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Manifestations of Speech Aggression in the Creativity of "Literaturnaya Gazeta" Television Critics (Russia)

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Abstract

The article investigates the examples of verbal aggression manifestations in publicistic texts that assess the modern broadcasting practice and the content of the main Russian television companies, "Literaturnaya gazeta", one of the popular weekly periodicals in Russia. In each issue of this newspaper, several articles were published with an assessment of the quality of television broadcasts. Having studied the archives of "Literaturnaya gazeta" issues (260 in total) for the period of 2012-2016, we found 842 articles containing both positive and negative evaluations of TV shows, the work of the TV show hosts and the trends of modern federal television broadcasting. Using the methods of "Literaturnaya gazeta" continuous monitoring, a quantitative and a content analysis of its articles and the comparison of the articles of television critics published in different years, we found out that a large part of the analyzed articles, the thing was about television programs and famous persons taking part in them. Having analyzed the style of information presentation in the publications of television critics of "Literaturnaya gazeta", we found out that verbal aggression over the chronological period of the research was one of the frequently used methods to develop a negative public opinion about the practice of the main Russian television channel functioning. In 2012-2016 this language phenomenon was applied in relation to television programs, television personalities and to characterize a social-political situation in the country where Russian television operates. We believe that the regular appeal of critics to verbal aggression testifies to the desire of "Literaturnaya gazeta" authors to influence the audience more emotionally than rationally and follow a simple path, revealing and replicating the negative.

Keywords: Media criticism, Television criticism, Journalism, Television, Evaluation, Speech aggression, Review, Opinion, Ethics of criticism, "Literaturnaya gazeta".

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Introduction

The purpose of the article is to identify and to study the examples of verbal aggression manifestation in the articles of the "Literaturnaya gazeta", which assess the current practice of broadcasting and the content of the main Russian television companies.

Television criticism, like any other trend in journalism, is a creative activity. Its subject is specific: "the current multi-faceted social functioning of modern TV companies of different levels" (Korochensky, 2004). This work is related with an assessment development concerning the quality of television programs, the effectiveness of media text impact on the audience, the conformity of television content level to the expectations and the requests of viewers, etc. We believe that tv critics is designed for a sympathetic audience that can think, learn, listen to someone else's opinion, be able to argue, but also has an artistic and aesthetic taste. Alas, not every person has such characteristics today.

Television criticism organically belongs to such a journalistic trend as media criticism, by which we mean the definition given by A.P. Korochensky (2002): "The field of modern journalism, which carries out the critical analysis and the evaluation of media texts and the whole complex of problems concerning the social functioning of the media. ... A constant audit of social-cultural and other norm activities in the sphere of mass communication is carried out, which contributes to the renewal and the development of media culture".

In this article, under the term "speech aggression", we are guided by the definition, given by O.N. Bykova (1999): "a form of verbal behavior aimed at insult or deliberately causing harm to a person, a group of people, an organization or a community as a whole".

"Literary Newspaper" is a weekly newspaper published since 1830. In the late 1980s it published the articles containing not only the analysis and evaluation of television programs, but also the discussion of Soviet central television professional status of that time. The discussions involved leading observers, writers, directors, the representatives of other television professions. Gradually, critics began to perform their expertises. Currently, "Literaturnaya gazeta" is the only social-political publication in Russia, each issue of which publishes several media texts, both with the assessment of various broadcast quality, and the work or behavior of TV show hosts and/or guests invited to a studio.

Along with professional journalists or critics, the pages of this newspaper published notes and reviews of ordinary people who did not remain indifferent to what they saw on a screen. Our research problem is to identify the level of episodic manifestations of verbal aggression in the articles of both professional and non-professional critics. Speech aggression can be used by authors as the means of expression, as well as the keeping of an audience attention or even as

the stimulation for a dialogue, the expression of one's thoughts, for example, by publishing their thoughts in the next issue of the newspaper. In our opinion, speech aggression is a form of influence on the creators of television content, in our case on the audience of the analyzed broadcasts. We were also interested in the degree of verbal aggression justification during the evaluation of Russian television content, and what articles have more aggression (professional or non-professional ones).

The results of our study complement the findings by V. O'Donnell (2017), S. Craft, T.P. Vos, J.D. Wolfgang (2015), A.A. Berger (2013), P.B. Orlik (2014), J.R. Linder, K.A. Lyle (2011), A.S. Rancer, T.A. Avtgis (2006) in the field of lexical-stylistic quality of television criticism on the pages of one of the popular Russian social and political newspapers. The results of the study may be included in the programs for television critic training at universities, advanced training courses or short-term creative seminars as a negative example of the qualitative examination implementation in respect of television programs or projects.

Methods

The empirical base of the research was the publications of television critics in the weekly public political periodical "Literaturnaya gazeta" during 2012-2016. This is one of the few federal publications, the editorial board of which has been analyzing television content regularly since 1989, revealing creative successes/failures and determining the trends and the patterns of federal TV company functioning practice. Each issue of "Literaturnaya gazeta" publishes several reviews about TV shows, as well as the work of leading different TV programs on the site in the section "Television".

260 issues of this periodical were studied in total during this period, in which 842 articles were published containing both negative and positive assessments of television programs, the work of television presenter or the tendencies of modern television broadcasting. We used the following methods during the study:

1. Continuous monitoring of the section "Television" in "Literaturnaya gazeta" to identify the articles containing the analysis of broadcasting practice at federal television companies and the evaluation of television broadcast quality.
2. The quantitative analysis of the identified articles, which made it possible to establish the following: the number of articles evaluating the practice of modern TV company operation published in "Literaturnaya gazeta" for each year of the study; Secondly, to identify the prevailing evaluation base (the articles with both a positive and a negative evaluation, and without evaluation (the so-called neutral media texts)) both for each year of the study and in

the general array of identified articles. The facts of verbal aggression manifestation were calculated by articles, and not by each case.

3. The meaningful analysis of articles containing television criticism. This method allowed us to study more deeply the content of authors' evaluations concerning this or that media work; the degree of a critic objectivity / subjectivity in his work; the lexical-stylistic originality of every television critic speeches in "Literaturnaya gazeta".

4. The lexical-stylistic analysis of the articles containing the quality assessment of television broadcast or the work of a television presenter. This method allowed us to reveal the possible presence, examples and frequency of verbal aggression manifestation in the publications of television critics.

Results and discussion

1. During the study period of the articles with the evaluation of TV programs were published regularly in the "Literaturnaya gazeta". In 2012, 161 articles were published, in 2013 - 164, in 2014 - 176, in 2015 - 172 and in 2016 - 169. A negative assessment contained in 758 articles (90% of the total number of articles identified in five years) became the prevailing assessment of the article authors in relation to the quality of content of the main Russian television companies. We found only 59 (7%) and 25 (3%) articles which did not contain a predominant evaluation of a critic in relation to the content of the programs or the work of their creative team.

2. Speech aggression was revealed in 677 articles (in 80.4% of the total number) of the "Literaturnaya gazeta", whose authors were both the staff members of the editorial board, who published their reviews regularly, and also the representatives of the audience who wrote their notes or mini-reviews for the rubric "Sending". Most manifestations of verbal aggression (74%) were revealed by us in reviews, articles and surveys of the newspaper staff authors. One article could contain several facts of verbal aggression manifestation. Not all vocabulary containing the means of artistic expressiveness had verbal aggression, the marker of its manifestation for us was the presence of a strong emotional impact (close to insult) within a word or a sentence in relation to specific individuals. This linguistic phenomenon was sometimes used even in media texts with a positive assessment of television programs or television broadcasting tendencies and relied mostly on the description of a social-political situation in which a reviewed television project was aired. Speech aggression was absent in congratulatory notes or in small creative portraits, whose authors wrote exclusively about the

merits of a particular television journalist or a head of a creative studio, and sometimes briefly reported their impressions about the programs.

3. Speech aggression as the tool of an overall assessment development concerning the practice of broadcasting was often not contained in the retelling of program episodes or serial scenes, but in their interpretation by critics. The manifestations of verbal aggression were often contained in nouns ("subversive", "scammers", "animators", "dirty tricksters", "hooligans", "traitors"), verbs ("hung," "terrorized", "tortured," "mocked", "will understand"), numerous adjectives and participles (for example, "vile", "enemy like", etc.). Sometimes verbal aggression was also contained in author neologisms.

4. Speech aggression in the articles of television critics was, first of all, the instrument for the development of authoritative, subjective evaluation of a specific television project and/or the quality of a program presenter work or the manners of invited studio guests. Secondly, this linguistic phenomenon is the tool for the development of a negative public opinion about a specific TV program and its author collective, a media person, administration and the management of TV companies and the modern practice of federal TV company broadcasting as a whole.

For example, a meaningful analysis of the "Literaturnaya gazeta" showed that its television critics had a negative attitude toward the activities of opposition representatives, regularly criticizing them with few appearances in the newscasts of Russian TV channels (in the programs of other formats from the main Russian television companies, the opposition did not participate as a rule). In these cases, verbal aggression served as the tool for the development of a negative public opinion about opposition representatives, emotionally reinforcing the arguments of critics. Thus, speech aggression has become one of the tools for the development of an oppositionist stereotype in Russian society as a negative hero of modern Russia, a man who thinks only of himself and seeks power to satisfy his ambitions. We believe that in these episodes the television critics of the "Literaturnaya gazeta" exceeded their professional powers, switching their attention from the necessary reasoned analysis of TV shows and television tendencies to the search for negative components among the oppositionists.

The second example: the facts of verbal aggression manifestation from the television critics of the "Literaturnaya gazeta" in relation to the authors of modern entertainment programs and serials. Despite the fact that in this case, there was less verbal aggression than in the first example, softer lexical means were used, but the colloquial style and popular language were applied (for example: "dumb" (public), "eating and laughing" (European country), "Fools" (songwriters), etc.), the made an emotional impact on the audience, in our opinion.

Thus, speech aggression can also be characterized as a tool manipulating with the audience attention with a subsequent impact on a person's consciousness. After all, using this linguistic phenomenon a point of view or an evaluation that is beneficial to the author of the article is imposed on a reader.

5. Speech aggression in the articles of "Literaturnaya gazeta" television critics was also used as the way of the audience attention attraction and keeping. It was presented regularly in the headlines of the articles and its leads, tuning the audience to the emotional "wave" needed by the author of the article. The analysis of the content showed that, the first words of an article showed the general intonation of the tele-critic usually in relation to the object and the subject of the study. Here are just some of the names of the materials: "Innocent shall be punished, and guilty will be rewarded", "War is lost?", "Makarovshchina", "Aggression of infantilism", "Telefool day", "Vanya, go home?" These examples contain the negative assessments of the discussed facts and phenomena of federal television broadcasting.

6. A regular appeal to linguistic aggression testifies to the desire of "Literary Newspaper" television critics to influence the audience more emotionally than rationally and to follow a simple path, revealing and replicating the negative. Criticizing television for the abundance of negative aspects, the correspondents of "Literaturnaya gazeta" identified and discussed the negative examples from the practice of the main Russian TV company broadcasting by themselves in order to achieve their communicative tasks, instead of presenting positive examples of TV broadcasting to the audience. The analysis of TV critic article contents of this newspaper showed that they had an obvious semantic preponderance towards the development of a negative evaluation of Russian television content quality, and the positive facts of broadcasting were rarely reported. Critics were ready to criticize television authors more than to praise them. This raises our doubts that television critics have observed the necessary objectivity during the discussion and the interpretation of television program content and the work of television journalists. We believe that through the use of verbal aggression use in their texts, critics will not receive respect for their work on the part of the authors or television program presenters, because the aggressiveness of the narrative should not substitute for argumentation and constructive criticism.

At present, television criticism in Russia regularly appears on the pages of more than ten publications. The analysis quality of journalist work and television content in other mass media will reveal further research.

Conclusion

The results of our study confirm the findings by M.A. Kormilitsyna and O.B. Sirotinina (2007), N.E. Petrova, L.V. Ratsiburskaya (2011) that speech aggression is one of the main features of modern media language. At least this can be confirmed by the example of the creative work as the television critics of the "Literaturnaya gazeta" in Russia. The results obtained by us also supplement the studies by P.B. Orlik (2014), the conclusions about the current state of media (in particular television) criticism in the modern Russian press and concretize the research by N.I. Leonov (2012), who proposed to consider the manifestations of verbal aggression in two types: motivational and instrumental one. We have revealed that the manifestations of verbal aggression in the television criticism of the "Literaturnaya gazeta" are instrumental and are aimed at the development of a negative public opinion of the audience about the quality of the main Russian television company content and the work of their journalists. If the authors of the articles spoke in them about something positive in relation to the object of their research, then under the influence of emotionally strong lexical units containing verbal aggression, positive facts could be shaded to the background without an impact on the audience. Also following S. Craft, T.P. Vos and J.D. Wolfgang (2015), A. Kaun (2014), and A.A. Berger (2013) we believe that the media (in particular television) critics should always present objective conclusions about the quality of the modern broadcasting of television companies and the work of journalists to the audience.

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