

Review (opponent)

The analysis of media discourse on environmental problems in the Russian English-speaking media

(Bachelor thesis)

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The thesis aims to discombobulate the rhetorical features of the environment-related articles from three Russian English-speaking news websites, mostly under the prism of (multi-modally-re-contextualized) CDA.

Firstly, in my point of view, the text is very well written and I appreciate the author's careful work on presented arguments, phrasing, work with critical apparatus and overall I must positively evaluated the structure of the presented thesis.

There are some exceptions, e. g. (to my taste, a bit clumsy) title of the introductory chapter: "The Beginning of Environmental Topics" (p. 8). In what sense one should understanding the "beginning"? In what discourse? E. g. in sociology (or even broader in humanities and social sciences) the environmental topics does not "begin" with the Beck's *Risk Society*, but can be traced to the philosophical anthropology (A. Gehlen et cie) and in sociology e. g. to the problematics of the social(environmental) movements (cf. e. g. Touraine's influential sociological works on this topics).

The second exception is, that some authors (e. g. U. Beck) serves in the text only as rhetorical ornaments. I lack more profound analysis of Beck's concepts, especially in the author's consideration of the roles of "experts" in media agency.

Third, rather insignificant, exception is the author's usage of the word "pragmatic" in the common sense (p. 15), when she works with the jargon of media-language theory (cf. "pragmatic(s)" vs "pragmatic").

My general point is, that author's definitions of the used concepts in the theory-driven chapters, despite the indisputable profoundness and careful work with the sources, seems to me to be still more intuitive, than analytical.

This indecisive work with theoretical concepts is, in my point of view, projected to the whole body of the presented thesis. My questions, concerning this aspect, therefore are:

1. What is it, or how would you precisely (methodically) differentiate between concepts of "neutral" and "emotional" (if the intention to present something as neutral is non-neutral intention)? Perhaps, the intention of "neutrality" does not come from some "clear representation", but from a dialogue and contextualization.
2. How would you precisely (methodically) differentiate between concepts of "slightly sceptical" (p. 34) and "more or less" sceptical language?
3. How would you measure or conceptualize the notion of "influence" (e. g. of "political authorities", p. 9)?
4. How would you measure the influence on the reader or how would you test the author's intention? (Ibid.)

If the answer is: through the analysis of the representation used rhetorical-visual figures, I doubt that the presented theoretical consideration of these phenomena is sufficient. My general question is – how to analytically/methodologically move from the "observability of words" to the "intention of the creator" and to the "influence on the recipient"? Perhaps I am mistaken, but author's arguments in this direction, sounds like a form of psychologism to my ears.

Therefore presented research questions are very hard to answer (p. 26):

"1. Is the information in the articles presented neutrally or the author's viewpoint is visible?"

There are cases (in literature, propaganda and in media general), where the author viewpoint is no "visible" (no "ich-form" etc. is found), but still the text is not presented "neutrally".

“2. Are there scientific terms or complicated structures that may distort the perception of the content?”

This (the problem of “distortion”), again, is a strong empirical question that cannot be, in my point of view, understood only by the presented form of analysis of the content of the media - but only in the work with respondents.

“3. To which other life spheres (economics, politics, etc.) are the links made in the publications?”

This question seems to me to be too vague, perhaps banal – social life itself is always interconnected to the spheres of “economics, politics etc.”

My last question is: what do the author (exactly) means by “discourse”? (In which sense is used this concept in the thesis.)

Despite aforementioned critical remarks, the presented thesis successfully meets the requirements for a B.A. thesis, therefore, I recommend the thesis for the defense and propose the grade 2.

Martin Švantner