

EDUCATIONAL FEATURES OF MODERN RUSSIAN SPEECH PRACTICE: A DETACHED VIEW OF AN EDUCATED OBSERVER

CARACTERÍSTICAS EDUCACIONAIS DA PRÁTICA DE FALA DO MODERNO RUSSO: UMA VISÃO DESTACADA DE UM OBSERVADOR EDUCADO

CARACTERÍSTICAS EDUCATIVAS DE LA PRÁCTICA DEL HABLA RUSA MODERNA: UNA VISTA INDEPENDIENTE DE UN OBSERVADOR EDUCADO

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ABSTRACT: The article concentrates on the educational features of modern everyday communication. The materials used were texts of notices that prove the existence of a crisis in modern mass communication. The reasons of crisis phenomena in speech practice have been established and ways out of the situation have been suggested.

KEYWORDS: Literary language. Literary norm. Speech practice. Speech communication crisis. Education.

RESUMO: O artigo concentra-se nas características educacionais da comunicação cotidiana moderna. Os materiais utilizados foram textos de avisos que comprovam a existência de uma crise na comunicação de massa moderna. As razões dos fenômenos de crise na prática da fala foram estabelecidas e as saídas para a situação foram sugeridas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Linguagem literária. Norma literária. Prática da fala. Crise de comunicação da fala. Educação.

RESUMEN: El artículo se concentra en las características educativas de la comunicación cotidiana moderna. Los materiales utilizados fueron textos de aviso que prueban la existencia de una crisis en la comunicación de masas moderna. Se han establecido las razones de los fenómenos de crisis en la práctica del habla y se han sugerido las formas de salir de la situación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lenguaje literario. Norma literaria. Práctica del habla. Crisis de comunicación del habla. Educación.

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Introduction. Defining Language Norms

It is known that the norm as a result of purposeful codification often comes into conflict with speech practice. M. V. Panov in his work *The Russian Language and Soviet Society* (1968) defined this conflict as one of the standing linguistic *antinomies*. Cf., “Usage limits the use of language units and their collocations; bare necessities of speech usage make continuously tear the chain of these restrictions, exploiting the potentialities underlying language system” (PANOV, 1968).

B. N. Golovin rightly considered such “dual” of norms and usage to be a pre-requisite to the dynamics of language, its continuous development and enrichment (GOLOVIN, 2018). G. O. Vinokur did write about this, arguing that “the standard dialect with its only relative stability is always composed of a struggle between the traditions of linguistic taste and those living forces that direct the natural course of historical linguistic development” (VINOKUR, 2017; SZABÓ, 2002). However, it is important that the classics of Russian linguistics are satisfied that the antinomy “norm – usage” remains a constructive force in the development of language only on conditions that both poles – norm as a guarantor of the internal stability of language and *usage* as the external energy of linguistic dynamics – are on a par. The pressure of any one of the poles of the antinomy inevitably entails destructive processes.

We “went through” the first type of destruction of the linguistic antinomy in Soviet times when the strict observance of speech correctness by mass media workers in print, radio and teletext was mandatory, as it was dictated by the party and the government. As a result, despite all the advantages of the struggle for purity of the language on a national scale, the speech of journalists and television announcers was normative and fine but dry and uninteresting at the same time.

The second kind of destruction of the linguistic antinomy – the pressure of usage – characterizes, as it seems, our time. Today, the state practically does not interfere with the speech content of the media space; responsibility for the normative aspect of texts that are broadcast to the mass consciousness is turned over to the broadcasters (= speakers / writers) themselves. At the same time, the lack of state care about the purity of literary language, about the preservation of its traditions and grammatical norms leads to the fact that “the broadcast is filled with the texts with several grammatical, speech and stylistic errors, an excessiveness of “Anglicisms”” (MINNEN; CARROLL; PEARCE, 2001).

In this situation, without state care, the “defense reaction” of the older generation weakens, especially those who, according to O. B. Sirotinina, are the transmitters of an elite speech culture (SIROTININA, 2011). The very concept *speech culture* ceases to be something important, interesting for a very large number of Russian speakers. This means that destructive processes in modern mass communication are deepening. The national linguistic area is being filled with low quality texts that define the “mass culture of the global post-industrial consumer society that does not know national boundaries and forms the tastes of an ordinary “civilized” man (MINNEN; CARROLL; PEARCE, 2001; KLUSHINA, 2012).

Methods of Analysis

The main methods of analysis of journalistic texts are: 1) cognitive-discourse analysis involving *observation* over the processes that occur within communicative practice not regulated by official norms, i.e. within the framework of live communication between native speakers of the Russian language (DIJK, 2014; SILVERSTEIN; URBAN, 2016); 2) *systematization* of the elicited linguistic facts; 3) *interpretation* of the results of systematization; 4) *forecasting* as an attempt to determine the way out of the current situation.

Results and discussion. Culture and counterculture in the language of contemporaries

Presently, it is obvious that the typical speech of a modern fair to middling enlightened bearer of mass culture is often far from notions (you can forget about knowledge!) of the norms of the national literary language. At the same time, *the culture of speech* is not at all unnecessary or far from life theory. *The culture of speech* has a very direct bearing upon the practice of the community. Indeed, adherence to norms – at least the most basic ones – lays the groundwork for successful communication, for delivering on missions, for achieving harmonious unity in joint material and spiritual activities. Compare in this connection the definition of *the culture of speech* given by E. N. Shiryayev, “The culture of speech is that set and that organization of linguistic means which, in a certain communication situation and subject to modern linguistic norms and communication ethics, permit to provide the greatest effect in achieving the assigned communication tasks” (SHYRYAEV, 2000; EROMS, 2018). In this definition, it is important that it should provide the maximum effect not in general (which is impossible) but in a certain situation and for achieving not any but communicative goals, and that all this should be carried out in compliance with modern linguistic norms and ethics communication.

One of the natural results of deterioration of verbal communication culture is, of course, the destruction of its ethical standards: an orientation of the author of the speech toward the listener, a desire to see them as a communicative personality and a desire to build a meaningful dialogue – cease to be the values of verbal interaction. It turns out that the most important task is *to say*, but how – it does not matter, the main thing is *to say*.

The negative processes occurring in the language have long been observed by many Russian linguists. So, for example, A. A. Chuvakin says that in Russian communication, “a person’s desire to turn from a factor of the communicative space into its center” develops (CHUVAKIN, 2010), which inevitably entails “an imbalance in the relationship of the tendency toward speech harmony and toward speech aggression in favor of the latter” (CHUVAKIN, 2010). The scholar considers these processes to be *a crisis of speech communication* and differentiates two of its most important manifestations:

- 1) “decline of a person’s ability for mental and speech activity” (CHUVAKIN, 2010).
- 2) decline of a person’s ability for speech communication (CHUVAKIN, 2010).

It appears that these reflections express the disappointing truth about the state and internal negative tendencies of modern speech – about the disruption of dialogical ties in the language of mass communication. Let us analyze this trend using the example of texts of notice entirely underlie living word usage.

A text of notice (a provisional term) refers to the texts intended to inform citizens about the result of their action (purchase receipts), about the presence / existence of any fact of reality (announcements, price labels on traded commodities or small clarifying and concretizing quotes that accompany them), various nominatives (texts representing the goods on wrappers, candy wrappers, packages, boxes etc.), advertising texts for street signs, banners, billboards etc.

Texts of notice are non-professional and therefore reflect linguistic “creativity” in its elemental (spontaneous) state.

The main types of rule breaking of literary standards in the texts of notice

Consider the linguistic inferiority of the texts of notice by analyzing their formal and content-related features.

So, *the first type of manifestation of the crisis of speech communication* – decline in the ability for mental and speech activity – is expressed in the texts of notice through the following types of literary substandards:

1. Combining lexemes, phrases, sentences that are incompatible and not explaining each other in one utterance (= text). For example (hereinafter, the texts are given with the original spelling, punctuation and, if possible, graphics): «Сильногазированный напиток “«Колозвончик”» under the generic name *МАРОЧНЫЙ* (why this drink is “марочный”/ “branded” and where this much obliging naming unit is coming from in the text is explained neither by the context of the label nor by authors’ special clarification); toilet paper «*Офелия*»/ *Ophelia* (That is really, the product and its name cannot be compared in principle!); a notice on the price tag «*Гвоздика одноголовая*»/ *Dianthus one-headed*; the name of the creamy caramel «*Гоголь*» (*Gogol*) with the qualifying naming unit «*поэма в сливочном вкусе*» (*a poem in a creamy taste*), etc.

2. Incompatible combination of verbal and graphic elements. See: the name of the vodka «*Hu шаг назад*»/ *Not a Step Back* with the image of I. V. Stalin’s portrait on the label; the price tag on the baby’s *bonnet* where *chest measurements* and *height* are indicated; the name of the sunflower seeds «*Путные*» (*Putnye*) with the image of V. V. Putin’s eye; etc.

3. Combination of words in the alien setting, in which ambiguity is produced, oftentimes with a comic effect. Compare: a notice at the swimming pool *Вход на коньках в бассейн запрещен* (*No skating in the pool*); a notice in the bus *Уважаемые пассажиры! Убедительная просьба лбами, носами, губами и языками в стекло не тыкаться!!!* (*We kindly ask you not to poke into the glass with your foreheads, noses, lips and tongues!!!*) etc.

4. Elimination of words from an utterance necessary for the very item or the presentation of its meaning, which produces ambiguity. For example, an advertisement *Используй фен, который не сушит* (*Use a hairdryer that does not dry*) (obviously, it is understood that the hairdryer does not dry the scalp); or a road-side announcement *Водитель! Тебя ждут дома* (*Drivers! Your homies are waiting for you*) (What should a driver do in this case – drive with care or, on the contrary, step on the gas?); the text of an advertising signboard *Удар по яйцам! Всего за 21.90* (*Egg shot! At a bare 21.90*) (all that remains for an intending purchaser is only to question and show surprise!), etc.

5. Ill-conceived (oftentimes, not understood even by the very author а часто) reduction or word breaks given without break signs in general nominative context (most typically in price tags). Compare: the text from a price label for biscuits *Мальчик с пальчик в глаз печенье*; the name for cheese *Сыр колбасный Из бабушки*; the price tag text *Суповой набор гов-на*;

6. Aggression deliberately covered in the texts is realized either through the use of derogatory, vulgar or excessively familiar terms, or through the creation of abusive, pejorative (although sometimes with a comic effect) context. Compare: office announcement *Специально для заочников: клуб закрыт и не работает, тут теперь офис. Распечатки, дырокола, интернета нет! Заходить спрашивать не надо! Объявление для идиотов в виде картинок будет позже*;

7. Unaesthetic or abusive names for goods, institutions and shops. Compare: Eskimo pie «*Сюстик-пусик*»; a kid's store «*ЁПРСТ*»; the store «*Обжора*»; a promotional roadside text *Угадай слово! «**Й*»; a lollipop *Палка-сосалка*, etc. (AITCHISON, 2016).

It is possible to single out other variants of substandards in the texts of notice, but already from the above it is clear that today, within the framework of free (not subject to professional control, including linguistic) mass communication, not only negligence toward language prevails, but it can be said that in this kind of communication today **the principle of neglect of the Other** is being heavily realized.

The Reasons for Communication Crisis in Modern Society. There are several reasons for communication crisis that gripped the Russian-speaking society, among which the most important, in our opinion, are associated with the crisis in education. These are:

1) revision (= destruction) of the classic Soviet educational standards acknowledged by time and generations, which led to the approval of the clip type of learning in school and university practice – “a little of everything, without going into further details”;

2) linguistic permissiveness in the media, as a result of which speech errors of various types flow into the audio and video space – orthoepic, morphological, lexical, syntactic, while being replicated and multiplied from text to text, from transmission to transmission.

The list of reasons for the crisis of mass communication can be extended.

Conclusion

So, in this regard, I would like to reinforce the importance of *the state language policy* which is so much-needed today. The situation is that linguists cannot cope without state support – destructive processes are in a way too deep. Although some, of course, may disagree with this, for they believe that it is necessary to let nature take its course: all goes through the mill, and all comes out flour; there is no need to interfere with the nature's way of language development; things will straighten out organically over time... However, in our opinion, it is an error of judgment. Back in 1929 G. O. Vinokur advocated for introducing by the state a well-thought-out language policy, arguing that it “is nothing more than a guiding principle of social linguistic needs based on an accurate, scientific understanding of the matter” (VINOKUR, 2017).

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