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FUNCTION OF VERBAL INFLUENCE AS MEANS TO MANIFEST HUMANS' MENTAL WORLD IN SEMANTICS OF LANGUAGE UNITS (MASS MEDIA LANGUAGE AS EXAMPLE)

E.I. Glinchevskiy

В статье раскрывается сущность функции речевого воздействия как средства яркого, инвариантного семантического наполнения единиц английского языка, которые являются вербальной манифестацией представлений людей о явлениях окружающего мира и их отношения к ним. Приводится авторская типология речевого воздействия как функции речи; показано, что в отношении богатства и разнообразия коннотативных значений языковых единиц язык СМИ нередко не уступает языку художественной литературы.

This article reveals the essence of the function of verbal influence as a means to provide a vivid, diverse semantic filling of the English language units, which act as a verbal manifestation of humans' perception of events and phenomena occurring in the real world and of their attitudes towards them. The article provides the author's typology of verbal influence as a speech function; it also proves that the media language is as rich in diverse and extraordinary connotative meanings of language units as the language of artistic literature.

Ключевые слова: речевое воздействие, язык СМИ, средства массовой информации, семантика, концепт, концептосфера, коннотативные значения, денотативные значения, вербальная манифестация.

Key words: verbal influence, media language, mass media, semantics, concept, conceptosphere, connotative meanings, denotative meanings, verbal manifestation.

Any language is a universal system of signs potentially capable of reflecting practically everything that composes the real world; the semantic contents of its units are able to include a vast variety of connotative meanings and shades, which reflect humans' knowledge of the external, objectively existing world and their attitudes towards them. Thanks to a natural language, people are able not only to produce utterances, but also to share their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and emotions. Any language is closely related to what people think and feel.

"...language and thought are not strictly coterminous. At best language can but be the outward facet of thought on the highest, most generalized, level of symbolic expression. To put our viewpoint somewhat differently, language is primarily a pre-rational function. It humbly works up to the thought that is latent in, that may eventually be read into, its classifications and its forms; it is not, as is generally but naïvely assumed, the final label put upon, the finished thought" [13].

Thus, according to E. Sapir, any language becomes a mirror and a tool of human thinking. In our view, his concepts coincide with the following utterance by A. Beliy:

"The process of cognition is establishing relations between words... A word creates a third world – the world of language symbols, which links the wordless, invisible world, which crowds in the depths of my personal conscience, with the wordless world of my personality... There is neither a world, nor a learner beyond a word" [2][1].

The role of language in reflecting humans' internal mental world is also outlined by other researchers, in particular, by S.G. Ter-Minasova.

"A language reflects the real world; it creates its own world image, which is specific and unique for every language" [15, p. 38]. "Contents, semantics, and meaning of language units (first of all those of a word), is a correlation between a sound (or a graphic) complex and an object or a phenomenon of the real world. Language semantics reveals a path from the world of language into the proper world of reality" [15, p. 47].

One should say that the present-day Linguistics has already gained such a firmly established notion as a **concept** – an aggregate reflection of both objectively existing and subjective distinctive features that are attributable to **a certain object** or **a certain phenomenon**, which exist in the human conscience and which may be verbalized in the semantic contents of units of any language. Thus, any particular concept verbalized by means of this or that language creates that very "third world" mentioned by A. Beliy. As for the notion "semantics" mentioned by S.G. Ter-Minasova, according to Ch. Morris [9], that is one of the three main dimensions in which a language sign exists; semantics is responsible for any link between a signifier and a signified; it is an aggregate of both denotative and connotative meanings of a language unit, whereas all those meanings make up the content plane of a language sign and verbalize the corresponding concept.

Now that the link between the semantics of a human language and the human internal mental world has been specified, the author of this article is approaching the next key point: what is the very essence of the verbal influence function and what is its particular role in the verbal manifestation of a concept?

First of all, one should mention the notion "verbal activities" introduced by L.V. Scherba [14] and by A.A. Leontyev [8]. That is an aggregate system of verbal utterances of the human society; that is the cornerstone for any sort of human activities. Like any other sort of human activities, verbal activities have got their own goals and functions. Those functions have been determined by V.V. Vinogradov [17] – communicating, inform-

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[1] Here and below, all the citations are provided in a word-for-word English translation from the Russian originals listed in the References below (except for E. Sapir's above citation, which is provided in its English original).

ing, and influencing. Let us provide a definition for the latter function. According to L.L. Fedorova, verbal influence is "a unidirectional speech action whose content is social influence exerted by a speaker upon a listener during their communication" [4, p. 46]. As for the role of this function in forming the language semantics, one could cite the following utterance by V.F. Petrenko:

"...verbal influence deals with altering an individual conscience, or, which is synonymic for us, with altering an implicit world image" [11, p. 325].

This citation has common links with the following citations: "...influence exerted by a text may cause essential changes in a reader's psychology, a reformed system of their values, transformations of their life worlds" [1, p. 26].

"The genuine function of expressivity tools in a text is to create the meaning" [5, p. 6].

One should pay particular attention to the latter citation: verbal influence is performed by means of certain language means, which are basically the well-known lingvostylistic devices that are applied in practically any masterpiece of artistic literature. **The function performed by lingvostylistic means of verbal influence is that they provide a vivid marking for the semantic contents of language units, which verbalize this or that concept, thus magnifying their influencing function and allowing a mass medium to carry its attitude towards the occurring events down to its audience.**

Yet, the language of artistic literature is not the only style of speech where such means of expressivity are applied. There is another language area – the language of mass media, where those means are also applied quite frequently. Playing an exceptional role in the human society's overall verbal activities, mass media implement all the three basic functions of speech specified by V.V. Vinogradov. Mass media do not only inform people of occurring events; they also evaluate those events, thus stimulating the mass audience to change their attitudes towards the reflected events and phenomena of the surrounding reality. Due to the huge role of mass media played in the life of the present-day human society, Yu.V. Rozhdestvensky [12] determines the mass communication as one of the four main groups of speech utterances, which form the entire range of verbal activities performed by the human society.

Since mass media implement are not only functions of communicating and informing, but also those of influencing, it means that they cannot but apply means of expressive speech in order to induce the mass audience to evaluate occurring events in a certain way. Accordingly, the mass media language is frequently as rich in stylistic devices as that of artistic literature. Similarly to the latter language, the mass media one frequently uses lingvostylistic means of expressivity – stylistic figures and tropes; their application helps to provide a powerful verbal influence upon the mass audience. Such expressivity means help to fill the semantic contents of language units with rich, variable meanings. Yet, one should answer the following question: what is the nature of verbal influence, when such means are applied?

Let us provide the following scale scheme of different types of verbal influence (VI) that has been developed by the author of this paper (the criterion is the goal of exerting influence) [6, p. 82] (Fig. 1).
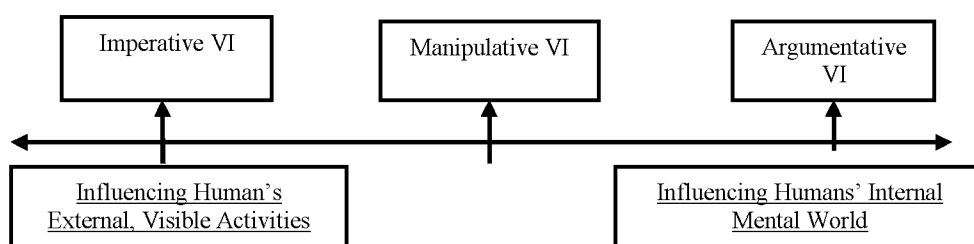

Fig. 1

As for the imperative type of VI, it aims mainly at human actions, at people's visible activities that are performed by means of real actions, not by means of a word (e.g. orders, requests, directions, etc.). Concerning the manipulative VI, one should say that it aims mainly at the human subconsciousness; it is based upon hypnosis and upon neurolinguistic programming, when a manipulator intends to obtain what he/she wants another person to do, e.g. to buy certain goods or to use certain services, as it is in advertising texts. As for the argumentative influence, it aims at people's conscience; its target is not to get a benefit quickly, but to convince a message addressee that the addressor's view-point is right. For that, rational arguments are generally applied.

"Argumentation is not possible without mutual understanding: one can accept and one cannot accept their partners' arguments only after they have been understood and correlated with their own interests and beliefs" [10, p. 89].

The complicated meaning structure of most mass media texts causes the argumentative, not the manipulative nature of verbal influence taking place in them.

"Texts with a complicated structure of meaning are the most entropic ones; hence, numerous ways of developing their meanings are possible: an addressee is free to interpret its meanings, and this is the very condition to exert influence successfully" [16, p. 43].

Therefore, it is texts where the argumentative verbal influence manifests itself that contain numerous, variable, subjectively attributed meanings and shades of language units, i.e. all what composes the semantic contents of a language unit. But could one say that any mass media text manifests argumentative verbal influence?

To answer this question, one should remark the following crucial thing: not all the mass media texts apply lingvostylistic means of expressivity – admittedly, there is a significant difference between short news texts and large-volume feature texts and commentaries. Professor T. Dobrosklonskaya, who is one the founders of the Russian Media Linguistics, determines the following four types of mass media texts and positions them on the following scale "Informing VS. Influencing" [3] (Fig. 2).
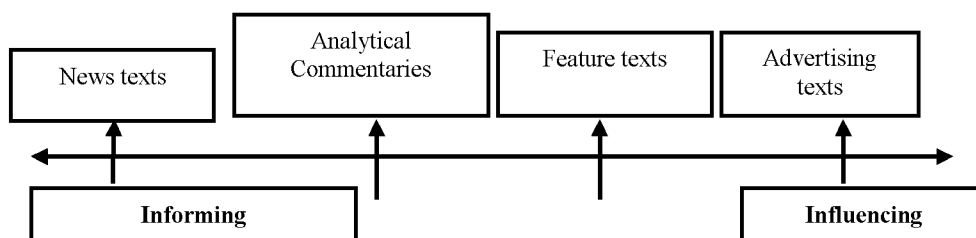

Fig. 2

Although it is advertising media texts that apply the influencing function in the maximal degree, one should remark that this function is of a somewhat different nature there, rather than in features and in analytical commentaries. It is of manipulative and of imperative nature there; first of all, it induces a person to actions dealing with an immediate purchase of advertised goods and services. As for features and commentaries, verbal influence is primarily of argumentative character there, i.e. the lingvostylistic means of VI applied in them help to provide well-grounded, valid view-points of their authors. As for language units where such VI means are applied, they acquire a rich meaning, a large variety of connotative nuances and shades, and thanks to that their influencing role is increasing significantly. Thus, these are the two types of media texts which may become a practical material to analyze the verbal manifestation of concepts in the mass media language.

Therefore, it becomes possible to state that the mass media language provides a vivid, variable manifestation of concepts of objects and phenomena in the mass media language (in particular, in analytical commentaries and in features). This manifestation may occur at all the four main levels of a language; yet, naturally, it occurs primarily at the lexical and at the syntactical levels.

Let us describe the peculiar semantic features of units of the English language, which verbalise a definite phenomenon of the real world – the international terrorism – and which attribute certain features to it [7]. Such language units serve as certain examples of such a verbal manifestation in mass media texts due to means of argumentative VI (i.e. ling-vostylistic devices) that are applied in them.

First of all, one should remark that lingvostylistic devices may be used at all the four basic language levels in the mass media language, similarly to the language of artistic texts. Admittedly, they are applied most frequently at the lexical and at the syntactic levels; yet, they may be applied at the levels of morphology and graphics as well. Here is a good example of how the seme "danger" is represented in an English-language media text:

"Certainly, the al-Qaida organization represents the embodiment of some kind of a network of global terrorism... And **it's dangerous. It's dangerous in a lot of places**"[1] (The frightening evolution of al-Qaida // Newsweek 24.06.2005).

The applied anadiplosis (being a means of verbal influence at the level of syntax) provides a vivid representation of two semes simultaneously – "globalism" and "danger", as features relevant to this phenomenon.

Another example of representing the seme "globalism" in the English language:

"**International** terrorism is an **international** problem and needs **international** cooperation" (How to catch a terrorist half a world away // Christian Science Monitor 03.11.2000).

While reflecting the phenomenon of the world terrorism, means of VI may reveal such a seme as "contrast", which is manifesting a very distinct contrast. This is what an author of an article published in the Christian Science Monitor writes: "Terrorists see the world in **Manichean, black-and-white** terms" (To fight terrorism, you must know your enemy.05/09/2006). The two highlighted attributes of undoubtedly metaphoric character reflect the seme of contrast very distinctly. Evidently, the author of the cited example expresses their opinion by means of the English language: terrorists absolutize everything, thus contrasting themselves to the rest of the world ("anyone who is not with us is against us, and so they all shall be annihilated physically").

The triple application of the lexeme "international", being a lingvostylistic device of the lexical level (as a lexical repetition), enforces the represented seme "globalism".

Two paragraphs below, the same author writes: "Their motivation can be summed up in a three-word phrase, according to Richardson: **Re**venge, **Re**nown, **Re**action" (ibid). Two means of VI (a homeology at the morphologic level combined with application of capital letters as a means of the graphical level) also exert powerful influence upon readers. In our opinion, one should pay special attention to two semes that the words "Revenge" and "Renown" contain, as they provide a vivid manifestation of the seme "revenge" and of the already mentioned seme "globalism", since being renowned means performing one's activities in such scales that one becomes well-known for numerous people (which is certainly attributable to the phenomenon of the world terrorism).

One cannot but mention a wide-scale occurrence of such closely-related semes as "mourning", "grief", and "sorrow" in English-language media texts. At that, the verbal influence is becoming especially emotional, whereas its means acquire special expressivity. The highlighted epithets below emphasize that:

"In Shankswille, the weather matched the **mournful** mood" (Sept. 11, five years later: We stand together // Newsweek. 11.09.2006).

"**Tearful**, private ceremony... Names of all the victims were read one by one as many in crowd **wept**..." (London marks 1-year anniversary of carnage//Newsweek 07.07.2006).

"**You had to laugh** when one boy threw up his hands in frustration after flubbing a name. **You had to cry** when one girl, after reading her father's name, **lamented**, "We miss you **sooo** much".

You had to stare as, two by two, with their freckles and braces, their cracking voices and hesitant pronunciations, kids of many nationalities, ethnicities, races, religions and

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[1] Here and below, all the words in the cited media texts applied to represent the applied means of argumentative verbal influence are highlighted in bold by the author of this paper.

sizes stood bravely at the microphone and spoke their loved ones' names" (Tears Rush back... // USA Today. 09.11.2003). The applied triple anaphora (at the level of syntax), the stretched word "sooo" (at the phonetic level), and application of the words that act as key words to represent the corresponding semes (at the lexical level) – all these VI means do not only exert a powerful impact upon the readers – they also amplify the represented semes "mourning" and "grief".

And finally, it makes sense to mention a bright comparison of the international terrorism with a character that used to exist during the Old Testament times – Amalek, as with personified evil. Amalek attacked the Israelis who were fleeing from the Egyptian slavery and slew numerous innocent people – the elderly, children, women, who were unable to protect themselves (Deut. 25:17-19). Here is an example how terrorism is allegorically compared with Amalek, as with mean cowards who slay the innocent.

"What made Amalek so **dastardly** was that unlike any other enemy who attacked the Israelites fleeing slavery in Egypt from the front, Amalek attacked the rear. This meant that his soldiers could kill **women and children, the elderly and the infirm** and in so doing avoid engagement with the soldiers at the front. In this way he could produce **maximum carnage and maximum terror**. The moral problem the Bible addresses is that this **is not warfare, it is the slaughter of innocents – it is terrorism**" (What the Bible says about fighting terrorism // Newsweek. 19.07.2006).

Besides the allegory, this fragment contains other lingvostylistic means of verbal influence – the epithet "dastardly", the lexical repetition "maximum", the syntactic parallelisms "women and children, the elderly people and the infirm, maximum carnage and maximum terror", which state distinctly and unequivocally that cowardice is a feature of both Amalek and international terrorists. Thus, the seme "cowardice" is becoming easy to reveal. This example also reveals such key semes as "blood" and "terror" ("horror") by means of emotionally colored words "carnage", "slaughter", "warfare", and "terror" (all simultaneously being means of VI at the level of lexics).

Therefore, vivid, variable filling the language units that characterise the phenomenon of the international terrorism may certainly take place in a natural language as a universal system of signs that combine the form and the contents (which may be very emotional and which may represent bright, peculiar images emerging in one's mind). There may be different semes represented by means of variable lingvostylistic devices at different language levels; but the very essence remains the same: it is lingvostylistic means of argumentative verbal influence (applied at different language levels) that fill the content plane of language units with numerous bright, variable meanings and shades. That could be said not only about the language of artistic literature, but about the mass media language as well.

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