional mediatext dialectics
1. Organized unity of mediacultural signs-symbols	- Genre - Stylistics (vocabulary, morphology, syntax, style) - Composition - Form of embodiment	**"Grand style"** Compliance with the norms of literary language, the lack of barbarisms, jargonisms, obscene vocabulary and insults **"Low style"** Presence of barbarisms, jargonisms, obscene and negatively colored vocabulary, insults, humiliation of the human dignity
2. The carrier of value orientations, attitudes,models of behavior, guide to action	- Appeal (positive / negative) to the norms of morality and law - Formation of stereotypes - Formation of audience needs - Imitation under the examples the heroes of a time - Suggestion to the consumer of a thought of his/her significance/insignificance - Protection of public interests	**"Rise of personality"** (propaganda of high morals, artistic taste, preferences of elite culture, spiritual values, desire to learn, work, creating images of the true heroes of a time) **"Dissociation of personality"** (propaganda of immorality, preferences of mass culture, material values, desire to receive pleasure from life and not to worry about anything, creating images of the false heroes of a time)

(Contd...)

Table 1: *(Continued)*

3.	A source of new knowledge about the world and society	Availability of: - Information on the achievements of society - Interesting facts - Useful advices	**"Intellectual development"** (personal enrichment, replenishment of knowledge, education and self-education) **"Intellectual degradation"** (personal degradation, devaluation of knowledge, rejection of education and self-education)
4.	Mood source	- Statement ratio with the positive/negative connotation - Creation of states of fear, carelessness, joy, sadness, anxiety	**"Life optimism"** (the desire to learn the world, to rejoice in communication, to keep calm, to take a positive attitude towards work, life, rest) **"Life Pessimism"** (emphasis on isolation, fear of people and communication with them, presence of fears and complexes)
5.	Mean of influencing the consciousness and subconscious of the audience	- The methods of influence (persuasion, suggestion, manipulation) - The method application purposes (orientation and disorientation in reality)	**"Formation of an active personality"** (emphasis on clear logic and detailed argumentation of the presentation, reflection of events and phenomena of life in accordance with their cause-and-effect basis) **"Formation of a passive personality"** (emphasis on illogicality and unargumentality of presentation, confusion of causes and consequences of life events and phenomena)
6.	Reflection of the author's professional culture	- Compliance/non-compliance with legal norms and ethical rules - Specific features of working behavior - Features of individual style (external image, language proficiency, attitude for constructive/destructive)	**"High professional culture"** (compliance with the legal norms and ethical rules, unique style, high education, empathetic personality) **"Low professional culture"** (violation of legal norms and ethical rules, language illiteracy, non-empathic personality)
7.	Interaction field between the subjects of mass communication (the author and the recipient)	- Generation and perception of mediatext, - Interpretation of mediatext, - Interaction degree (high, low) of the author and the recipient (interferences - compositional violations, complex style of presentation, high terminology, allegoric nature, understatement)	**"Equal interaction"** (the author and the recipient are parity in communication) **"Unequal interaction"** (the author and the recipient are not parity in interaction)
8.	The reflection of reality	- Subject - Issue - Historical time - Heroes - The degree of possible information distortion	**"Objective reality"** (actual relevance, reflection of facts, attracting the audience attention, opinions of authoritative people) **"Subjective reality"** (false relevance, distraction of the audience, construction of a false problem)
9.	Component of mediaculture	- A place in the general context of mediaculture	**"Text"** (part of "high mediaculture", motivation for creation, improvement of oneself and the world, reinforcement of faith in life, filling with high meaning) **"Antitext"** (part of "low mediaculture", motivation for inaction, distraction from reality, deprivation of purpose, faith in people, devaluation of life)

The mediacultural analysis of the texts can help the researchers in the study of journalistic texts, understanding their essence, goals, and tasks.

SUMMARY

The semantic nucleus of the mediacultural method is the understanding of the text of mass communication as a dialectical semantic-semiotic formation, which simultaneously and continuously creates mediaculture and is included in it. The dialectical nature of mediatext is due to the dialectical nature of the human himself/herself, who is in a state of constant internal struggle. The verbal embodiment of the dialectical nature of the mediatext is its two opposite states - text and antitext.

Within the framework of this approach, the functional characteristics of the mediatext are highlighted, within

which it is: the organized unity of mediacultural signs-symbols; the carrier of value orientations, attitudes, behavior models; a source of new knowledge about the world and society; the regulator of the audience needs; a source of positive or negative emotions; guidance to the audience for a specific action; a mean of influencing the audience consciousness; reflection of the author's professional culture; the field of interaction between the subjects of mass communication - the author and a member of the audience; reflection of the culture of mass communication; an integral part of mediaculture.

The mediacultural analysis can be used by researchers and journalists as a theoretical and methodological basis for researching the results of the creative activity of a journalist (texts), synergistic processes of mass communication, interrelations and relationships between the subjects and objects of information space.

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