

DISCURSIVE TECHNIQUES NEGATIVITY IMAGE OF RUSSIA IN THE WESTERN MEDIA

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Abstract. The article discusses the discursive techniques of negativity the image of Russia and the Russians - deconstructing stereotypes, changing the pragmatic focus, and intentional news framing.

Modern Western discursive practices and, in particular, the mass media, present a far from objectivity, often negative and hostile image of Russia and Russians, due to non-linguistic factors. From a linguistic point of view, it is of interest to systematize the means of verbal expression and semantic content of Russia's image and the Russian nation in the space of a foreign (western) community.

The study of the country's image involves the analysis of its perception, both by its citizens and by representatives of other states. The attitude of the citizens of a country depends on its reputation. If citizens do not trust their government, they will not serve it in good faith.

The most important characteristic of image communication is the factor of the target audience. Different audiences need different standards for the communication channel. The message, formulated for different types of audiences, may differ in content (set of facts) or specific techniques.

When analyzing images in media texts, a discursive approach is used. The analysis of media discourse, on the one hand, is aimed at isolating the essential elements of the process of creating and transmitting meanings in the course of mass communication and, on the other hand, at determining the role of the media context in meaning formation.

The purpose of this article is to establish linguistic means in the formation of the modern media image of Russia and Russians in the Spanish-language media.

In this study, analysis of newspaper articles is carried out at the lexical-grammatical and syntactic levels within the framework of two models: the "image of Russia" and the "media image." The first concept is formed historically in the public consciousness of other nation, and the second one is created in a particular media system.

As a result of constant analysis of Russia's image by Western media, linguists and journalists can observe the evolution of this image in diachrony.

The author considers such metaphorical models of the political life of Russia as monarchic, anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and mechanical.

The strengthening of negative elements in the structure of Russia's image is connected with the latest political events.

The author used the Spanish-language media (el Mundo, el País, ABC) as an empirical material and applied not only discourse analysis but lexical, semantic, and linguistic stylistic analysis.

Articles' selection of the newspaper Las Provincias for 2006–2014 devoted to Russia (4387) identifies three main headings: "international events" (1940), sports (698), and regional news (439).

The structure of the image of Russia in the mass media includes such components as the internal political image, the external political image, the image of the state's head, the image of the Russian history.

The author of the article examines in detail the lexical and semantic compatibility of the adjective Ruso - Russian - in Spanish, clearly describes concepts related to the everyday consciousness of the Spanish language personality with Russia, presents lexemes with negative axiological content, demonstrate particular dynamics of ethnocultural stereotypes about Russia.

After analyzing the image of Russia in two aspects: 1) the "image of Russia" and 2) the "media image," it can be concluded that the Spanish media is most interested in Russia as a state in terms of its foreign and domestic policy. Undoubtedly, in the era of globalization and the development of international relations, the state policy comes to the fore. In this way, a change in the pragmatic focus contributes to the negativity of the media image of Russia.

Keywords: negative media image of Russia; stereotypes; the change of the pragmatic focus; news framing.

Introduction

Modern Western discursive practices and, in particular, the mass media, present a far from objectivity, often negative and hostile image of Russia and Russians, due to non-linguistic factors. From a linguistic point of view, it is of interest to systematize the means of verbal expression and semantic content of Russia's image and the Russian nation in the space of a foreign (western) community.

It is essential to distinguish the concepts like "image of Russia" and "media image." The first concept is formed historically in the public consciousness of other nation, and the second one is created in a particular media system (Zelentsov M.V., 2015).

Western media continuously analyzes the image of Russia in linguistics and journalism (Denisova A., 2013; Maliavina S., García Bilbao P.A., Zanetti

Durand C., 2009; Pirozhenko O., 2015), and one can observe the evolution of this image in diachrony.

So, in the early 2000s (Santsevich N.A., 2002) several metaphorical models of political life in Russia were highlighted on the material of German opinion-based journalism.

- *Monarchic model*

The head of state appears as the king. Because of this, in the minds of German readers, Russia acquires the status of an undemocratic, inherited state.

- *Anthropomorphic model*

Russia is a living organism; it is sick; it was broken by paralysis; the country has no money for its treatment. Russia entirely depends on the help of the West.

- *Zoomorphic model*

Russia is represented as a particular country inhabited by predators.

- *Mechanical model*

Russia is presented as a mechanism, parts of which are disabled.

In 2012, the image of Russia formed in the Western media, according to E. L. Orlova (Orlova E., 2012: 16) was reduced to the following postulates:

- Russia is the successor of the USSR, seeking to regain its former domination,

- Russia is a military nuclear power,

- Russia is a state of "one person,"

- Russia is a country of corrupt officials and powerlessness,

- Russia is far from establishing democratic institutions of society.

Some of the authors offer in their articles and books to reconsider the negative perception of Russia in the West (Benítez J., 2019). Despite it, after the Crimea became part of Russia and the anti-Russian sanctions were tightened, the Western media's rhetoric can be characterized as negative, and even a demonizing image of Russia. In connection with the latest events (unfounded allegations of interference with American elections, Catalan separatism, Brexit, doping scandal, the Scripals' affair), it can be argued that there has been an increase in negative elements in the structure of Russia's image.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this article is to establish linguistic means in the formation of the modern media image of Russia and Russians in the Spanish-language media.

Methodology

The study analyzed the materials of the Spanish-language media (el Mundo, el País, ABC) using discourse analysis, lexical, semantic, linguistic, and stylistic analysis.hk.

The role of news framing in the formation of media image of Russia

Through the use of discourse analysis, O. Pirozhenko analyzed the regional (Valencia) press of Spain, in particular, the Las Provincias newspaper for the period 2006–2014. Most of the presented articles, devoted to Russia (4387), belong to the sections: "international events" category (1940), sports (698) and regional news (439).

The "international events" section is the absolute leader in the number of articles that mention Russia. It indicates that Russia is an active player in the international arena.

A separate section on "domestic/foreign policy" has a total of 145 articles highlighting essential topics from the Spanish point of view. On these topics, covering Russia, it is worthwhile to stop separately.

Table 1 - Negative and positively labeled news block headings

(-) on a rating scale	(+) on a rating scale
Terrorismo – terrorism	El potencial energético ruso – Energy potential of Russia
Mafia rusa – Russian Mafia	Viajes oficiales de altos cargos españoles y de la CV a Rusia –officials' visits of Valencia to Russia
Espionaje: agentes dobles y escándalos diplomáticos – Espionage: dual agents and diplomatic scandals	Eventos realizados conjuntamente por parte de Rusia y España (festivales, años duales, etc.) – joint events of Russia and Spain (festivals, Cross Year, etc.)
Redes de prostitución de mujeres rusas en España – prostitution of Russian women in Spain	Logros comerciales españoles en el marco de la exploración del mercado ruso y de los países de la CEI – Commercial successes when working in the Russian and CIS markets
Conflictos geopolíticos con la participación de Rusia – geopolitical conflicts involving Russia	
Corrupción rusa – коррупция в России	
Devaluación del rublo – la moneda nacional rusa – devaluation of the ruble - the national currency of Russia	
Atentados y disturbios en Rusia – attempts and riots in Russia	
Oposición rusa – Opposition in Russia	
Política regional rusa y las tendencias de separatismo – Russian regional policy	

and separatism trends	
Criminales rusos detenidos en España – Russian criminals arrested in Spain	

As you can see, the Spanish media set an informational "agenda", their news framing, focusing the audience's attention on some events or phenomena, and leaving the others uncovered. Thus, the media, by manipulating the content of discourses and their thematic repertoire, directly participate in creating the image of a foreign state through the information that is complemented by stereotypes that already exist in the consciousness of society. The structure of the image of Russia in the mass media includes such components as the internal political image, the external political image, the image of the head of state, and the image of Russian history.

The interpretation of stereotypes with a change of sign estimation

A. Denisova (2013) and O. Pirozhenko (2015) discussed in detail in their works lexical-semantic compatibility of the adjective *ruso* - *Russian* in the Spanish language. It characterizes concepts related to the everyday consciousness of the Spanish language personality with Russia.

- montaña rusa, ruleta rusa
- ensaladilla rusa, filete ruso, té ruso, kvas ruso
- vodka ruso, ruso borracho
- mujer rusa, alma rusa, bebé ruso, muñeca rusa
- mafia rusa, espía ruso, nuevo ruso, nuevo rico ruso
- frío ruso, nieve rusa, hielo ruso, baño ruso
- matrioshka rusa, balalaika rusa, troika rusa, izba rusa, samovar ruso
- revolución rusa, bolchevique ruso, ejército ruso, fusil ruso
- iglesia rusa, icono ruso, catedral rusa
- locura rusa, osadía rusa, pasión rusa

Among the 35 lexemes presented there are several (9) - ruleta rusa, ruso borracho, mafia rusa, espía ruso, nuevo ruso, nuevo rico ruso, and locura rusa - with negative axiological content.

A specific dynamic also characterizes ethnocultural stereotypes about Russia. So, in the American press of the 1980s, the stereotype "bear" was spread, and in the 1990s the stereotype of "vodka" was actualized (Orlova O.G., 2013: 18). At the same time, the concept "Russian bear" – *el oso ruso*, often correlated with political discourse, characterizes Russia as something big, brutal and clumsy - grande, brutal y torpe.

The concept of vodka ruso - *Russian vodka* - appears to be contradictory in terms of evaluation. For the Spanish-language press, such statements with this subject stereotype (stereotype-symbol) are typical: The Russians *have vodka in their veins*, and they do not get drunk; Para beber, *sólo vodka*.

¿Con vino? ¿Con cerveza? No: la comida rusa se bebe con vodka - while eating, *Russians drink only vodka*.

Sometimes you can even find an ode to this national drink.

Calienta el Mundial con los mejores y más puros destilados del país de Putin y aprende a consumirlos como si hubieras nacido en Siberia. – Meet the Mundial with the best purest vodka from Putin’s country and learn to drink it as if you were born in Siberia!

El actor y realizador chino Jiang Wen... define así su manera de hacer cine: “Las películas de otros son como un cóctel: un poco de alcohol con agua y zumo. Las mías son *como el vodka puro*”. Como sugiere el bueno de Wen, el vodka siempre será el destilado más asociado con la pureza, tanto por como es su proceso de destilación, como por su color y sabor (Matossian J. C., 2018).

The Chinese director and actor Jiang Wen defines his way of making films: “The pictures of other directors are like a cocktail - some alcohol, water and juice. Mine is like *pure vodka*.” According to Weng, vodka is always associated with purity, both in the distillation process and in terms of color, and taste.

The nature of the discourse determines the modality of evaluation, it can change in biased and politically engaged texts. So, the lexeme *vodka* is placed in an unusual context, negatively marking the entire phrase: ... *'armas' de indigestión masiva como el vodka o el polonio radiactivo*¹ (Utrilla D., 2009) – *vodka and radioactive polonium as a weapon of mass poisoning*.

Souvenirs from Russia are subject to political coloring. It is a matryoshka doll - muñecarusa, matriuska; the text links criticism of the policy of Mariano Rajoy with it.

Mariano Rajoy resumió ayer en diez medidas su anunciada reforma de las Administraciones Públicas <...> nuestra democracia <...> creyó que la eficacia consistía en abrir ventanillas por todos los rincones, un desdoblamiento frenético parecido al de esas *muñecas rusas – matriuskas*— que *no son más que una sucesión inútil de cajitas pintadas* (González J. 2011). – Mariano Rajoy announced his ten-step government reform. Our democracy believes that efficiency is opening windows on all sides. It looks like a desperate split, splitting, just as it happens *in Russian dolls - matryoshka dolls, which represent only a useless sequence of colored boxes*. The negative image of Russia can be clearly seen even in sports. Despite Russia's victory over Spain in the 2019 World Cup, the Spanish media tried

¹The polonium scandal was inflated by the British special services in connection with the death of former Russian secret services officer Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006.

to belittle the Russians' victory. Thus, the newspaper Marca expressed its disappointment at the loss of '*the weakest Russian team in the past 30 years without a single star in the list.*' The edition called the manner of the Russians' game '*a rustic, archaic, and outdated.*'

As follows from the analyzed examples, the change of the pragmatic focus contributes to the negativity of the media image of Russia.

Conclusion

The constructing of a negative media image of Russia and Russians is considered as a project of modern Western media, due to the influence of non-linguistic factors. The media create not just the image of a country that personifies war, chaos, they belittle it with the help of irony, emotional and evaluative vocabulary and lexical means, showing that the threat comes from weakness. Foreign media have very little interest in domestic politics. They mainly write about the role of Russia on the world stage, about its relationship with other countries. At the same time, the topic and content of the news depend on the political situation at the current time. Thus, in the conditions of the current conflict political situation, Western media form a linguistic means, a negative image of Russia.

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