ОБРАЗНЫЙ ПОРТРЕТ ПРЕЗИДЕНТА РОССИИ ВЛАДИМИРА ПУТИНА, СОЗДАННЫЙ АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНЫМИ СМИ

Научная статья

Шустова И.Н.*

Воронежский государственный педагогический университет, Воронеж, Россия

* Корреспондирующий автор (irina.philatova[at]mail.ru)

Аннотация

Статья посвящена исследованию оценочной лексики, используемой англоязычными СМИ, в частности журналом The Economist, при создании образного портрета президента России В.Путина. В ходе исследования выявлены типичные оценочные ситуации, в которых представлен Президент России, а также определены релевантные качества В.Путина, акцентируемые в англоязычной прессе, и формирующие его образный портрет. Выделены четыре тематические группы: ВОИНСТВЕННЫЙ и ОПАСНЫЙ, ЛИДЕР СЛАБОЙ СТРАНЫ, СЛАБЫЙ, но ПРИТВОРЯЕТСЯ СИЛЬНЫМ, КОВАРНЫЙ и ХИТРЫЙ. Прозвища, данные Путину англоязычными СМИ, имеют в основном негативные оценочные коннотации или иронический подтекст. Прозвищные перифразы, как рациональные, так и образные гиперболизируют черты образного портрета Президента России.

Ключевые слова: аллюзия, метафора, эпитет, язык политики, прозвища, тематические группы, объект оценки, эмоционально окрашенные слова и словосочетания, образный портрет, политический имидж, оценочные ситуации.

THE FIGURATIVE PORTRAIT OF PRESIDENT OF RUSSIA VLADIMIR PUTIN, CREATED BY THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MASS MEDIA

Research article

Shustova I.N.*

Voronezh State Pedagogical University, Voronezh, Russia

* Corresponding author (irina.philatova[at]mail.ru)

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of evaluative lexis used by the English-language mass media, The Economist journal in particular, while creating a figurative portrait of Russian President V. Putin. While the investigation, typical evaluative situations in which President of Russia is presented, were revealed; as well as the relevant qualities of V. Putin, highlighted in the English-language mass media and forming his figurative portrait, were identified. Four thematic groups BELLIGERENT AND DANGEROUS, LEADER OF A WEAK COUNTRY, WEAK BUT PRETENDS TO BE STRONG, and CUNNING AND DECEIVING were formed. Nicknames given to Putin by the English-language mass media mostly have negative evaluative connotations or ironical implication. Nickname periphrasis both rational and figurative ones hyperbolize the traits of the figurative portrait of Russian President.

Keywords: allusion, metaphor, epithet, language of politics, nicknames, thematic groups, the object of evaluation, emotionally colored words and word combinations, figurative portrait, political image, evaluative situations.

Introduction

The language of politics comprises a number of lexis endowed with high axiological potential. And the role of stylistic devices such as metaphor, epithet and allusion in political discourse can not be overestimated. E.I.Sheygal states that "political language is mainly incentive, aimed to influence, stimulate and inspirit the addressee" [8, P.46]. And stylistic devices help to achieve this aim. We can't but agree with A.N. Baranov who states that "Each metaphor forms the model of perception the reality in which, like in a mirror, the ideas about the role and place of an acting subject are reflected. [1, P. 14]. Metaphors act as "a way of cognition, structuring, evaluation and explanation the world [6, P. 122].

Due to their expressive possibilities and effective accomplishment of pragmatic functions, the tropes have always been used in manipulative aims to express the assessment indirectly, that is considered to have higher persuasive opportunities than direct evaluation. Many Russian and foreign linguists agree on this fact (E.I.Sheygal, A.N. Baranov, A. P. Chudinov, E. V. Budaev, T. A. van Dijk, M. Johnson and G. Lakoff). For instance, A. P. Chudinov, after M. Johnson and G. Lakoff, states that "metaphorical model can serve as an effective tool of manipulation with the social consciousness" [7]. So, "in political discourse metaphors become the tool of agitation" [4, P.51] and propaganda, because "metaphorical definitions and nominations possess the ability of forming a definite attitude to political figures and events" [9, P.99].

The role of epithets in political discourse is also significant one, because "they serve not only as a powerful means of assessment but they also perform the regulative function, imposing on the recipient the ideological and axiological views of the addresser concerning the object of assessment, and ultimately, making him change his mind in favour of the manipulator" [10, P.33].

That's why modern news items and political articles, highlighting the political situation and actions of various politicians, are full of expressive evaluative lexis. Concerning English-language mass media, political metaphors, epithets and allusions are widely used by journalists who try to show the political situation in the world in the most colorful way to produce a striking impression on their readers, and to form often biased opinion about certain political figures.

The aim of our article is to study the peculiarities of lexis used by journalists creating the figurative portrait of Russian President Vladimir Putin whose personality is in constant focus of English-language mass media attention. That proves the relevance of the topic.

Method

Having collected and analyzed 25 articles from The Economist magazine (Year 2016), in which the name of Vladimir Putin was mentioned, we have selected the situations where metaphorical descriptions, epithets and allusions serve as a means of creating a figurative portrait of Russian President. We also used descriptive and lexis-semantic analysis while classifying the selected units.

Discussion

While investigation we have noticed that English-language mass media, definitely and consistently, promote the idea that the image of Russian President is identical with the image of Russia and it is part of inseparable triad – Russia, The Kremlin, Putin. These are key words around which all figurative nominations and definitions concerning Russia, Russian President and his politics, are built. And the images, created by the foreign journalists, are rather picturesque ones.

For example, "*Putin is just a symbol. The president has come to embody Russia. No Putin – no Russia (The Economist, 2016, Jan.30, p.20)*".

He is the embodiment of Russian statehood (The Economist, 2016, March 19, p.17).

In this case the English-language press stands in solidarity with the German mass media. And "metaphorical perception of modern Russia by German politicians and journalists is presented exclusively by means of dominant model 'Russia is V.V. Putin'"[3, P.65].

Another fact, that is often mentioned in the press, but differently assessed by Russian journalists and always negatively presented by foreign mass media is Mr Putin's previous service in KGB.

Yet, for all his authoritarianism, Mr Putin is <u>not a bloodthirsty dictator, but a cautious former KGB officer</u>. He prefers mass manipulation to brutal repression. As <u>a secret-service operative</u>, Mr Putin excels in concealing his intentions (The Economist, 2016, March 19, p.18).

...As <u>a former KGB man</u>, Mr Putin sees himself as the only decision-maker and the secret police as his most effective tool to ensure stability (The Economist, 2016, Sept. 24, p. 26).

We should say that the image of former KGB agent follows V. Putin all his further political career. The same fact underlines A. M. Strelnikov saying that " in spite of the long limitation period, the professional activity of Putin before his entering the Big Politics put its impact on his evaluative portrait" [5, P.83].

One more significant target of evaluation in V. Putin's image is his youthful appearance and good state of health. English-language mass media promote the following description:

...<u>the macho mould</u> of the often <u>bare-torsoed</u> Mr Putin (The Economist,2016, Nov.26, p. 48)

Age <u>is unlikely to mellow</u> him (The Economist, 2016, Oct. 22, p.7)

The popularity of Putin among Russian citizens also makes English-language mass media find fault with the Russian President.

It is thanks to this role as <u>the avatar of a resurgent nation</u> that Mr Putin is staying popular during one of the worst economic crises in modern Russian history (The Economist, 2016, March 19, p.17).

Eventually he is endowed with such qualities that can be estimated as extraordinary ones, but presented in such a way that have a negative connotation. For example:

Mr Putin became "<u>a charismatic leader of the Promethean type</u>; <u>a demigod</u>, a <u>Titan</u>, who <u>brought the people fire</u>". ... "Everything in this life is finite." Even Prometheus got tied down eventually (The Economist, 2016, Jan.30, p.20).

The chain of metaphorical images, which follow one another in the figurative description of the Russian President, achieves the highest point in the gradation when Putin is identified with a demigod, Titan, Prometheus. And the final statement alludes to a Greek myth, having the tragic end, which English-language mass media predict to Vladimir Putin.

As for Vladimir Putin's foreign policy, it is also a considerable part of his evaluative portrait and a subject of mass media assessment. And the evaluative statements are often given figuratively. Often they are shaped as military and mechanistic metaphors to create Putin a threatening image of a dangerous man. For example,

Putin tries his best <u>to topple Merkel</u>, and he has <u>a lot of instruments at his disposal</u> (The Economist, 2016, Apr.23, p.19).

Mr Putin's <u>willingness to use hard power</u>, and the West's fear of confronting him, are allowing him to call the shots (The Economist, 2016, Feb.27, p.29).

...Mr Putin <u>seeks to destabilize countries as a way to stop them drifting out of Russia's orbit</u> (The Economist, 2016, Oct. 22, p.7).

A row of metaphorical epithets given to Putin allude to the powerful leaders of the past well known for their violence. There is also a manipulation with the personal name of Putin, Vladimir, which is often shortened to acquire additional connotations, usually negative and ironical ones. For example:

Vlad the invader (Oct. 22, p.7). The nickname is given in connection with Putin's foreign policy.

Ivan the bearable (Oct. 22, p.7). The ironical play upon words together with an allusion to Russian tsar Ivan the Terrible with whom Putin is partially compared.

Vlad the Great (Nov.5, p.22). The allusion to Russian tsar Peter the Great.

Vlad the victor (Feb.20, p.27). The nickname hints at power and influence of Putin and his success in resolving foreign war conflicts.

Vladimir unbound (Jan.30, p.20) and *Putin the peacemaker* (March 19, p.31).

Again, the nominations are given to highlight Putin's influence and power in the world politics.

Structurally we classified the nicknames given to Putin by the journalists into two basic groups: NAME + EPITHET and NICKNAME PERIFRASIS, which can be rational and figurative ones. They contribute to the evaluative portrait of the Russian President.

Results

The results of our investigation are given in the table.

NICKNAMES GIVEN TO PUTIN	
NAME + EPITHET	**NICKNAME PERIFRASIS**
Vlad the invader Ivan the bearable Vlad the Great Vlad the victor Vladimir unbound Putin the peacemaker	**Rational description:** a cautious former KGB officer; a former KGB man; a secret-service operative **Figurative description:** the provoker-in-chief; the embodiment of Russian statehood; the avatar of a resurgent nation; a charismatic leader of the Promethean type, a demigod, a Titan

Among the word combinations that are marked as nickname periphrasis there are some nominations that have rational assessment, for example, *a cautious former KGB officer; a former KGB man; a secret-service operative*, and there are some which are used figuratively: *the provoker-in-chief; the embodiment of Russian statehood; the avatar of a resurgent nation; a charismatic leader of the Promethean type, a demigod, a Titan*. Nevertheless, all of them contribute to the negative evaluative portrait of Putin, presenting him as "dangerous for the civilized European world".

We also selected a number of evaluative situations forming the figurative portrait of Vladimir Putin, and classified the statements according to their meaning into four relevant thematic groups.

EVALUATIVE SITUATIONS FORMING THE FIGURATIVE PORTRAIT OF VLADIMIR PUTIN	
BELLIGERENT AND DANGEROUS	the macho mould of the often bare-torsoed Mr Putin; for all his authoritarianism; His willingness and ability to act abroad; Mr Putin's military interventions; Putin tries his best to topple Merkel; Mr Putin attacked Ukraine; Mr Putin responded by annexing Crimea and vowing to restore Russian greatness after the Soviet collapse; a nuclear-armed Mr Putin is bent on imposing himself in the old Soviet sphere of influence; Mr Putin has framed his intervention in Syria as a battle between good and evil. Vladimir Putin's war in Syria; Russia's twin-headed eagle faces east towards Asia as well as west towards Europe. This far-sighted beast is near-as-dammit the heraldic coat-of-arms of Vladimir Putin, who revived the old imperial symbol.
LEADER OF A WEAK COUNTRY	Putin is just a symbol; Mr Putin's rotten state; Vladimir Putin's deadly, dysfunctional empire; Mr Putin's Russia is more fragile than he pretends; Like a naughty child, Mr Putin is rewarded by American attentiveness, he believes; Mr Putin lacks the firepower or economic resources of the Soviet era, but lays great stock in the geostrategic position it aspired to, and which is surrendered with its collapse;
WEAK BUT PRETENDS TO BE STRONG	Mr Putin sees himself as the only decision-maker and the secret police as his most effective tool to ensure stability; Mr Putin's overseas adventurism; Vladimir Putin's foreign policy is born of weakness and made for television; Mr Putin has exhausted an important tool of propaganda; Mr Putin's popularity … But the narcotic of adventurism soon wears off.
CUNNING AND DECEIVING	He prefers mass manipulation to brutal repression; Mr Putin and other demagogues are practicing a politics of outrageous lies

Conclusion

As the investigation has shown, there are four basic features of the figurative portrait of Vladimir Putin promoted by the English-language mass media: BELLIGERENT AND DANGEROUS, LEADER OF A WEAK COUNTRY, WEAK BUT PRETENDS TO BE STRONG, and CUNNING AND DECEIVING. The qualities are exaggerated by means of metaphors, epithets and allusions to form the biased opinion about Putin. The image of Russian President is controversial one, but still journalists try to present him mainly as an authoritarian leader which looks threatening for European society sharing democratic values.

Конфликт интересов	**Conflict of Interest**
Не указан.	None declared.

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