

Representation of Ethnic Conflict in the Media in the Post-Soviet Period

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Mass media with the help of language form the picture of the world among readers, listeners, spectators. For this reason, studies of the representation of ethnic problems and issues in the media are important as the media is special linguistic tool to influence public opinion. The tradition of analyzing the media and identifying the main ways of representing ethnic problems was formed in the 1970s. Scientifically-based monitoring of Russian media activities in such a delicate and painful area as coverage of various aspects of inter-ethnic interaction is necessary and very much in demand. We believe that the range of tools used by media to shape attitudes to different ethnic conflicts and problems is very diverse. The main working hypothesis of the study was the assumption that the style of presenting information on ethnic issues has changed significantly over the post-Soviet period, and the media place considerable emphasis on the emotional component. To achieve this, appropriate graphics (photos, pictures) and catchy emotional headlines should be used. Content analysis of more than 300 publications in the electronic newspaper “Arguments and facts” and on the portal “Fontanka.ru” showed that it is not so. Dramatic techniques, catchy headlines with a large number of emotional statements were peculiar to the period of the 90s, while after 2010 there has been an increase in the number of articles in a neutral style, and the range of covered issues has widened. To a large extent, the choice of events for media coverage depends on editorial policy and is related to the adoption of the agenda.

Keywords: ethnic conflict, media, content analysis, dramatization, manipulation, migrant phobia.

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Репрезентации этнического конфликта в средствах массовой информации в постсоветский период

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Средства массовой информации с помощью языковых средств формируют картину мира у читателей, слушателей, зрителей. Вопрос о такой взаимозависимости очень подробно и обстоятельно рассматривает в своих работах Дж. Лакофф. Он полагает, что через различные языковые конструкции (например, метафоры) происходит конструирование отношения к различным явлениям. Актуальность исследования репрезентации этнических проблем и вопросов в средствах массовой информации определяется тем, что СМИ представляют собой особый языковой инструмент влияния на общественное мнение. Традиция анализа средств массовой информации и выявления основных способов репрезентации этнических проблем сформировалась еще в 1970-х гг. Научно обоснованное наблюдение за деятельностью российских СМИ в такой деликатной и болезненной сфере, как освещение разных аспектов межэтнического взаимодействия, необходимо и очень востребовано. Спектр инструментов, используемых средствами массовой информации для формирования отношения к различным этническим конфликтам и проблемам, весьма разнообразен. Особый интерес представляет динамика изменений репрезентаций проблематики этнического конфликта в средствах массовой информации. Способы репрезентации этнических конфликтов в начале 1990-х и середине 2000-х гг. существенно различались. Основной рабочей гипотезой исследования стало предположение о том, что за постсоветский период стиль подачи информации по этнической проблематике существенно изменился и средства массовой информации делают значительный акцент при их освещении на эмоциональную составляющую. Для этого используются соответствующие графические изображения (фотографии, картинки), броские эмоциональные заголовки. Контент-анализ более 300 публикаций в электронной газете «Аргументы и факты» и на портале «Фонтанка.ру» показал, что это не так. Приемы драматизации, броских заголовков с большим числом эмоциональных высказываний свойственны именно периоду 1990-х гг., тогда как после 2010 г. происходит увеличение числа статей нейтрального характера, значительно расширяется спектр освещаемых событий.

Ключевые слова: этнический конфликт, средства массовой информации, контент-анализ, драматизация, манипуляция, мигрантофобия.

Modern mass media play an important role in the life of society; they largely form the overall picture of the world for the average person bringing to the agenda some events and facts and hiding others. Lazarsfeld, Merton, Lasswell, McQuail¹ wrote about this influence. In many ways, it is the media that form a certain attitude to different ethnic groups, ethnic conflicts in the mass consciousness. The study of the role of mass media in the formation of public opinion is a very relevant trend for many sciences.

¹ See for example: Lasswell H. D., Satis K. A. Political Communication: The Public Language of Political Elites in India and the United States. New York, 1969; Merton R., Lazarsfeld P. Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action. New York, 1948. P. 95–118; McQuail D. Media Performance: Mass Communication and the public interest. London, 1992.

Harold Lasswell in the first half of the 20th century formulated the concept of the influence of the media on public opinion. This concept received a beautiful name of the theory of the “magic bullet” and although later the author recognized that it was false, some of its points have not lost their relevance until now. One of the most important theses formulated by H. Lasswell was the assumption that individuals who control the media control society as a whole as through the media they have a direct impact on the audience, its opinions, views, attitudes.

In the most extreme form, the thesis of the influence of the media on public opinion and consciousness can be formulated through the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis². According to linguistic determinism, the influence of language is not in its impact on internal processes and mechanisms of thinking, but in the participation of language in the formation of a global verbal representation of the world, which determines the understanding of the world by person.

According to the researchers, thinking and understanding of the environment simply cannot be “independent” of our language as we think either with the help of non-verbal images or with the help of concepts. Therefore, our thoughts are literally either images of words (verbal images that have meaning or concepts) or other (nonverbal) images and sensations.

At least for this reason, our conceptualization of reality, and, consequently, our thinking, in principle, cannot be independent of the concepts and constructions of them. It is through them and in them that we not only represent the world around us, but also understand it. Thus, we can say that the mass media with the help of language form the picture of the world among readers, listeners and viewers. The question of such interdependence is very detailed and thoroughly considered by George Lakoff in his works: he believed that through various linguistic constructions (for example, metaphors) we create the relationship to different phenomena. Human verbal thinking is obviously dependent on language as it is built from the images of his words, which have verbal meanings, quite clear and rigidly fixed in the language in the form of language structures³.

Studies into media influence have their own history and are recognized by the scholars worldwide. The same concerns the media influence in representing ethnical issues. V. K. Malkova notes that the tradition of analyzing the media and identifying the main ways of representing ethnic problems was formed in the 1970s. She rightly says that scientifically-based monitoring of the activities of the Russian media in such a delicate and painful area as the coverage of various aspects of inter-ethnic interaction is necessary and very much in demand⁴.

But she also emphasizes that today there is no clear view of the problem and the methodology of its study. All research work on the analysis of the media and the problems of ethnicity in the media can be divided into several areas that are not related to each other:

Philology and linguistics. Within the framework of this direction, the research into linguistic techniques, representation of ethnic problems and ethnic conflicts prevails.

² Whorf B. L. Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. Massachusetts institute of technology. Cambridge, 2012.

³ Lakoff G., Johnson M. Metaphors We Live by. Chicago, 1980.

⁴ Malkova V. K. Sovremennye etnicheskie SMI kak instrument konsolidatsii etnicheskikh soobshchestv // Etnograficheskoe obozrenie. 2009. No. 1. P. 144.

Here it is necessary to point out, first of all, such researchers as V. B. Kashkin, L. V. Enina, A. G. Osipov⁵.

1. Journalism, ethics of journalism. This area is dominated by studies of a journalistic nature, which are aimed at creating the right attitudes in the journalistic environment to the coverage of ethnic issues, and at avoiding promotion of xenophobia. In this type of works such terms and categories as "language of envy", "language of consent" are most often used. This direction is represented by the works of authors such as I. I. Zasurskii, I. M. Dzialoshinskii, E. V. Chepkina⁶.

2. Sociological, ethnological direction. In this direction, one can find direct socio-logical analysis of the representation of ethnic problems in the media on the basis of quantitative methods, for example, content analysis. The works by A. V. Semenova, M. V. Korsunskaya, L. M. Drobizheva, V. K. Malkova, V. A. Tishkov are the main in this field⁷.

3. The direction of political analysis. In this field the discourse of political actors is usually analyzed, and ethnical problems are included in political sphere as acute issues. For example, the representations of historical past and present in media is the subject of research for A. M. Barsukov⁸. The role of Ukrainian media and representations of Russia in them are the focus of analysis for S. V. Kozlov and D. V. Bereznikov⁹.

It should be noted that foreign researches in the field of mass media and its influence on the ethnic issues have channelled their efforts in the same direction.

It is necessary to make a brief overview of recent researches. Foreign analysts in multi-ethnic communities study mainly issues related to ethnic minorities, their lives and civil rights. As a rule, ethnic problems in the media are considered from the point of view of journalistic ethics. The journalistic community itself, various structures of civil society, human rights activists and ordinary people are not always concerned with the strict adherence to the principles of professional ethics by journalists covering ethnicity. Given the great ethno-cultural and political importance of the dissemination of ethnic infor-

⁵ Enina L. V. Etnicheskai tolerantnost' v otrazhenii uralskikh gazet // Kulturnye praktiki tolerantnosti v rechevoi kommunikatsii: Kollektivnaia monogr. 2004. P. 150–164; Kashkin V. B., Shatalov D. G. Metafora kak sredstvo aktivnogo poznaniia // Iazyk, kommunikatsiya i sotsialnaia sreda. Voronezh, 2006. P. 94–102; Osipov A. G. Konstruirovaniie etnicheskogo konflikta i rasistskii diskurs // Rasizm v iazyke sotsialnykh nauk. St. Petersburg, 2002. P. 45–68.

⁶ Chepkina E. V. Russkii zhurnalistskii diskurs: tekstoporozhdaiushchie praktiki i kody. Ekaterinburg, 2000; Zasurskii I. I. Rossiiskaia zhurnalistika: iskushenie svobodoi. 1990–2007 g. Moscow, 2004; Zasurskii I. I. Internet i interaktivnye elektronnye media: issledovaniia // Sb. Laboratoriia mediakultury, kommunikatsii, konvergentsii i tsifrovyykh tekhnologii. MGU. Moscow, 2007; Dzialoshinskii I. M. Zhurnalist v posttotalitarniui epokhu. Moscow, 1999; Dzialoshinskii I. M. Manipulativnye tekhnologii v massmedia // Vestnik Moskovskogo universitetata. Seriia 10. Zhurnalistika. 2005. No. 1. P. 29–54.

⁷ Malkova V. K., Tishkov V. A. Etnichnost i tolerantnost' v sredstvakh massovoi informatsii. Moscow, 2002; Semenova A. V., Korsunskaya M. V. Kontent-analiz SMI: problemy i opyt primeniennia. Moscow, 2010; Sotsiologiya mezhetnicheskoi tolerantnosti. Moscow, 2003.

⁸ Barsukov A. M. Reprezentatsii istoricheskogo proshloga i nastoiaishchego v media sovremennoi Rossii // Kommunikativnaia kultura: istoriia i sovremennost': materialy VII Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii. Novosibirsk, 2017. P. 108–111.

⁹ Bereznikov D. V., Kozlov S. V. Simvolicheskai politika postsovetskoi Ukrayny: konstruirovaniie legitimiruiushchego narrativa. // Polis. Politicheskie issledovaniia. 2015. No. 4, pp. 34–45. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2015.04.05>; Kozlov S. V. Ukrainskie media v mekhanizme natsionalnoi simvolicheskoi politiki // Kommunikativnaia kultura: istoriia i sovremennost': materialy VII Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii. Novosibirsk, 2017. P. 10–12; Kozlov S. V. "Rossiia — eto medved', ob"iatia kotorogo vsegda opasny": konstruirovaniie Rossii v ukrainskikh regionalnykh media // Vestnik Novosibirskogo gosudarstvennogo universitetata. Seriia: Istoriiia, filologii. 2014. T. 13 (6): Zhurnalistika. P. 33–41.

mation in society, individual associations, guilds and other organizations of journalists addressing ethnic issues have been established in many countries. One of the basic topics is peace journalism¹⁰. The problem of covering delicate ethnical issues in articles without developing interethnic conflicts is discussed by O. Simić and her colleagues in the paper concerning peace psychology in the Balkans. In their research, they used critical discourse analysis of news-papers and in-depth interviews with journalists of papers analyzed. The crucial point of research concerned the beginning of war in former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. “Based on media representation, we can establish the key media strategy: the analyzed daily newspapers set the causes and the consequences of the event in question with different starting points. In the media and from the political point of view, the struggle for the starting point of the war is the crucial strategy for political legitimization of the war. The starting point of the war is equated with the guilt for war. In that, the media continue to be drawn into the advancement of values preferred by the ruling political elites. The war-time dichotomies continue to involve divisions between us — the victims — and them — the perpetrators”¹¹. So we see that it is rather difficult for the media to avoid the trap of analyzing ethnic problems in a “politically right way”.

The second actual issue for researchers is the representation of different ethnic groups in the multinational state. This is a pivotal problem for many countries: Israel¹², South Sudan¹³, Kazakhstan¹⁴, or Ukraine¹⁵.

The common ground for researches from different corners of the world is that mass-media influence and form ethnic stereotypes and attitudes towards different nations. C. Els summarizes that “the boundaries of nationhood and citizenship are discursively demarcated within the pages of the Daily Sun. By positioning the non-national as the archetypal stranger, and thus “the other” who threatens post-apartheid society and promises, the in-group/out-group delineation becomes the legitimate classification by which non-nationals are stigmatised and violated. By deploying the ubiquitous rhetoric of the “alien”, which in South Africa is equated with strangeness, criminality and unbelonging, nationhood is inscribed in such a manner that, within the discursive constructions of the Daily Sun, the non-national is positioned as the perpetual outsider”¹⁶.

Similar conclusions are presented by D. Tussupova in her paper. She examined different news-papers for different ethnic groups in Kazakhstan: the Uzbeks, Russians and Kazakhs. She wrote that, “Newspapers published in Kazakh were the most biased and the most critical of other ethnicities. The writers and editors of these publications usually

¹⁰ See, for example: Peace Psychology in the Balkans: Dealing with a Violent Past while Building Peace, Peace Psychology Book Series / eds O. Simić et al. New York, 2012; *Wibobo A. H. The Language of Media Supporting Peace Journalism // Jurnal Komunikasi Malaysian Journal of Communication. 2018. Vol. 34 (3). P. 349–360.*

¹¹ *Peace Psychology in the Balkans... P. 234.*

¹² *Huesmann L. R., Dubow E. F., Boxer P., Souweidane V., Ginges J. Foreign Wars and Domestic Prejudice: How Media Exposure to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Predicts Ethnic Stereotyping by Jewish and Arab American Adolescents // Journal of Research on Adolescence. 2012. No. 22(3). P. 556–570.*

¹³ *Els C. Constructing Xenophobic Discourses: The Case of the Daily Sun // Language Matters. 2013. Vol. 44, no. 2. P. 47–67.*

¹⁴ *Tussupova D. Mass Media and Ethnic Relations in Kazakhstan // Problems of Post-Communism. 2010. Vol. 57, no. 6. P. 32–45.*

¹⁵ *Bilaniuk L. Race, Media, and Postcoloniality: Ukraine between Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism // City & Society. 2016. Vol. 28, iss. 3. P. 341–364.*

¹⁶ *Els C. Constructing Xenophobic Discourses: The Case of the Daily Sun. P. 61.*

divided the population into “us” and “them”. The Kazakh press actively employed generalizations to appeal to Kazakh readers¹⁷.

Another essential direction of mass media research highlights of the problems of refugees. In this respect, such authors should be mentioned as S. de Poli, N. Jakobsson, S. Schüller, I. Kuznetsova, J. Round, M. Ambrosini, M. Del-Teso-Craviotto.

S. De Poli, N. Jakobsson and S. Schüller suggested that the salient media coverage of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean reduces xenophobic attitudes. They combined a randomized survey experiment with variation in interview timing. The results showed that media have not only the power to increase negative attitudes towards foreigners, but also to reduce negative attitudes — depending on whether immigrants are depicted as a threat or as victims¹⁸.

The influence of mass media on the attitudes is discussed in the work by I. Kuznetsova and J. Round, who suppose that “all of the problems migrants face, are exacerbated by the state and mass media’s construction of migrants as diseased and criminal, which in turn becomes embedded into cultural imaginations”¹⁹.

The brief review of latest mass media researches shows that there are diverse number of approaches and methods. The theoretical and methodological discrepancy we have identified does not provide a single and permanent basis for the study of the representation of ethnic problems in the media. V. K. Malkova rightly notes that “the research in this direction is conducted in general unilaterally — some scholars identify (mostly intuitively) certain elements of information — the so-called “language of envy”; the “image of the enemy”; materials “inciting ethnic strife”, whereas others show numerous examples of tolerant publications. However, the majority of studies is carried out in different techniques, which are hardly comparable and cannot be verified. The authors note the incomparability of the data, the uncertainty of the criteria for their evaluation with which “only the most common features of the language of envy” can be described²⁰.

The most common and methodologically developed are media studies on the problems of migrants. Here it is necessary to point out works by P. M. Fedorov, O. V. Saraeva, O. F. Varganova, V. A. Achkasov²¹.

Some of the research results should be considered in more details. P. M. Fedorov conducted a content analysis of publications in Internet on the basis of a modified method of A. V. Semenova, M. V. Korsunskaya. The main category of analysis was the concept of “migrant”. The methodology of the Institute of sociology of RAS was supplemented by several blocks of variables characterizing: 1) various parameters of comments on the analyzed messages on the website; 2) the number of visits to the website (if records are kept); 3) identifying the source of statements, opinions mentioned in the message. 1421 informa-

¹⁷ Tussupova D. Mass Media and Ethnic Relations in Kazakhstan. P. 40.

¹⁸ Poli S. de, Jakobsson N., Schüller S. The Drowning Refugee Effect: Media Salience and Xenophobic Attitudes // Applied Economics Letters. 2017. Vol. 24, no. 16. P. 1167–1172.

¹⁹ Kuznetsova I., Round J. Postcolonial Migrations in Russia: the Racism, Informality and Discrimination Nexus // International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy. 2018. No. 10. P. 131–151.

²⁰ Malkova V. K. Etnicheskaya tematika v rossiiskom informatsionnom prostranstve // Kommunikologiya. 2014. No. 3. P. 110–117.

²¹ Achkasov V. A. Integratsiya trudovykh migrantov v prinimaiushchee obshchestvo: rol' SMI // Politeks. 2011. Vol. 7, no. 4. P. 41–51; Saraeva O. V. Konstruirovaniye obraza migrantsii rossiiskimi SMI // Vestnik ekonomiki, prava i sotsiologii, 2011. No. 2. P. 245–249; Fedorov P. M. Rol' internet-SMI v formirovaniyии sotsialnykh ustyanovok rossiian v otnoshenii migrantov (po rezul'tatam kontent-analiza regionalnykh novostey internet-saitov) // Monitoring Obshchestvennogo mneniya. 2014. No. 6 (124). P. 119–134.

tion messages containing words related to the category “migrant” were analyzed on 106 regional information websites of 20 regions of the Russian Federation from 01.05.2012 to 01.05.2013. The results showed that explicitly negative information on the category of “migrant” is presented in 37 % of the analyzed messages, while explicitly positive information is contained only in 13 % of the messages. According to P. M. Fedorov, this ratio of positive and negative information in communications generally reflects social attitudes of the population towards migrants, and regional Internet sites voluntarily or unwillingly contribute to the consolidation of negative attitudes and stereotypes concerning migrants.

The author of the study identified the main method of impacting the audience as setting the agenda when certain events are covered and others remain in the shadows. In this regard, the events and issues receiving the most media coverage are more familiar to the audience and, therefore, are perceived as more significant. Further, P. M. Fedorov identified such techniques as silencing of opinions and judgments that will be obviously unpopular with the audience and emphasising the emotional component of the perception of the news.

O. F. Varganova comes to similar conclusions in the analysis of publications about migrants. She notes that “almost half of the publications (48 %) are negative. Publications of this nature, as a rule, describe situations with the reduction of quotas for foreign labor; with the growth of crimes committed by migrants; with non-compliance with working conditions in enterprises where migrant workers work, etc. Information messages of a positive nature amount to only 22 %”²².

V. A. Achkasov, in his analysis of the role of the media in the perception of migrants, states that responsibility for the formation of attitudes towards migrants lies with the media. He notes that “one type of identity is ‘media identity’, which is created from ideas, dreams and fantasies reproduced by the media. For this reason, the media can both increase the conflict potential and contribute to its consolidation”²³.

There are also a number of studies aimed at analyzing the direct representation of ethnic conflicts in the media. For example, L. A. Akhmadieva conducted a thematic content analysis of the media and identified elements of ethnic conflicts covered in the media. She notes that “publications in general pay more attention to ethnic conflicts taking place in Russia than to those taking place abroad. The exception is the “Independent newspaper”, which comprises 23,7 % of the materials from the sample on conflicts outside of Russia (mostly former Soviet republics). “Komsomolskaya Pravda” (34,9 %) focuses mostly on ethnic conflicts in small towns of Russia, and “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” (23,7 %) — in large cities of our country”²⁴. She also points out that many media often touch upon the problems of nationalism, both of Russian and of ethnic minorities.

N. B. Zazaeva, analyzing the role of the media in the formation of inter-ethnic tolerance, concludes that “there is a huge gap between the proper and the actual order of things in the coverage of inter-ethnic interactions. That is why the “discourse of consent” is extremely rare in the information space and is perceived by the mass audience as false and

²² Varganova O. F. Obraz trudovogo migranta v federalnykh i regionalnykh SMI (po rezultatam kontent-analiza) // Sotsiologicheskaiia nauka i sotsialnaia praktika. 2015. No. 3(11). P. 88.

²³ Achkasov V. A. Integratsiiia trudovykh migrantov v prinimaiushchee obshchestvo: rol' SMI. P. 47.

²⁴ Akhmadieva L. A. Obrazy mezhetnicheskogo konflikta v pechatnykh SMI (rezul'taty tematicheskogo kontent-analiza) // Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie problemy sovremenennogo obshchestva: materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii. Penza, Praga, 2011. P. 22.

politically engaged. And, as a result, it is used only by officials as appeals and slogans”²⁵. This fact is noted by L. M. Drobizheva, in whose opinion, “thematization of ethnicity in the context of migration occurs mainly in the opposition of “we” — “they”, “we are the owners, local” — “they are newcomers”. The judicial status of migrants is often emphasized; it is clarified that they are “illegal migrants”; and depending on the genre of the newspaper statements on this issue can be more or less forceful, but the essence remains — migration is considered a social problem for the entire local population”²⁶.

E. V. Shmeleva, conducted a content analysis of the St. Petersburg press and also came to the conclusion that the main medium of intolerant judgments in the St. Petersburg media is the economic theme. Ethnic problems have a high potential for tolerance. According to her study, the media are most intolerant of subjects that, in the opinion of journalists, are perceived as “aggressive, carrying any danger, or capable of direct or imaginary aggression (migrants in general; migrants who lost their jobs, etc.)”²⁷.

A brief review of the research on the topic shows that it is extremely relevant and acute. But researchers tend to analyze the already identified concepts or events: migrants, the Kosovo conflict, terrorist acts. It is interesting to look not at specific events and their interpretation, but examine what events and news are marked, represented as an ethnic conflict, and what means are used for this. That is why for our research content analysis will be the best. We give a brief description of this method.

A. V. Semenova and M. V. Korsunskaiia note that “content analysis is a special methodological procedure for the analysis of all types of texts (verbal, visual, etc.); it is an analysis of the core of communication, of what lies between the communicator and the audience, between the author of the message and those to whom this message is addressed. In contrast to the survey methods, content analysis allows the researcher to make conclusions about social phenomena without directly interfering with what he is studying; to explore a wide array of texts highlighting aspects of information that do not lie on the surface”²⁸.

When devising the procedure of the content analysis, we relied on the methodology developed by representatives of the Institute of sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. At the first stage, manifest coding was conducted, which enables to record the sizes of articles, forms of materials, originality of genre, key events, titles. Manifest coding is the first step in the implementation of the entire study.

On the basis of data obtained by this method the most important ethnic conflicts are highlighted which are represented in media.

The next stage will be the development of parameters of interpretative content analysis of the selected event, the identification of the main denotations and metaphors. The foundation for the delineation of the basic analytical units will be the semiotic analysis and the metaphorical approach of George Lakoff. Concisely described, interpretative content analysis solves complex problems of coding; if manifest coding is aimed at identifying the explicit content of the publication, then within the framework of the content analysis we focus on the latent content.

²⁵ Zazaeva N. B. Rol' SMI v formirovani mezhethnicheskoi tolerantnosti v sovremennoi Rossii // Vestnik Povolzhskoi akademii gosydarstvennoi sluzhby. 2013. No. 5 (38). P.63.

²⁶ Drobizheva L. M. Sotsiologiia mezhetnicheskoi tolerantnosti. Moscow, 2003. P.137.

²⁷ Shmeleva E. V. Etnopsikhologicheskie ustanovki zhurnalistov (na primere Sankt-Peterburga) // Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta. Seriia 12. 2010. No. 1. P.311.

²⁸ Semenova A. V., Korsunskaiia M. V. Kontent-analiz SMI: problemy i opty primeneniiia. P.10.

A. V. Semenova, M. V. Korsunskaya proposed the following algorithm for this type of content analysis. In their opinion, “semiotic theory of denotative and connotative meanings is useful for this. Denotations or denotative values refer to the explicit content and identify parts of the text. They are first-order values and correspond to common sense, have obvious meaning. Meaningful or connotative values (latent content) are realized by combining the meanings of individual elements of the text with the understanding of its meaning as a whole”²⁹.

This approach has a pronounced interdisciplinary character, and in this case linguistic components (connotations) act as markers of social processes.

But first we need to identify the main parameters for the first stage of our study.

Object of research: the newspaper “Arguments and Facts” for the period from April 1989 to April 2018. The newspaper “Arguments and facts” was selected as the main object for analysis as it has been one of the most widely read newspapers in Russia over the past twenty years. In 1990, the newspaper “Arguments and facts” entered the Guinness book of records as the newspaper with the largest circulation in the history of mankind — 33,5 million copies, and the number of readers exceeded 100 million.

Additionally, we analyze publications on the portal “Fontanka.ru”. This portal was selected as a leader in the number of citations among the information sites of St. Petersburg.

Subject of research: Ethnic conflict as an event

The unit of analysis is an article, publication on the subject of ethnic conflict. The selection of publications was made automatically by entering a query in the search bar in the archive of the newspaper “Arguments and facts” for the last 30 years, and in the archive of the portal “Fontanka.ru” — for the period from 2000 to 2018.

Objective: to analyze the dynamics of press coverage of various ethnic conflicts; to identify the key images of ethnic conflict that formed the media.

Tasks:

- determining the significance of the event for the newspaper (the size of publication, its place in the newspaper);
- defining the type of the article;
- evaluating the article title (on the scale of positive-negative statement);
- evaluating the text of the article (on a scale of positive-negative statement);
- highlighting the main events that are most often represented as ethnic conflict.

Hypotheses of the study:

We hypothesized that over the past 20 years the representation of ethnic conflicts has changed to a large extent; the media has moved from the presentation of facts to emotional statements, which are most clearly expressed in catchy headlines.

Publications on internal problems of the Russian Federation will be marked as ethnic conflicts mainly. Articles on external conflicts will be presented less frequently and in a smaller size.

Current conflicts will be reproduced in the media not only in the news covering during their occurrence but also later when there will be a constant return to them.

²⁹ Semenova A. V., Korsunskaya M. V. Kontent-analiz SMI: problemy i opyt primeneniiia. P. 10.

One of the most significant conflicts in the media will be the Chechen war: the number of publications on this topic is likely to be the largest.

The main unit of analysis was the publication with this lexeme — “ethnic conflict”.

At the first stage, manifest coding was carried out, which enabled to record the sizes of articles, forms of materials, originality of genre, key event, and title.

According to this principle, a number of articles were analyzed on the portal “Fontanka.ru” and newspaper “Arguments and facts” (electronic version).

In the course of the study, we analyzed 275 publications in the newspaper “Arguments and facts” and 106 publications on the “Fontanka.ru” portal in accordance with the developed content analysis Protocol. Ru. The total number of the analyzed material was 381 articles.

Nearly half of the materials on the topic of ethnic conflicts (46,6 %) were published in the last five years, in the period from 2013 to 2018; the smallest amount of material on this topic appeared in the period from 1988 to 1994 and from 1995 to 2000. This kind of distribution is largely due not to the topic itself, but to the changes in the channels and ways of distributing news and publications. The newspaper “Arguments and facts” during the collapse of the Soviet Union was a weekly newspaper, and articles on certain topics could not appear more often than the printed version of it. After 2000, there was a significant breakthrough as the publishing houses began to move to the Internet and to develop their own sites and later mobile platforms and applications. The ability to publish material at any time and increase the speed of information transfer increased the number of publications by several times. Online format allows you to respond quickly to the conflict and publish materials about it online.

It is also necessary to add that the portal “Fontanka.ru” has been developed as a web project only since 2000, but despite a shorter history in this edition, the received materials enable to draw some conclusions about the construction of ethnic conflict in it.

In the process of the content analysis, the main sub-topics of the articles were identified, in which the unit of analysis was found:

- 1) migrants and migration;
- 2) ethnic politics in general;
- 3) particular conflict.

The analysis of the subject matter of publications shows that there are significant differences in the selection of material and editorial policy. At the level of quantitative indicators for articles on migrants and migration, the “Fontanka.ru” portal is small and accounts for only 5,0 % of all publications. But, if we take into account only the articles of this portal ($N = 106$), the total number of publications about migrants will comprise almost a fifth (21%). It should be noted that the articles on migrants and migration on the “Fontanka.ru” portal are very specific and belong to the section “crimes and incidents”. Crimes and domestic clashes between migrants are marked as “ethnic conflict”.

In the “Arguments and facts”, only one tenth (8,8 %) of the 275 articles on migration and migrants deal with this problem, it is a much lower proportion.

The second sub-theme of ethnical policy as a whole is present in both editions, but their emotional background is different. In the materials on ethnical politics as a whole in the “Arguments and facts” newspaper, a neutral, serious tone prevails, and in most cases such publications are constructed as an interview or an expert article. By contrast, on the portal “Fontanka.ru” such materials devoted to ethnical politics in general (for example,

the adoption of the city program “Tolerance”) are written in the genre of the author’s column and have a very ironic and cynical style.

In both papers, a large part of the publications concerns different ethnic conflicts.

To simplify and summarize the results in quantitative form, all analyzed materials were divided into three categories: external conflict (without the participation of the Russian Federation), external conflict (with the participation of the Russian Federation), internal conflicts.

By external conflicts with the participation of the Russian Federation, we understood those ethnic conflicts and clashes in the resolution of which the Russian Federation is directly or indirectly involved — through a system of agreements or direct assistance of a military or humanitarian nature.

Slightly less than half of the articles (40,2 %) deal with internal ethnic conflicts. It should be noted that almost all articles pertaining to ethnic conflicts in the Russian Federation are publications of a general nature on ethnical policy and on migrants and migration problems. A little more than a quarter of articles cover ethnic conflicts abroad, in the resolution of which Russia is not involved in one way or another. And almost a third of the publications (32,8 %) present external ethnic conflicts in which the Russian Federation takes part.

It is essential to consider what kind of ethnic conflicts were on the agenda throughout the post-Soviet period:

1. The conflict in Ukraine — only 28 publications for the entire period. The most significant amount of materials on this topic was published in 2014. The newspaper “Arguments and facts” published 18 articles on the Ukrainian theme marked as an ethnic conflict. On the portal “Fontanka.ru”, there were 10 such articles, which is almost a tenth of all the analyzed articles on the portal.

2. The Kosovo conflict — a total of 26 publications for the entire period. It is impossible to clearly identify the period when the largest number of articles was published as the Kosovo conflict in one form or another arose on the agenda of each of the analyzed publications regularly. During the period under review, the newspaper “Arguments and facts” contained 18 publications on the Kosovo conflict and its participants. On the portal “Fontanka.ru”, there were 8 articles about Kosovo.

3. Georgian-Abkhazian conflict — only 19 articles for the entire period. Articles have appeared regularly since 1989. “Arguments and facts” published 11 articles on this topic, and on the portal “Fontanka.ru” — 8 publications.

4. Georgian-South Ossetian conflict — only 15 articles. The most significant number of publications appeared in 2008 at the height of the events in Tskhinval. But there were publications both earlier and later. Every year, to mark the anniversary of the events, a big article (150 lines or more) about this conflict can be found in the newspaper “Arguments and facts”. The portal “Fontanka.ru” has only three articles on the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict.

Karabakh conflict can fall in the same group of ranking (the 4th place) because the total number of publications is 15. The representation of the Karabakh conflict differs from others as articles about it and the problems associated with it have appeared regularly since 1989, while the peak of publications in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict was in 2008. It should be noted that in this case the number of publications on the portal “Fontanka.ru” is twice as many (10 articles) as in edition “Arguments and facts” (5 publications).

5. Syrian conflict — total publications on this topic 11. In both media, the Syrian conflict is represented as an ethnic one, with an emphasis on ethnic groups and interethnic relations in Syria. In the “Arguments and facts” 8 such publications were identified, and on the portal “Fontanka.ru” — only three.

Also, articles about the events in Kyrgyzstan are marked as ethnic conflicts, but these publications (12 articles) are found only in the newspaper “Arguments and facts”, and on the portal “Fontanka.ru” there is none. In addition, there are no articles on the Chechen conflict on this site, and in the “Arguments and facts” there were only eight publications. All of them were written during the first Chechen war and have a very strong emotional manner.

A significant number of materials in both media were also devoted to the ethnic conflict in Myanmar: seven in the “Arguments and facts”, and only three — on the “Fontanka.ru” portal.

The events in Kondopoga, where there were clashes between representatives of different ethnic groups, are presented as an ethnic conflict only on the portal “Fontanka.ru”.

The range of ethnic conflicts represented in the publication “Arguments and facts” is much wider: the Transnistrian conflict, unrest in Thailand, ethnic conflicts in the Baltic States, the conflicts in Iran, the Iraqi conflict.

Summing up, we will give a description of the ways of representation of ethnic conflicts in the analyzed media.

The style of articles in “Arguments and facts” is significantly different from the style of the portal “Fontanka.ru”. In the first, mass media articles of neutral-serious character prevail. Emotional headlines predominate in the “Arguments and facts” during the period 1991–2000, afterwards their number decreases sharply, whereas emotional headlines and very emotional style of presentation are common for the portal “Fontanka.ru”. The genre specificity of the articles also testifies to the significant thoroughness of publications. In the newspaper “Arguments and facts”, the predominant types of publications are interviews with an expert or analytical article. The “Fontanka.ru” portal is characterized by brief information messages, or notes that largely reflect a subjective opinion. Large analytical articles and reviews (longreads) are very rare and have a predominantly neutral-serious tone of presentation.

Our brief review of main quantitative results will be followed by the interpretative content-analysis of one of the cases mentioned in the previous part. It was decided to take the case of Georgian-Abkhazian conflict for further analysis. It was made for a few reasons: firstly, this conflict is closely connected with post-Soviet history of the Russian Federation; secondly, the amount of articles is sufficient for analysis; and lastly, this pending conflict is in contrast with the conflict in Ukraine.

A brief description of the logic and main procedures of the interpretative analysis should be given. The composite lexeme “Georgian-Abkhazian conflict” was formed. This lexeme was entered in the search bar of both “Arguments and facts” and “Fontanka.ru”. Then the content of chosen articles was analyzed.

Interpretative content analysis was conducted on the portals “Arguments and facts” and “Fontanka.ru”; the main unit of analysis was the lexeme “Georgian-Abkhazian conflict”. At the previous stage, on the basis of the lexeme “ethnic conflict”, we identified 19 articles devoted to this conflict.

The search for “Georgian-Abkhazian conflict” gave more publications, which were analyzed. The unit of account was the article; the main semantic units of analysis we have identified were the actors mentioned in the description of the event in the article. These may be countries (Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia and others); organizations mentioned in the article about the event (UN, OSCE, peacekeeping forces and others); individuals (President of Georgia, President of Russia, representatives of other countries).

The context in which these actors were mentioned was also taken into account. The main indicators were adjectives and phrases used to characterize the actor in the article.

In addition, the analysis of the correspondence of titles and content of articles was carried out.

Through the search for “Georgian-Abkhazian conflict” 40 publications were identified — 25 publications on the portal “Fontanka.ru” and 15 publications on the portal “Arguments and facts”. As we can see, the number of publications on this topic is more than we have highlighted in the first stage of the search for the lexeme “ethnic conflict”.

In fact, it is not quite so. At the first stage, we identified 19 publications on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and 15 more articles on the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. All articles devoted to the Georgian-Ossetian conflict contain the lexeme “Georgian-Abkhazian conflict”. Thus, it turns out that these two conflicts are united by the media in one, and the publications do not distinguish between the events in Ossetia (Georgian-Ossetian conflict) and Abkhazia (Georgian-Abkhazian conflict).

The results of the content analysis should be examined in more details.

Frequency of references to different countries and organizations in publications

Country	Quantity of references	Organization	Quantity of references
Georgia	40	Peacekeeping troops	11
Russia	34	UN	8
Abkhazia	30	OSCE	4
Ossetia	20	NATO	3
Other countries	18	-	-

From table it is evident that the media do not distinguish between the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflicts. Both conflicts are considered in relation to each other. This is evidenced by the frequency of references to Ossetia as a participant in the events marked as the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. The publications deal with the events of North Ossetia but also mention the circumstances of the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia. Georgia and Russia took the leading positions in the references in the articles. Almost half of the reports mentioned other countries: USA (8), France (3), Germany (2), Britain (1), and European Union (1). The collective expression West (2) is also used. The key organization mentioned most often in the articles on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict were peacekeeping troops, and the UN (8), OSCE (4) and NATO (3) were also mentioned in the description of events.

It should be noted that in addition to denotative concepts, such as the name of the country, some publications were accompanied by words-connotations. Thus, such negative connotations as “global backstage”, “a gang of bullies” were applied to the Western countries; such connotations as “hawks from Tbilisi”, “invaders”, “militarized country”, “external enemy”, “fascists” were used in relation to Georgia. References to Russia had no connotations in general, except for one article published on 11 August 2008, during the period of events in Tskhinvali, when the following characteristics were recorded: “daring, independent, determined, confident”, which can be assessed as positive.

The organizations mentioned in the publications under review generally have no additional connotations, with the exception of peacekeeping troops. But the analysis shows the difference in the representation of peacekeepers in the materials of the portal “Arguments and facts” and the portal “Fontanka.ru”. The “Arguments and facts” referred to peacekeepers in only three articles, with a neutral style of presentation prevailing and no additional evaluative characteristics. On the portal “Fontanka.ru”, in 8 articles peacekeepers are actors of the conflict, but in three of them these publications are accompanied by negative evaluative characteristics — “drunk”, “boozy”.

In general, the analysis of the selected publications showed it is not Georgia and Abkhazia that are represented as main actors in this conflict but other countries: Russia, on the one hand, and the generalized countries of the West, on the other. The frequency of mentioning of Russia as a party in the conflict can be considered as markers of its role, as well as such formulations: “Abkhazia and Ossetia is a zone of interests of Russia”; “Russia intends to change the hated regime in the small Caucasian Republic”. The second player on this arena of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is the USA: “the USA wants to introduce international police into the conflict zone”, “senior comrade”, “they want to entangle Russia with the ring of their regimes”.

The events that took place on the territory of Abkhazia and Ossetia in the media have the following connotations: “bloodbath”, “genocide of the people”, “blitzkrieg”.

The research enables to make some conclusions. The marking of an event as an “ethnic conflict” is largely arbitrary in the media, and the general reference to the category of “ethnic conflict” is inaccurate. Clarification of the request and search for a specific event (in this case, the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict) show that out of 40 analyzed publications, 4 were not related to it at all, but were devoted to economic issues.

To a large extent, the choice of events for media coverage depends on editorial policy and is related to the adoption of the agenda. The audience perceives the events covered in the media as important.

In general, the portal “Fontanka.ru” and “Arguments and facts” are dominated by a neutral or positive attitude to Russia as a subject of various conflicts, but on the portal “Fontanka.ru” there are publications that underestimate the status of peacekeeping troops.

The publications in “Arguments and facts” and in “Fontanka.ru” that deal with internal ethnic conflict usually describe some criminal, delinquent cases, where migrants took part. Therefore, it can be said that media put the stigma of ethnical conflict on some criminal events. It corresponds to other research results: media negatively highlight other ethnical groups (especially migrant) diminishing positive issues. The lexeme “ethnical conflict” is rather popular and serves as a means for the editorial board to attract the attention of the audience.

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