

## Linguistics and languages (UDC 81)

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ЯЗЫК И СТИЛЬ В ЭПОХУ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ СМИ

## Аннотация

Когда мы говорим о том, что нужно знать об изменчивом мире, идущем по пути неопределенностей и глобализации, нам часто очень сложно находить общий язык. Особенно, когда мы имеем дело с такими науками, как лингвистика и стилистика, сложно находить точные аргументы, чтобы доказать установленный тезис. Цель данной работы – попытаться доказать наш тезис о том, что язык и его стиль подвержены сильному воздействию, или даже заражены влиянием глобальных средств массовой информации. Множество уважаемых авторов писали об этой проблеме. Однако это все еще открытое поле неопределенностей. Настоящее исследование посвящено проблеме того, как глобальные СМИ влияют на язык и его стиль, а также каков характер словесного общения отдельного человека постмодернистского времени. Мы в то же время пытаемся создать платформу для будущего, более расширенного, исследования в этой области.

**Ключевые слова:** язык, стиль, глобализация, средства массовой информации, общественная коммуникация.

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## LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN THE TIME OF GLOBAL MASS MEDIA

## Abstract

If one should engage in a conversation about what there is to know concerning the ever-changing world that goes along the path paved with uncertainties and globalization, it is very complex task to find a common ground. Especially, dealing with sciences like Linguistics and Stylistics it is very difficult to find the exact arguments to prove the established thesis.

The aim of this paper is to try to prove our thesis that language and its style are highly affected or better, infected, by global mass media communication. There are many well respected authors who have been writing about this problem. However, this is an open field of uncertainties. Dealing, in our research, with the basic problem of how global mass media influence language and its style and the nature of verbal communication of fragmented man of postmodern time, we, at the same time, try to open the platform for future, more extended, research in this field.

**Keywords:** language, style, globalization, media, public communication

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**I**ntroduction

The key to the survival of man in the global society is "the secure feeling of self". However, Scholte in his book "*Globalization a Critical Introduction*" concludes that "in order for a person to be untroubled in the world he or she needs a satisfactory notion about who is who, where he belongs, what he wants to become, together with the conviction that the society will respect and defend these ways of being, belonging and achieving [7, P. 305].

Individual identity is completely neglected in the global society. It has lost its basic civil and cultural value." Modern globalization has also sometimes undermined the safety of identity through cultural destruction. Different life worlds quailed before the overrun of electronic mass media, transplanetary tourism, global English language, consumerism and other sub territorial interventions which contradict the local tradition [7, P. 306].

The world's biggest media agencies produce on one way or the other, the simplification of cultures and the assimilation of life styles. However, not to stray from the subject of the paper any further, language and with it, the style is effected at most. Almost half of the languages people use around the world will soon stop being used. Some linguists even think that almost eighty percent of the languages of the world will cease to exist during the XXI century. Scholte claims that this development is promoted by the global media by giving real significance only to the major world languages. The trend of homogenization of culture and language as well as global westernization affects the mass sense of loss of identity and self-reliance. The cultural issues

concerning language also create significant hierarchies in globalization management. The rule of western languages, especially English, inevitably makes other nations feel underestimated. Furthermore, the ideas and principles which are not easily translated in English are often difficult to push forward for a hearing at global forums. [7, P. 375]. On the other hand all that widespread public and global ignorance and passivity only stimulate the aggression of public media which affect the creation of communication murmurs.

**Methods**

Methodology of langue-stylistic research in the field of media in global time is based on lingual-stylistic analysis as the basic method of global communicative discourse. Also, the method of deduction and syntheses accompanied with comparative research are included in the research process. Based on its findings we develop the further organization of the text.

**Discussion**

The educational and cultural sphere of action in the global age that functions mostly according to the principles of the western model has neither time nor ear, and most definitely, has no patience for different or original world views. The non-western models can only cause a short-lived comment by the ruling global culture without entering any further into the deeper layers of what is said, written or displayed.

The rule of English language in the world makes it impossible for the large part of humanity to express itself and be involved in the changing and creating of the global world. The mass media affect the formation of an informal public

education by addressing thousands of information. People in the world should learn more about globalization and its fundamental aspirations, requirements, priorities, plans from those sources. However, very little is learned about these issues from the media, because they just do not see a reason or interest in directing the attention towards globalization as a phenomenon and, on the other hand, they intentionally avoid educating the masses on this phenomenon. One of the reasons is that the media are not sure which direction should be taken or if the rise in the educational level in this area might compromise their own interests.

Journalists themselves have often a very poor education in the area of globalization so that even, when they get the chance to write about it, they do not know how to approach the subject, because, apart from their poor knowledge, their writing pens are not sharp enough. Many media reports and media channels uncritically underline the prevailing new-liberal approaches to globalization on the one hand, and on the other hand, the media belongs to a large business which profits from liberalization and privatization in the area of communication.

The main media bodies are also tightly connected to the circles in power and that also affects the quality and objectivity of investigative journalism. [7, P. 356]. The mass media have a key role in keeping people around the world ignorant and mislead about the major tendencies of the global effect postmodern age has on them.

This condition in the global world significantly influences the journalists who feels the narrowness and the lack of freedom to react according to the principals of their profession, ethics and personal beliefs. "For certain executors to be considered responsible for something they themselves must have an understanding of fundamental moral notions such as justice, and moral reactions such as praise and condemnation. Such understanding does not have to be deep, but without a wider notion about those sizes, the man will not be responsible." [4, P. 31]. The freedom to express himself unconditionally through language belongs to the individual. In this case the journalist, should have the unconstrained awareness about his responsibility to himself and to the world. Such freedom is gained through courage to express a certain attitude despite the subjective feeling of being constrained. There is a well known case of the journalist who worked at the prestigious high-circulation daily the New York Times who fabricated his news stories, reports, interviews using sophisticated language and style. He did it successfully for almost six years feeding the readers' hunger for virtual reality. The main pattern of the global society is comprised of journalists becoming accustomed to prolonging their restrains in conveying the truth and adapting the audience to falsehoods. Language and its accompanying tools cover up the true information and display the false ones.

E. Kant suggests that we stay as far away as we can from habits because they take away our freedom and our independence. The global man is suffering more than ever from habits because those habits are mostly conformist. Habits affect the freedom of the human spirit to create its own style. Is man himself not the style, as Buffon wrote? If a man has the habit of spending five to seven hours watching one of the bright screens, he exposes himself to an empty and superficial language.

Roland Bart represents the opinion that language is a kind of response, a convention and that behind the language there is a style that comes from the man's innate and acquired properties. He firmly believes that style does not belong to language. According to him style is outside of language and

is only an accompanying object. [10, P. 126]. Mass media, intentionally or not, in its attempt to simplify language, keep style on distance from language.

Public speech, for ancient Greeks, was the basis of democracy and freedom. Sreten Petrovic [5] speaks of a logic-ethic, and a formally-aesthetic division which, each one in its own way, define and judge the purposefulness of the rhetoric. The first current speaks of emphasizing and expressing the truth through language, and the other represented by the sophists is focused on coaxing and persuasion and on the beauty and style of expression (the way something is said not what is said). Plato never gave credit to rhetoric as a technique nor as an art. He called the sophists flatterers whose only purpose was to be liked by the crowd instead of nurturing the truth. Aristotle tried to unite these two currents by adding a new element of assurance as a way to alleviate the manipulative power of coaxing and persuasion and to get closer to the logic-ethic current to whom speaking the truth was of the utmost importance. One of the greatest philosophers of the XX century E. Cassirer claims that language becomes one of the elementary "spiritual means through which there is a progress from the mere world of feeling to the world of perception and performance. [2, P. 35].

Shuvakovic, on the other hand, speaks of a changing structure of modern civilization which is characterized by the absence of a unique ideology, understanding of the language in accordance with its inter language functions and not according to the reference to the world outside the language, the metaphorization and allegorization of narration [9, P. 35].

On the other hand, speaking about a style of communication in the age of globalization means to speak about the transition from the individual to the collective. Myers and Myers state that communication represents a central phenomenon of culture. Also, if we understand communication as a symbolic process, in which the human awareness is created, maintained, repaired and transformed, all of this might fit into the definition of world global communication. Communication and the mass media are greatly responsible for the development of limited language skills, especially among young people. John Street states in his book *Mass Media, Politics and Democracy*, [11, P. 86] that mass media have an effect on raising the awareness about political literacy of citizens around the world and television has more influence on the viewers' emotions, but at the same time, television affects people in such a way that they shut themselves out from social frames. Robert Patnam states in the same book that "every hour a viewer spends watching television is related to his lesser confidence in social environment. Television, as a private entertainment increases the resistance towards the outside world and weaken citizens engagement in the social system. [11, P. 91]. It is obvious that language, as a social category, stagnate in a modern society where everyone is busy looking at the screens instead of having alive conversation.

Stylistics as a young science regulates the way of the relation between the individual and the society in the context of use of language within the frame of mutual communication. The expressiveness of language can be the product of spiritualized, free view on life, not the oppressed or manipulated view that mass media creates. Talbot Taylor formulated the theory of style as the theory of communications. According to him the process of communication cannot be explained only by dry linguistic theories that mainly explain the verbal communication as abstract link of expression and meaning. This kind of

criticism jeopardizes the nature of relationship between language and communication. The messages we receive in any communication influence communication more than their meaning. [3, P. 82]

In the public media where language is used every day to express different attitudes and opinions the examination of the quality of information is very important. The way in which information is received depends on the way the journalist uses language. The language used by the media must, opposed to the language of literature, respect the legitimacy of standardized language, and that is not always the case as we will see later in this text.

The loss of identity and individuality in the global era of media, political and cultural violence brings about the weakening and neglecting of the individual's style. The journalist does not stand out any more as a creator, a writer or an evaluator of reality. He does not establish, through his style, a special, remote contact with his readers or viewers but unfortunately, instead he forms a distant, formal and estranged contact.

Language culture in global, public written media in Serbia and the irregularities that occur daily in public media has been written from time to time by Egon Fekete, Ivan Klein, Serbian linguists, Milovan Danojlic, the writer who wrote the famous book *Torment with words* in 1975. Scientific papers has been reading in scientific conferences and published in magazines and anthologies. What catch the eye in most of them are, apart the language irregularities, the emphasis on the increasing domination of bureaucratic language. The most often mentioned examples are the use of decomposed predicate (give suggestion - suggest), give opinion - think), give contribution - contribute), nominalization of statements, use of gerund in different case constructions: two mps exchanged opinions, there were discussions, consultations were made, and etc.

The most concerning is the fact that apart from journalists, politicians and public figures who use the bureaucratic language its use is more frequent in every day speeches. What produces a specific alarm is that young people use this form of non standard language.

The analysis of increasing presence of bureaucratic language which impairs and violates the physiognomy of the standardized language seems to lose sight of language being above all a social category. Apart from lingual factors, there are also non-lingual factors that affect its development.

The appearance of the culture of mass society brought in a disturbance in the development tendencies of the spoken language. It disturbed the authentic language culture in relation to the language reality of the poorly educated. These changes continue to influence the language culture of all layers and ages in a society with increased intensity almost daily.

Even people with perfect knowledge of the rules of standardized language, functional styles and who consider themselves stylistically literate, cannot control the non-lingual impulses that affect language.

The criticism of culture of mass society comes from both, the rightists and the leftists. The first ones fear from anarchy being the consequence of mass society, and the other ones believe that mass culture is a product of the ruling class and that it fortifies the bourgeois value system.

Language as a key role in every cultural practice, related to linguistic meanings is definitive because it is affected not only by the creator but also by the interpreter. Every meaning has its own narrative logic that has its own story about itself and about others. Linguistics and stylistics

provide a fair basis for the deconstruction of the power that creates a platform required for the use of non proper speech; the bureaucratic language being one of them.

Roland Bart, addresses the public with the analysis of culture as a text. According to him everything that is broadcast through mass media is subjected to reading because it is a product of a labeling process. The semiology approach supposes that cultural texts are a manifestation of cultural patterns which are universal, unchangeable and that the process of labeling is always active. However, in reality, in the field, every occurrence has a set of meanings. Thus the phenomenon of intersexuality comes into existence. It strives to leave every meaning open to new and different interpretations. His famous theory about the author's death confirms the stance that there is not a phenomenon or meaning that can be interpreted in a way its author desires instead the meaning gets its value only when it is interpreted or changed by the recipient or the consumer. This means that the interests of powerful ideologists can be redirected and also the thesis of some theorists like Sandra Sharo's that bureaucratic language is imposed by the centers of power, governments, the big brother etc. If we "translate" Bart's interpretation of culture as a text there is one evident message, the interpreter of limited and poor text cannot really enrich his language and style. The author in her book *How to Write for the Newspaper* gives the advice to the present and future journalists, but to the authorities as well:

Bear in mind that the all the governments and managements of the world will try to make their work seem less clear because the mystification of the work is an effective way to rule without accountability. An ideal means for that purpose is language. Thereby, it does not matter if the bulky language of administration is used or the language out of which God's essence speaks, or the will of the people, or the authority of political philosophy, sociology, psychology, economy, law or any other former vocation of the politicians... The language of administration is best understood if it is not heard at all. Therefore, you should try to understand what the government is doing before engaging in political journalism. What is of no less importance is this: you should get rid of the fear from the government in order not to get confused by its language. You are left to struggle with the bureaucracies of other vocations. You would not believe but there are as many as there are different professions. [8].

### Results

Why do people speak and write bureaucratically? Can they resist the negative influence of mass media on their language?

The manipulation of the public would not be possible without the public's consent. Choosing a lesser evil, only in the society ruled by political terror, means agreeing to manipulation. In all other cases language offers to the public something that it wants, something that it needs or something it appreciates. What does he admire and what does he highly appreciate in a bureaucratic discourse? The society can have different values at different times and nowadays the main values are mostly western values and modernity.

In addition, since the beginning of the modern age the public has high value for the objective scientific cognition. Bureaucratic rhetoric today appropriates foreign words from western politics and economy (mostly English words) and certain features of the scientific style" [8, P. 115]

In the essence of post structuralism is that there is no objective reality which has not gone through the meanings given by the language. J. Derrida thinks that there is no way

to determine the truth because every spoken word actually carries the traces of what was left unspoken. Perhaps Foucault would be a better example for understanding the issue we are dealing with. He is not interested in the functioning of the language itself as much as he is interested in the social conditions which lead to the creation of discursive knowledge. According to him the speech itself is not important to society but, who is speaking and why. The representatives of mass media know that really well that the value system is relative and variable which is why throughout human history different discursive formations were dominant, formations that regulate a certain system of knowledge which cannot be compared to anything that was or that is yet to be.

Language is variable in time in relation to the new and unpredictable situations. Adoption of models and patterns for their use and functioning in communication does not happen according to a certain pattern. Every participant in communication has language ability, and the way of communicating depends on the competence of the code and communication. Communication murmurs have a considerable effect on the process of communication (insufficient attention, ideological choices, indifference etc.). An ideal speech representative (in the sense supposed by the representatives of generative grammar) who possesses an ideal language knowledge does not exist. He especially does not exist among the employed in the mass media where no formal education is required for the job. The occurrence of speech is a complex process of communication depends on the spoken situation (a non-lingual context).

For the same journalist different spoken situations could be interlocutors with different educations, ideologies, mentalities, the readiness for a concrete conversation, stage fright etc. A Serbian sociolinguist Radovanovic says:

The speech representative of course possesses the rules for choosing and using language tools depending on the type of linguistic situations together with all other rules in the part of his knowledge about language called the competency of communication [6, P. 59] Since no speech manifests itself as a completely unified whole but instead it transforms depending on who speaks to whom, with what purpose etc. Thus, a speech variation occurs which has its own style characteristic among others.

One of the main reasons for such an occurrence is that the functional stratification of language is not normatively regulated. Hence the negligence in the use of language. Many editors of the public media are not aware nor are they familiar with the speech variations or functional styles. Just like legal regulation brought about progress a kind of regulation would bring changes in language as well. Therefore, Radovanovic suggests: A language norm must explicitly point out the linguistic features of a style and specify which non-lingual conditions are needed for their choice and use. [6, P. 65].

Some theoretical premises are common for sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics in the linguistic work and actions they undertake. For example, one of them observes language not only in the systematic sphere as linguistic knowledge i.e. competency, but also in the communicational sphere as specified by Radovanovic. Very important issues are related to the problem of language acquisition, bilingualism, diglossia and multilingualism in speech interactions of any kind, organization and function of the speech act, the correlation between linguistic, cultural, social and psychological structures and occurrences, personality structures, speech act and its integration on the level of discourse, linguistic actions in the area of mass media etc. [6, P. 140].

Language itself and its stylistic actions cannot be isolated from its natural environment and from social and cultural context and be understood and interpreted by closed, abstract and stereotyped formulas. Simply put, there are no homogeneous language expressions the likes of which the representatives of traditional linguistics are trying to portray. Language, according to Georgas Mooning is not equipped in a way that it can convey the deepest experience of the individual speaking the language. The complexity of the language functions should be comprehended as a fact which warns us that it depends on the certain realized speech occurrence and speech actions within it when and in which statement some of the possible functions of language might hierarchically get to the forefront. Neither structuralisms nor generativists created the conditions to observe language in the totality of human communication activities, social, cultural, psychological and other interactions or even compare language to them. [6, P. 147]

Lesic here asks the key question, basing his assumptions on Plato's and Aristotle's postulates about style. In order to prove his thesis on the unity of thought and speech he suggested a unit he arrived at during the analysis and that contains the properties inherent to speech thought as a unity. That unit would, according to him be the meaning of the words, because meaning is neither speech nor thought, and they develop and change through history. [4, P. 102]

Apart from all the listed possible reasons that lead to the abundant use of the bureaucratic style in public media and by the students journalists to be and public figures, other reasons could be added such as the development of new technologies, the number of information which multiply by geometric progression, the replacements of words with pictures, not reading and aggressive politics of the owners and managers of mass media etc. Vigotsky firmly rejects the teachings of earlier schools about the connection between word and meaning being only associative and made under the multiple matching in the consciousness of the impression produced by the word and the impression made by the object for which the word stands for. Bureaucratic language and its style is not only a transfer of the bureaucratic bogeyman from the notorious socialism in Yugoslavia but also, and many serious language connoisseurs agree on it Fekete, Klajn, Danojlic, and others that this language "the new speech" of the global age has all the elements of the same limited speech of which Orwell wrote and the conditions for its application have finally been met in this age of mass media. Words have, according to A. Alonso infectious power that has to be considered by those who deal with stylistics. We should stop here for a moment, and consider that infectious energy of words when bureaucratic language is concerned. Polish students proved in the newspaper "Зудие Варсзавы" how demagogic and cliché language can be. They made a table with four horizontal columns and ten vertical columns. There are a few words in each column from the bureaucratic futile dictionary from the time of socialist Poland.

Sima Avramovic in his book *Rhetoric techno* cites this example as an excellent indicator of empty bureaucratic words that can help make more than ten thousand different speeches. Each one of them sounds serious and significant but in fact they say nothing.

These relapses from the past found their place in today's global written media. Sima Avramovic calls those linguistic phrases mantras and fetishes. Language of the global age has its fetishes, notions such as Human rights, ethnic cleansing, market economy, global society, gender correctness, tolerance, multiethnic etc. Many other terms, many of which

come from the bureaucratic dictionary of international institutions and global world administration, are coming into use and separating people to those who are informed and those who are not.

The use of a number of those terms is a good base for manipulation and demagoguery by those who became familiar with the words first and so gained the right to interpret their meaning to those unfamiliar with them.

It is a sensitive issue especially when terms do not have precisely determined meanings. Right along with it comes the production of consent through media propaganda machinery. The most drastic illustration of it is probably the constantly repeated sentence by Margaret Thatcher when she spoke of the inevitability of neoliberals — there is no alternative. [1, P. 56]. According to Avramovic, bureaucratic language includes slogans, undesired and forbidden words, neologisms, phrases. Bureaucratic language of contemporary media suppresses the individual, and it advertises the market and the political elite. Demagogic coloring of such a language is one of the main

threats to modern democracies and freedoms in the global world. "Hence, perhaps, it can be said that totalitarianism begins in the language," Sima Avramovic lucidly noticed.

#### Conclusion

We tried to, by citing different author's theories and ideas related to the mass media in global era, join those who address a very complex subject that has not been discussed much. The domination of mass media in all areas of human global life creates a vacuum in which the western civilization strives for an extreme historical delusion that more information and superficial knowledge leads that very civilization along the right path. If language, as the essence of all communication, gets abducted by aggressive and shallow goals of mass media and its creators, a human being of (post)modern time will be locked in deaf society. A rare individual will at some point in a synthesized voice utter certain words speaking and speaking but say nothing. Then, it will be too late for any action.

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