

## MEDIA RHETORICS – PARTICULAR RHETORICS OF LANGUAGE OF MASS MEDIA

### МЕДИАРИТОРИКА – ЧАСТНАЯ РИТОРИКА ЯЗЫКА СМИ

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*Mass media are the most influential sphere of the existing modern culture. They form their own picture of the world or a world media picture in the consciousness of the audience. Its basic features are separation, fragmentariness and step-type behavior. The estimation of this fragmentariness is possible within the framework of the rhetorical methodological approach. Traditional central concepts of classical rhetoric – ethos, logos and pathos – can become the basis of a descriptive model of a modern world media picture.*

**Key words:** *world media picture; rhetorical modality of a media discourse; culture of a ready word; protheism of the language person of the journalist.*

*Медиадискурс, как прозаический тип речи, и СМИ, как наиболее влиятельная сфера бытования современной культуры, – «благодарный» материал для риторического осмысления. Традиционные центральные понятия классической риторики, переосмысленные в контексте риторического ренессанса XX века*

*и неориторических теорий, могут стать основой для формирования частной риторики языка СМИ – медиариторики. В статье предлагаются медиариторические понятия, с помощью которых возможно построение риторической модели современного медиадискурса и той медиакартины мира, которая им формируется. Здесь же рассматриваются перспективные направления исследований в области этой новой филологической дисциплины.*

**Ключевые слова:** медиариторика; медиакартина мира; культура интерпретации готового слова; риторическая модальность; риторическая позиция.

The comprehension of rhetoric stretches today far outside limits of the theory of eloquence. From the middle of the XX century, which became an era of the rhetorical Renaissance, the understanding of this science broadens to the philosophy of verbal and speech culture (Okeanskiy, 2005). Such an approach to the rhetoric allows us to speak about its own methodological system. “The methodological difference of rhetoric from other philological sciences consists of orientation to the value aspect in the description of the subject and the submission of this description to the applied tasks. <...> Elimination of the value aspect of research of the speech and the text leads to the loss of the specifics of rhetoric against a background of descriptive philological disciplines” (Rhetorics).

## **Rhetorical Renaissance of the XX century**

The crucial role in rhetoric revival in the XX century was played by *the theory of mass communications* and *the logical theory of the argument*. They enriched and expanded the categorial device and tools of classical rhetoric. The theory of mass communications representing an extensive set of research tools of linguistic, semiotic and social and psychological character, promoted the development of deeper understanding of the

main participants of the communicative act (the sender defining characteristics – the recipient of the message, the sender – the addressee), and also the parameters of the message.

H. Perelman's theory of the argument became a theoretical basis of "new rhetoric" (or "neorhetoric"). This theory in many respects created the subject matter and a system of research analysis of *the French structuralism*. Thanks to efforts of this school rhetoric started to arrive at the proscenium of intellectual life of France and Europe as a whole, in the middle of the 1960s (R. Bart, Tsv. Todorov, Z. Zhenett, A.-I. Grey-mas, K. Bremon, etc.).

The Belgian "group  $\mu$ "s (Z. Dubois, F. Menge, F. Pir, F. Edelin, Zh.-M. Klinkenberg, A. Trinson, etc.) work "The general rhetoric" (the 1970s) became a key stage in the revival of rhetoric. They emphasized the *rhetorical*, instead of *poetic* (by R. Jakobson) function of language and described it as *transcendental* (that is initially inherent in the language, causing all other functions of language) in relation to other language functions. Such an approach practically gave researchers a chance to study manifestations of the rhetorical in any type of verbal communication, both in semiotics area (which can be included in rhetorical) and in nonverbal communicative systems. The second important result of "group  $\mu$ "s activity is that they defined both the ultimate goal and the main object of rhetoric as a product of ethos. Thus, "group  $\mu$ ", after Haim Perelman, revived the axiological component to the rhetorical analysis.

Today rhetoric became a driving force of language policy in many countries (first of all in the USA, Japan, Germany). The American rhetoric, for instance, is called a perfect instrument of public consciousness manipulation. It is essentially important in the culture of *mass information* and *mass communication*, in the world of mass media, and, naturally, occupies there the top of "the pyramid of knowledge" which to some extent brings it together with rhetoric in Ancient Greece. During the antique era the rhetorical class was the highest (after grammar and poetics) and *prepared the citizen for conscious political activity*. That is to say rheto-

ric was taken as the top of *education*, or of *paydaia*. Werner Yeger wrote about it: “Education is means used by the human community to preserve its kind corporally and spiritually...” (Yeger, 2001).

Today rhetoric is thought to be a certain *coherent* beam of philological subjects (stylistics, cognitive science, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, lingvoethics, lingvoculturology, theories of speech acts). Actually, the subjects which it once generated. At the same time rhetoric acts as a certain *outlook* since it has a very important axiological component. Rhetoric drives speech behavior to a verbally conscious purpose, and its rules (norms) – to an *ideal*. That is modern rhetoric is, as we say today, *multilinguistic* or even the *polyhumanitarian*: it unites not only linguistic subjects and methods, but also all-humanitarian subjects (philosophy, sociology, political science, etc.). We even prefer to consider *rhetoric as a coherent science* since it does not only use the polyhumanitarian approach, but also forms on its basis the rhetorical understanding of the research object which is the language in its mental discursive movement.

## **Rhetorical comprehension of a media discourse.**

### **Media rhetorical categories**

Mass media, media discourse are the most “grateful” material for rhetorical comprehension. First of all, because it is a prosaic type of speech and prosaic texts serving that is the object of research of traditional rhetoric (Rozhdestvenskiy, 1996; Volkov, 1996). Secondly, because mass media are the most influential sphere of the modern culture. For this reason it is possible to speak about rhetorical, or more exactly even neorhetorical comprehension of a media discourse and *the media picture of the world* presented in it, and also about the creation of private rhetoric of the mass media language, media rhetoric.

The categorial scientific device of private rhetoric of a media discourse, or *media rhetoric*, by means of which the media discourse can be described, has to rely, on the one hand, on traditional rhetorical concepts

and on the other hand it is enriched by research of various schools of the XX century neorhetoric we spoke above.

Mass information and mass communication are considered by modern literature as one of *speech innervoices* that is “a certain material of speech processed by certain tools” (Rozhdestvenskiy, 1996). Yu. V. Rozhdestvenskiy singled out three main types of differentiation of mass communication texts and information: 1) on a cumulative *image of a ritor*; 2) on territorial and occupational characteristics and 3) on specific and genre features (Rozhdestvenskiy, 1996). It is obvious that today from these three dominants only *the first* more or less remains unchanged. Washing out borders of genres, the change of the system of genres brings the text characteristics out of the category of dominants of the modern media space rhetorical analysis. It is possible to partly recognize territorial occupational characteristics essential when it comes only to narrowly professional and narrowly territorial (regional) publications: the duplicating, diffusion of central and large local (regional, republican) publications form certain “monochromaticism” of a media picture of the world presented in them.

In our opinion, traditional central concepts of classical rhetoric – *ethos, logos and pathos* – can become the basis of a descriptive model of a modern media discourse and a media picture of the world.

“It (in classical rhetoric. – *I. A.*) is accepted to call *ethos* the conditions which the recipient of speech offers to the speaker. <...> It is accepted to call *pathos* an intention, a plan of the speaker which has the purpose of developing in front of the recipient a defined subject interesting for him. <...> It is accepted to call *logos* the verbal means used by the speaker during the realization of the plan of speech” (Rozhdestvenskiy, 1997).

Three main categories of classical rhetoric connected directly with each other and kind of penetrating into each other, are structured in a media discourse and cement the neorhetorical model of a media picture of the world and receive their own terminological designation in the media rhetoric.

*Pathos* of the media discourse is embodied in general perlocutive idea of its texts which we named a *rhetorical modality*.

*Logos* is embodied in the main strategies of discursive activity of mass media which come to *various types of interpretation* (especially at the level of national topics) and accumulate in themselves all signs *the era culture of the real world of interpretation*.

The quintessence of *ethos* in a media discourse can be considered a *rhetorical position* of a journalist, and also the publications or the channels through which media texts are broadcast. Speech activity of a journalist, as an individual, and, according to Yu. V. Rozhdestvensky's terminology, "a cumulative image of a ritor", is *proteistic* today.

### **Interpretative system of the media discourse**

Once again we will emphasize that all three categories are not isolated from each other and exist in close interaction. It reveals vividly at the level of language, the main "device" and the main tool of activity of mass media. The language of modern mass media (at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries) can be considered a *two-dimensional interpretation*. On the one hand, it fits in the new concept of the main question of philosophy when in the center of attention there is not the problem of correlation of *being* and *consciousness*, but the problem of *reality* and *text* as its possible interpretation. On the other hand, the mass media language fits into the system of units of verbal communication which nowadays form as cultural information and include cultural sems, a cultural background, cultural concepts and connotations. Moreover, whatever component dominates in this or that text of mass media, we can only talk about the addressees' interpretation of mass media of meanings and figuratively motivated associations which are generated by them. Cultural and language competence of modern informants of the Russian literary language and the Russian culture allows journalists to conduct and make "precedent" operations of various intellectual and mental complexity

and of various ethnic and psychological background. The abundance of texts-interpretatives in a media discourse reflects the fact that we appear to be creators and at the same time users of the *culture of interpretation of the ready word*. The culture of the ready word is the rhetorical type of culture in which the word is the live bearer of cultural tradition and all important meanings and contents of this tradition. But the modern era shows us also its interpretation of the ready word culture which consists first of all in a travesty of these meanings and traditions. And this travesty is an outcome of a certain rhetorical aim: free use of the word is a traditional rhetorical understanding of the problem of the word in general: “from its the very beginnings in Greece the rhetorical theory and practice understands the word as if it was *entirely in the power of its user*” (Mikhaylov, 1997). Only today the author-journalist, the author-scripter dominates not only and not so much over the word, as over the word of others, over a cultural background, so he does not create but interprets.

The *journalist-scripter* (R. Bart’s term), appears to be the bearer of this activity, i.e. such a type of a language personality that does not exist out of (before and after) this speech act, who creates the text only *here and now*. And though the question of possible existence of a certain average type of a language personality of a journalist is questionable, discussion of this subject seems promising and quite reasonable. The existence in comparative rhetoric of the concept of *a national rhetorical ideal* (Mikhalskaya, 1996) itself allows us such an approach. Especially so because each language personality is formed on the basis of appropriation by a specific person of all language wealth created by predecessors. Moreover, a personality in general, and a language personality in particular, is defined by time and place: existing in historical time and space, it has the appropriate mentality – it defines not only specific conceptions, but also the ways of thinking and feeling that dominate in its environment, the ways of understanding the world and of estimating people. In this sense it is possible to speak about the person of the era of Antiquity, of the era of the Middle Ages, of the era of Renaissance, etc.

The antinomy of a journalistic creativity, which results from the fight of social and personal bases in the language personality of a journalist, and also from the need to unite individual and collective, forms a mental and behavioral dominant of linguo-rhetorical activity of the modern journalist. This dominant can be designated as *a proteism of a rhetorical position of the journalist*. Of course, it is not that proteism which in its time was offered for understanding of the phenomenon of A. S. Pushkin's works: an organic penetration into the culture of any nation, confluence with it without loss of his own national identity is one of the amazing traits of Pushkin's poetic mind, of Pushkin's language picture of the world. But this Pushkin's "crunching" of cultures always remained within Culture. The proteism in works of modern journalists is in many respects predetermined by specifics of a subject of their language: the media space is an original single-stage interpretation not only of a cultural background, but also of the processes taking place out of the sphere of culture, we will call them after P. M. Bitsilli (Bitsilli, 1996) civilizational. That is the modern journalist forms in consciousness or subconsciousness of the audience first of all *a picture of a modern information Civilization*.

This interpretative level (the most obvious, the most open) in the language of modern mass media brings us directly to a more difficult interpretative system which is schematically expressed by the dichotomy *reality~text*. And the greatest interest in it for us is represented by interpretative models of the major national and cultural stereotypes. A cultural tradition is a powerful mechanism which makes a much stronger impact on our perception, than the scientific description. Both culture concepts and its toposes undergo interpretation. It is first of all connected to those differences which exist between the notions of *a concept* and *a topos*, which are predetermined by specific differences of linguistics and rhetoric. *The concept* (the notion of cognitive science) is a reflection of *speech-thought-cognitive activity*. *The topos* of culture is a reflection of an *estimative and comparative knowledge, an ethic and moral paradigm of the people* and at the same time it is *a basic national communication component* (Hazagerov, 2008). The scientific literature that describes and systematizes concepts of



the Russian culture is extensive. Toposes in this sense were less “lucky”. A. M. Panchenko in his time wrote about it in the book “The Russian culture on the eve of Peter’s Reforms” (Panchenko, 2008).

Interpretation of the domestic system of toposes in media discourse is treated by the main strategies of modern mass media’s activity. In the second half of the XX century domestic mass media appeared to be completely in the power of those strategies that had been already created in the West. Among them it is necessary to recognize as the main things: 1) the strategy of “cultural shock”, 2) the manipulation strategy, 3) the strategy of a secularism and, last but not least, 4) the hedonism strategy. In our opinion, we should recognize the hedonism strategy as the dominating strategy leading all others. An entertaining function was always inherent in the press. But preferences of audience could not be fully reflected in mass media until the 1990s: “the reading public was accustomed to a few mentions of the daily, personal, domestic” (Fomicheva, 1976). Today we observe a different situation: the entertainment factor very often outweighs the informational value factor when members of the public choose this or that edition, moreover, an informational cause in itself is sometimes not serious, entertaining (regardless of positive or negative content of this information). But there is also an opposite tendency: shocking (tragic) information is perceived as entertaining. This tendency in many respects is caused by the double idea of a leisurely character of modern mass media: on the one hand, they take free (leisure) time of the reader, on the other hand, they actually make as such the leisure of the reader, they are his filling.

Sources of hedonism lie in *the European subjectivity* which is today euphemistically called *anthropocentrism*. In modern Russian mass media this subjectivity is embodied and realized in the following mental linguo-rhetorical operations:

- in the communicative aim of a transaction (a possible change of communicative roles of the writer and the reader);
- in transformation of *a topos of self-appraisal* (a conversion into Anglo-Saxon model of the world image in which the center is “I”: “I – centrist”, “yachnost”);

- in pretativization of *quality of life* as a sociocultural “fragment” of a new Russian mentality;
- in reshuffle of “*the external*” and “*the internal*” as the terms of the topos of *Integrity* (the term “external” as a topological symbol of non-priority, of periferism, is brought forward to the center of being and forces out to the periphery the term “internal”, i.e. value significant);
- in conversion of the hypertopos Being (ontologically unstable term “virtuality” replaces antonymous, i.e. the ontologically rigid term “reality”, growing fast with meanings of the second and creating thereby *mythoenergy of virtuality*), and so on.

So in the entertaining and hedonistic sphere of mass media we do not face a simple interpretation of these or those national cultural stereotypes, but the change, “conversion” of the whole blocks of ontologically and axiologically important components (or maybe even of dominants) of the traditional outlook of Russians inherent in the Russian language (as the views of Germans – in German, and of Chinese – in Chinese).

### **Rhetorical modality as a media discourse constant**

The existence of the strategic paradigm of activity of mass media, pre-determined by the initial aim of belief and influence, shows us the basic impossibility of an objective modality of texts of media discourse. In texts of mass media there is always a certain communicative and target component, a certain rhetorical sense which we named *a rhetorical modality* of media text. Most often persuasion appears to be this component, open or hidden, i.e. manipulative. The rhetorical modality of media texts can be expressed both explicitly, and implicitly because the rhetorical sense exists not only outside the text (in the intension of the journalist-rhetorician), but also in the text itself: both in its ideological sphere, and in its formal organization. Regardless of interpretation of this rhetorical content by the reader the *constant will be the rhetorical modality of the media text*.

And here again we should address the category of *rhetorical position of the journalist*. The concept of *an author's position* (L. G. Kayda) was developed for journalism. But the media text is a wider phenomenon than a publicistic text. The social journalism is a sphere of a direct influence, direct persuasion. As a rule, the publicistic text is built by a ritor on the basis of his own beliefs. It is typical of a media discourse that journalists (both individuals, and corporative media communities) act as *intermediaries* between the reality itself and the mass audience. By means of their views and world outlook they form a world picture in the consciousness of the mass audience. Not all *events* (the phenomena appurtenant to the world) become *facts* (that is to say opinions about the world) in mass media. There are the journalists who recast *events into facts*, that is the language persons provided with cultural and social authority to “filter” the events. And in this respect journalists act as ritors, as professionals of rhetorical activity, that is “of the art of use of language <...> *to convince or have an impact on others* (our italics. – *I. A.*)” (Scott, 1980).

All media discourse participates in the formation of such a picture of the world. And in this sense we can also speak about *a rhetorical hypermodality* of media discourse in general. But this hyper modality is not the mechanical sum of rhetorical modalities of separately taken media texts. It is above the “fight”, it is exactly that “beacon” of media discourse on which its texts are focused. And this beacon is a media picture of the world.

In our opinion, all texts of a media discourse have a rhetorical modality: both of reasoning, and informing types. For the informing type of speech, and consequently for texts of informational genres, the rhetorical modality will be telling at a stage of the choice of an event, worthy to be “melted” into a fact. (Such an informational genre as interview is not an exception: even the choice of the interviewee is predetermined *by a rhetorical modality of importance, significance or relevance* of this “hero” for formation of a certain picture of the world in the consciousness of the mass audience, that is of the mass addressee). The “*de re modality*” as, however, the “*de dicto modality*”, is subordinated here to

a wider and at the same time to a more specific modality – the rhetorical proper. It forces *the event* to move to the category of *the fact* and, thus, to become *an argument of interpretation* of the objective world within media discourse, that is to become a fragment of the media picture of the world.

In reasoning type of speech, that is in analytical genres, whose share considerably decreased today, the rhetorical modality predetermines the choice of argumentative methods, or tactics, that allow the sender to reach the planned perlocutive effect [natural proofs, arguments to ethos, arguments to pathos, arguments to authority (to trust and to mistrust), the quasiargumentation, methods of linguistic demagoguery, argumentum comœdiarum (not true, but the plausible image of the past) and others] (Mikhalskaya, 1996; Panchenko, 2008; Hazagerov, 2002).

Thus, the genre belonging of texts of media discourse does not influence the existence or lack of rhetorical modality. A genre can be “a non-core credit” in its result and formation. *The rhetorical modality appears to be an objective category of discourse of the mass media, generating factual and structural components of this discourse.*

The structure, as modern philosophers argue, is the main concept of humanitarian knowledge of the XX and XXI centuries, it is a way of the organization of any humanitarian material. The media rhetoric is a peculiar “opened structure”, i.e. not closed, not predetermined, open. Therefore, *the media rhetoric* faces not only one task: the media rhetoric can develop in details the typology of rhetorical positions of the reader in modern media discursive activity; in media rhetorical aspect we face the phenomenon of corporative mass media and corporative language policy of various mass media to reveal that media corporations have their own rhetorical position in the era of aspiration for depersonalization of the journalist and of obscuring his name behind the name of an edition or a channel; within media rhetoric it is necessary to develop a typology of a rhetorical modality in media texts of various media cultures. The development of a dictionary of national toposes seems promising to us, an intensive polysemantic interpretation of which in modern media

discourse leads to the deformation of a traditional value paradigm in the consciousness of the mass audience.

*The media rhetoric* is the new theoretical and study subject demanded by time of a peculiar diffusion of culture. Blurring the borders (state, cultural, social, ethnic, etc.) happens at the expense of rapid and extensive development of communication technologies. Modern communications, information technologies squeeze space and time, overcoming immensity of the world around us. Its cultural and civilizational variety joins a single worldwide context more and more actively. The activity of modern mass media becomes more and more transnational and supranational. And the coherent beam of *media rhetoric* can highlight culture-specific components of national images of the world in the language activity of mass media that actively transform and intertwine in language of modern mass media and thus participate in the formation of *a modern media picture of the world*.

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