Nomination of Event in Media as Reality Development Method

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the models for nominating an event in the media language using the example of the incident that occurred with Sergei and Yulia Skripal in March 2018 in the city of Salisbury. It has been established that the most relevant essence of the named events is reflected by the names-phrases, the supporting component of which indicates the event itself (the action or its result), and the dependent component indicates the participants, the event time or place. The considered names are distributed by including various specifiers in the name structure. In order to save speech resources, the media searches for the most accurate and laconic name for the event. As a rule, it is formed from a particular event reference component and the brightest event marker that sets it apart from the rest.

Keywords: mass media language, event, nomination, mass media.

1. Introduction

A media event is an important or unusual event that attracts the interest of mass audience. “Events fill reality” [1: 170], i.e. are characterized by temporal extension and spatial fixation [Ibid: 172]. Besides, the events that arouse the interest of mass audience are always social, since “they occur in people’s lives, and people must take part in them” [Ibid: 171]. Therefore, negative events associated with tragic death of people get a special resonance and response in society [2]. These properties, together with the relevance and demand by society, launch in the media the mechanism of an event verbal fixation in the linguistic consciousness of the mass audience, which is manifested, among other things, in the appearance of a certain kind of nomination for the event, since the nomination allows one to “embed” a certain author’s idea into the consciousness [3].

Methods

In modern linguistics, much attention is paid to the system of nominations presented in the media [4, 5, 6, 7, 8, etc.], however, the issues related to the naming of events remain almost unexplored [9, 10, etc.].

The process of linguistic fixation of an event in the media is directly related to its construction. The process of constructing a media event nomination is based on the basic model of a news message answering the questions of who did, what (what happened), where, when, why and how [see: 11:19; 10:30, etc.]. This model turns out to be relevant when constructing the name of an event, therefore, in the course of our research, we used it as a base one. The most relevant information for the nomination of what happened is the information about the participants of the event (who), the kind of event happened (what), as well as the event time and place (where/when). However, for naming an event, the question of what happened turns out to be more important: the answer to it is primarily reflected in the nomination, the rest of the information can be presented alternately and only if it is necessary to identify the event canvas of a media message.
Results and Discussion

The media, like a giant mirror, reflect reality, but this reflection can be changed depending on the coverage \[12; 17\] and the variative-interpretive activity of a journalist. The alternative description of the event is manifested, among other things, in the system of nominations used in relation to the event. In the course of covering the event, journalists use the names already available in the language, and often and deliberately create various kinds of names, which leads to the emergence of a set of nominations for the incident, i.e. to the heteronymy of media events. The nominations may differ from each other both in the degree of detail and the description accuracy, and in the way of subjective interpretation of what happened.

Names, which are phrases, reflect the essence of the named events most relevantly. They are built according to basic models that reflect the most important characteristics to identify what happened. The components of a name-phrase combination are the following: a reference component of a phrase indicating an action or its result (usually a noun), dependent/dependent components indicating/denoting participants and/or representing spatial coordinates (local and/or time reference of an event).

Let's consider the basic models of an event nomination using the example of the incident that happened to Sergei and Yulia Skripal in the city of Salisbury during March 2018.

When naming the analyzed history, nouns with general event (incident, event, history) and specific event (poisoning, attack, attempt) semantics were used as a supporting component for the nomination. Since “the substrate of an event can be an action, a change of action, a process” \[1: 175\], a verbal noun is often a key word. According to our observations, a general event noun used as a nomination for an event as a more abstract designation of what has happened can be supplemented with a noun with specific event semantics that specifies the called phenomenon, for example: an incident with poisoning, a story with poisoning, etc. The specified basic components of the event name (a word with general event or special event semantics or their combination in the form of a phrase) are supplemented in order to convey more complete information.

The first basic model for the above event is a nomination indicating an action/result of the action and the names of its participants: Skripal’s poisoning / S. Skripal’s poisoning / Sergey Skripal’s poisoning; poisoning of the Skripals; the attempt on the Skripals; poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal; the incident with the Skripals, etc. In rare cases, the names of the victims are replaced with contextual equivalents that identify the description subject from different angles. This may be an indication of social status (including the indication of citizenship, position/profession, including the former one); poisoning of Russian citizens in Salisbury; attacks on Russian citizens; ex-employee of the GRU; the incident with the poisoning of a former employee of the GRU; the relative nomination can also be used: S. Skripal and his daughter, etc.

The second basic model reflects spatial coordinates that are equally important for this event. Local binding of an event is most often carried out using toponyms, while varying degrees of detail are possible: poisoning in Salisbury; the assassination attempt in Salisbury; the Salisbury attack; the Salisbury incident; the incident in British Salisbury; the events in Salisbury; the story in Salisbury; the Salisbury attack; the Salisbury incident; the Salisbury poisoning incident, etc.

However, the names of the events discussed above do not always give a complete picture of what happened, therefore, various kinds of specifiers are often included in the nomination structure, including:

1) the indication of social status: poisoning of ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal; the assassination attempt on former GRU colonel Sergei Skripal in Salisbury; the assassination attempt in Salisbury on former GRU colonel Sergei Skripal; the incident with ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal; the attempt on the life of the former GRU colonel Sergei Skripal in Salisbury; the incident with the poisoning in Salisbury of Russian citizens Sergei and Yulia Skripal, etc.

2) inclusion of a relational nomination: poisoning of Skripal and his daughter Yulia; the incident with the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, etc.

3) generalization: the poisoning of the Skripal family in Salisbury, etc.

4) a combination of specifiers:

a) social status and relative nomination: poisoning of former GRU employee Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia; poisoning of ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury / poisoning of former GRU colonel Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury; the poisoning of former Russian GRU officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury; the attempt on the life of ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in British Salisbury; the poisoning of ex-GRU Colonel Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in British Salisbury in March 2018; the incident with ex-GRU colonel Sergei Skripal, etc.;

b) social status, relative nomination and temporary localization: the incident with the poisoning in the British city of Salisbury of the former GRU officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in March 2018; the story of the poisoning of ex-GRU officer Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Great Britain in March 2018, etc.

Separately, it is worth highlighting the nominations built according to the abovementioned models, but containing information about the instrument of crime, since it was it that caused a public outcry not only in the
Russian, but also in the foreign press: the story with the “newcomer”, poisoning by “Novichok” in Salisbury; Rookie attack in Salisbury; poisoning of a former GRU employee Sergei Skripal with the Novichok chemical in Salisbury; the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter with a nerve agent in Salisbury, UK in March 2018; an attack on a former employee of the Russian secret service with Novichok; the incident with the use of the nerve agent “Novichok” in the city of Salisbury, etc.

From the standpoint of syntagmatics, these nominations, being correlated with one reference situation, are coreferential in relation to each other. They can function simultaneously in the text, forming a single nominal or event chain [13: 115, 121]. The nominations differ from each other in the degree of detail, representing a truncated and expanded version of the names (the latter is characterized by the presence of specifiers). Since the truncated version of the nomination does not always give an idea of what happened, the text, as a rule, uses a detailed name along with it, allowing the reader present the event in its relative completeness. At the same time, in the presence of a detailed nomination, a nomination of the most general nature can also be presented in the text, consisting only of the action indication that took place or its result, i.e. from the nomination supporting component.

According to our observations, particular-event names as the supporting components of the nomination are used much more often than general-event names, since they specify what happened and allow it to be classified. At the same time, under the influence of the law of saving speech resources, the search for the most accurate and laconic name of the event takes place. As a rule, it is formed from a particular event reference component and the brightest event marker that sets it apart from the rest. For the story described above, this is the Skripal poisoning nomination or the Skripal poisoning. The variability of the standardized version is associated with the specifics of the event participants. In the first case, there is an example of the anthropoynomic nomination generalization (Sergei Skripal and Yulia Skripal -> Skripals), in the second – focusing on the event main character, since the name of Sergei Skripal, thanks to the coverage of the event in the media, becomes more significant and known to the general reader. Functioning of a laconic nomination in media texts becomes possible due to the specifics of the media space with a system of text and hypertext references, allowing the reader learn about the details of what happened.

The above methods and models of nomination are the main ones for naming the event, but not the only ones: the reality represented by the mass media “is not this reality itself, the denotation of the media text is based on an objectively existing or the reality of the author’s consciousness” [14: 88]. The interpretation of the event plays a key role in the deployment of the information chain [12: 194]. Since the media space is characterized by agentive multilayerness [10: 31], the process of interpreting an event is binary - on the one hand, it is interpreted by the message sender, on the other hand, the recipient recognizes the meaning of what he read, based on life experience, his own system of values, etc.

Mass communication presupposes polyaddressing; therefore, media texts must have polysemy. According to E.V. Chepkina, the degree of polysemy increases if “the text offers the addressee not a ready-made meaning, but an opportunity for independent construction of this meaning” [13: 130]. The scholar identifies two strategies for the text polysemy implementation:

- emphasizing the objectivity of the presentation, which makes the text open for self-interpretation of the addressee;
- polystylistism, i.e. a story about an event in different stylistic systems, which makes it possible to embed what is happening in different semantic orders [Ibid: 130-131].

As the researcher emphasizes, the structural ambiguity of the text increases as the result of semiotic system mixing. This “allows the addressee to choose familiar codes” [Ibid: 83], which in turn makes it possible to model the addressee of the message flexibly [Ibid: 83].

The implementation of the first communication strategy can be observed on the example of the nominations described above. Nominations with general and specific names give an objective (as far as possible) presentation of what happened, leaving the reader with the opportunity to interpret the event independently. The second strategy is manifested in the appearance of stylistically marked elements (for example, Skripal’s middle). However, more often you can observe the imposition of the event interpretation from the aspect of the media building broadcasting the event. One of the common ways in this case is the actualization of the event direct assessment in the text. We agree with the opinion by S.S. Reznikov that assessment is a special way of influencing: “when they evaluate something, a speaker directly or indirectly recommends in some way, advises to make a choice in favor of this or that object or a point of view” [9: 11].

The article by journalist Georgy Bovt “Yes, crazy spies. So what’s next?” on the portal of the media edition Gazeta.Ru is very indicative in terms of the use of detailed evaluative nominations designed for the planned impact. Let’s give a fragment of the named article as an example:

After the sensational interview by “Boshirov” and “Petrov”, Margarita Simonyan (she is certainly without quotes) seemed that the spy game “Poison Skripal” turned into a farce, after which it would decline eventually. They make a noise and forget. In the end, whether these “Salisbury tourists” were hounding or not hounding the “bastard and traitor,” as the Russian president called him - all this is a game of the special services with loud propaganda and
political design. <…> Farce before our eyes is already turning into some kind of bad comedy in Sasha Baron Cohen’s style [Gazeta.Ru 8.10.2018].

As you can see from the cited text, the author of the publication gives an open assessment of what happened, which is expressed in the lexemes naming the event farce, game, comedy. Besides, the introduction of cultural language units into the text - a precedent name (see: a bad comedy in Sasha Baron Cohen’s style) actualizes the background knowledge of the reader and creates the preconditions for an ambiguous interpretation of the event.

An assessment of what is happening is also given using a manipulative technique - referring to an authoritative opinion, namely the opinion of public figures whose opinion is trusted by the readership: Russian President Vladimir Putin also said that the Skripal case is an ordinary spy scandal that is artificially inflated [Gazeta. Ru 20.01.2020]; “The Skripals case” is “a crudely cobbled together and stitched provocation,” believes Sergei Naryshkin [RBK 2.10.2018]. The Salisbury incident on 4 March 2018 was a "dead cat" stunt used by the British government, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. [RT 4.03.2019]; The Russian Foreign Ministry called the Salisbury incident a trick of the British government [Gazeta.Ru 03.04.2019], etc.

The expression of assessment and translation of value judgments through the statements of authority figures affects the opinion of the audience, forming a certain fragment of the media picture of the world. Thus, the texts of the mass media have, among other things, a formative property, which is expressed in the ability to influence the system of society assessments and to exert an ideological influence on the audience [12: 183].

**Summary and Conclusions**

Thus, a well-chosen nomination allows you to designate the persons involved in the event, update information about the place and time of the incident, characterize the event and give it a social and sometimes ideologically motivated assessment. The name of an individual event is a fragment of the nominative event field created by the media, and the nominative event field itself is a powerful instrument of pressure on mass consciousness, a means of reality development.

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**References**