

RUSSIAN PR-TEXT IN THE MULTICULTURAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT OF THE NORTHERN CAUCASUS

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ABSTRACT

The differential signs of the corporate Russian PR-discourse realized in the multicultural environment of the Northern Caucasus make adjustments in comprehending its typological features. These signs are determined by the existing communicative situation, the pragmatic objectives and linguistic and cultural specificity of the media space, as well as by the characteristics of the Russian-language picture of the world. The paper provides the typology of corporate Russian PR texts considering its plural communicative-pragmatic and linguistic-cultural features. The materials for the study were PR-texts created in Russian in the period from January 2010 to October 2014 (the total number of text fragments is 7453) by the Directorate of Public Relations of the open joint-stock company “Interregional Distributive Grid Company of the Northern Caucasus” (hereinafter: IDGC of the Northern Caucasus).

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In the modern linguistic paradigm, the need to specify the text typology remains pressing. In this connection, N.S. Valgin says: ‘Text typology, despite its central position in the general theory of text, is still not sufficiently developed. The general criteria (they should be the basis for the typology) are not yet determined’ [1]. Defining the criteria of text differentiation is an important problem; it is necessary to accept that one criterion is often not enough for a clear typology; accuracy can be achieved by a range of parameters. This situation causes the presence of different typologies for PR-texts.

Another factor contributing to the multiplication of PR-text typologies is constant updating of their forms. New genres are determined by new communications opportunities, including digitalization, Internet use and convergence in the field of mass media. For example, a few years ago, such kinds of press releases as IR releases (the abbreviation of investor relations release) or social media releases (releases for distribution in social networks) were known only in a narrow circle of PR specialists. Until recently, corporations have not been supporting blogs on the Internet. Thus, the dynamic process of new genres development in the Russian PR-discourse requires scientific interpretation and analysis.

Based on the PR-text peculiarities, their interpretation can be extended by introducing additional characteristics. For instance, PR-texts are not obligatory addressed only to one target group: they have genres that possess a certain suggestive potential aimed at several such groups (corporate publications,

financial reports and so forth.). Internet or mobile communication channels may mediate access to a PR-text.

Thus, the additional characteristics relevant to distinguishing new genres in Russian PR-texts are the following: the message volume and nature, the degree of immediacy and saturation with events, design manner, focus on a particular public group, PR-activities' specificity (internal and external PR), the degree of publication proficiency, distribution channel and the degree of personal principle in a PR-text.

A.D. Krivonosov offers a PR-text typology, the main criterion of which is the nature of the information presented via PR means. This typology separates verbal (written and oral) and nonverbal (iconic and indexical) types. In its turn, the iconic information includes visual (photo and video) and infographic subtypes[2]. The criterion of PR-text proficiency for publication allows the researcher to identify the following PR-text types: reference PR-texts and related ones (with an incomplete set of PR-text signs (slogans, resumes, press reviews). In their turn, reference PR-texts include primary PR-texts and media texts, i.e. journalistic scripts, which have relevant signs of a PR-text (image articles, image interviews, case-stories). Primary PR-text are differentiated into simple PR-texts (press releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, biographies, lists of questions and answers, by-liners, congratulations, statements to the media, invitations, image articles, image interviews, case-stories) and combined ones (press kits, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, booklets).

Like A.D. Krivonosov, we highlight the following PR-text genres significant for our research concept [2]:

- operational-news genres (information and news): press releases, invitations;
- investigation-and-news genres: backgrounders, lists of questions and answers, image interviews;
- documentary genres: fact sheets, biographies;
- investigational genres: statement to the media, image article, case-story;
- image-news genres: by-liner, congratulation.

The problem of dynamically developing PR-text typology is of particular significance in the context of the frequently used Internet's information space, 'The digital age has had a significant impact on both the media and the public relations forcing corporations to respond faster, be more accessible and straightforward' [3]. The global Internet development demands greater speed of creating PR-texts from PR-specialists; that naturally affects the deadlines of material preparation. Both the content and the form of PR-texts obviously fall under the influence of mediatisation. For example, before the appearance of Internet and in the early stages of its development, the recipient's attention was fixed by catchy headlines based on language game principles, alliteration, allusions and reminiscences. Today's title choice is dictated by the use of hyperlinks and search engines.

The modern Russian PR-discourse is characterized by the following key trends, which change the PR-text format in many ways:

- Mass media actively use Internet opportunities; that naturally causes changes in PR-text signs - and the format of their fixation in the Internet space in particular. Besides, traditional PR-text genres themselves acquire new features in this environment. For example, a press release (provided it is distributed by e-mail) carries a necessary hyperlink to the corporation official website or to any other resource containing additional information required to a journalist (a video from a previous action or a

video message from the company's head and so on.). Responsible person's contacts must now include not only a mobile phone and an e-mail address but also his/her ICQ number, which allows accelerating the communication process and eliminating its formal nature. Therefore, PR-text characteristics have multimedia message signs now because the communication channel itself determines its meanings.

•Text types are diversified in accordance with their functional purpose and target groups: press releases for journalists are complemented with IR Releases (Investor Relations releases), direct-to-consumer releases (Scott, 2010). Thanks to the Internet, a company can communicate with its customers without intermediaries (mass media); that causes appearing new variants of already known genres.

The diversification of PR-texts by target groups allows choosing the recipient's type/audience as a criterion for PR-text typology. Indeed, mutually beneficial relationships with customers may happen only due to correct understanding of the PR-message's prospective audience, its motivations and goals, as well as the system of its values and preferences. PR-service departments are charged with the duty to detect a range of interested persons, with which companies expect to establish and develop harmonious relations. From this perspective, this criterion allows defining PR-text optimum category attributes. Of course, the multicultural environment of the Northern Caucasus dictates special attention to the status-role relations of communication participants.

The basis of PR-text differentiation is their discursive (situational, communicative-functional) and intra-textual (thematic, structural-semantic and lexical-grammatical) characteristics modified under the influence of the interactive nature of those texts.

Because PR-texts represent one of the most effective mass communication tools, their purpose is to transmit the information, which takes into account the public interest, and to simultaneously provide such information with a public status in the impact on the target group. PR-text effectiveness should be measurable and expected; that can be established by identifying indirect influence on the formation of a sustainable positive attitude to the PR basic subject.

The most popular genres in the Russian PR-discourse are, in our opinion, press releases, image articles, by-liners, backgrounders and feature-stories; they are most often represented in the corporate media. This PR-experts' choice is driven by the genre specifics and the peculiarities of implementing PR communications in the multicultural environment of the Northern Caucasus.

Thus, press-releases are traditionally allocated to operational news texts. They represent factual, motivational-factual or instructional information; their text contains a reference to the date and time of the event and indicates the participants of the event. That allows creating a holistic view of the event served as an informational impulse for the press release. In the sphere of corporate media, such information includes facts about ongoing activities, the elimination of accidents, changes in management or organizational structure, etc. The press-release informational saturation determines selecting succinct syntax expressing communicative and pragmatic information in one sentence. The recipient's attention is held by means of clear statement structures fixing basic information as a semantic center. In addition, the press-release structure makes ramified intra-text links and thereby facilitates the decoding of PR-messages. In press-releases, simple and expanded sentences are most frequent, e.g.:

'It is the sixth "Golden support" competition carrying out in the Northern Caucasus. The six power supply companies controlled by JSC IDGC of the Northern Caucasus and JSC Nurenergo (the Chechen Republic) choose the best among the consumers - legal entities.'

We think that the press releases' important feature is frequent use of multi-level (lexical and syntactic) iterations allowing the recipient to focus on the new information and also to support the text coherence.

New information is manifested on the background of the already known material and creates a comfortable environment for the perception and interpretation of the PR-text:

‘It has not been possible to prevent icing at the Line 110 “Mashuk-Zalukokoazhe” by *ice melting* because the duplicate line “Mashuk – Kirov” turned off earlier ...Despite the vast majority of transmission lines maintained by “Stavropolenergo’s” branch is equipped with the systems of *ice melting*, the conducted melting has given only temporary effect - frost is quickly formed again’ (22.01.2010).

Press-releases may contain rhetorical questions that create a pseudo-dialogue situation, thereby increasing the genre’s influence intensity on the recipient:

‘Anyone who has seen the old instrument panel can compare it with the one installed today,’ Alexander Masich, the general director of” TiS-Energo, told at a meeting, ‘Dispatching equipment is the grid company’s face. And this “face” has come out very good. *Why was it such kind of a panel?* We prepared a design project especially for your branch. This is the best option, very simple to operate, the best we have ever implemented – a German combined panel with light indicators and video cubes, where you can display any necessary information...’(06.09.2012)

Communicative objectives are accomplished by means of PR-statements and infinitives, which help to create a required communicative situation prompting the recipient to a particular attitude towards the news:

‘“The Best in the Profession” [competition] is a great opportunity *to enhance* the prestige of blue-collar jobs not only regionally but also at the federal level’ (5.06.2012).

One of the most effective and important means and lexical-semantic markers of critical information used in the Russian-language press releases is surely inversion. Breaking word order draws the recipient’s attention to the fragment of reality appropriate for the PR subject and forms a predetermined attitude to both the event and informational occasion. That, in its turn, creates a positive image of the company:

‘At the competition opening ceremony, with welcoming remarks to the electric power industry, addressed the Deputy General Director for Technical Issues – the Chief Engineer of JSC "IDGC of the Northern Caucasus" Boris Misirov’ (03.07.12).

Obviously, a larger share falls on the Russian nationwide vocabulary because profession-related special words reduce the degree of the information assimilation by the general public.

Press releases are assertive speech acts because, during a communicative act, their producer makes the truth of the proposition explicit. The recipient is convinced via a set of lexical means selected by the addresser to characterize the news event. Assertive acts allow manipulating the recipient’s consciousness as it creates a positive image for the organization through a variety of communication strategies:

‘On July 7, 2010, in Moscow, the top management of JSC “IDGC of the Northern Caucasus” met with the investment community representatives. The meeting was held by Deputy General Director Armen Danielyan, Director for Economics Vladislav Zuevsky, Corporate Governance Director Andrey Harin. The event was organized by the investment company ATON ...’ (07/09/10).

In the above-mentioned fragment, the truth of the proposition is represented by indicating the event date, its location, the names of the event participants and the companies, which really exist in the energy market.

The Russian-language press releases are characterized by frequent use of constative verbs. That generally confirms our hypothesis of assertive speech acts presented in these PR-texts. Assertiveness of speech act is enhanced due to including specific figures and data into the text - that is also aimed at producing the organization's positive image.

Discourse-analysis led to the conclusion that the Russian-language feature-story gives priority to the use of simple extended sentences: 'Since 1970, pioneering competitions of electricians took place on the training grounds of "Stavropolenergo"'.

In the Russian-speaking feature-story, there are constant indications to the present moment in order to achieve the effect of continuously repeating action, in other words – the effect of recipient's presence at the ongoing event: 'In our days, All-Russia competitions of electricians – employees of JSC "IDGC Holding" - were also held in 2008 on the basis of JSC "IDGC of the Northern Caucasus"'.

Feature-story is also characterized by various types of repeats, which help to realize the stylistic functions of amplification, gradation or clarification: 'Since 1970, pioneering *competitions of electricians* took place on the training grounds of "Stavropolenergo". In 1979, Pyatigorsk hosted the first All-Union *Competition of electricians* working in the sphere of power supply'.

For the Russian feature-story, of special significance is the factor of expressivity and evaluation, which promotes labeling the author's modality: 'In 2011, the representatives of JSC "IDGC Holding" visited the "rodeo" of electricians in Kansas, with 200 competing teams. *It cannot be excluded* that the Russian energy sector will take part in them regularly, side-by-side with their colleagues from the US, Canada, UK and Jamaica'.

Let us also note that in the Russian-speaking corporate PR-discourse, feature-story themes are often quite limited due to the strategic task PR-services face. First, they are to create a positive image for the organization; it is attained by means of press releases, backgrounds, by-liners and other genres providing a quick expected result.

An image article is also a demanded genre in Russian PR-text. They can be of two types: informational or analytical. In the first case, image articles provide information about the company, its top managers and so on; in the second – they submit the analysis of specific problems and ways to solve them. Both image article types work for absolute concrete definitions since they have a specific correlation with reality and are characterized by reference. Specifying is represented in dates, numbers and names. Simple sentences are significant in such articles:

'By Decree of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin No. 746 of May 30 2012, Alexey Demidov, the First Deputy General Director of JSC "IDGC Holding", the Acting General Director of JSC "IDGC of the Northern Caucasus" was awarded the medal "Order For Merit to the Motherland in the 2nd degree" for his labor achievements and long-term conscientious work' (30.05.2012).

To our opinion, the image article created within the frames of the Russian corporate PR- discourse has a number of obligatory signs, among which special significance is given to the information about a particular event, person, etc.:

'A.V. Demidov has been managing JSC "IDGC of the Northern Caucasus" from November 18, 2011. Alexey Vladimirovich Demidov was born in 1976 in Leningrad. In 1998, he graduated from the St. Petersburg Trade and Economic Institute majoring in "Accounting and Audit". He completed advanced trainings at the International Banking Institute (2000), Corporate Educational and Scientific Center of RAO UES (2010). In 1994-2000, Alexey Vladimirovich worked at JSC "Bank Petrovsky" (JSC

“Petrovsky Narodny Bank”), where he rose from a consultant to the Director of the Internal Audit Office. Later, he held the posts of Financial Director at CJSC “First Stevedoring Company” (2001-2003), First Deputy General Director of JSC “Sevmorneftegas” (2003-2006), Adviser to the Deputy Chairman of the Board at OJSC “Gazprom” (2006), the First Deputy Chief Financial Officer at OJSC NK “Rosneft” (2006-2009) ... ' (30.05.2012).

An important lexical-semantic component to characterize the image article stylistic features is the presence of abstract nouns contributing to the activation of recipient' cognitive potential and the formation of his/her positive opinion on the PR subject (abstract nouns are marked in italics in this passage):

‘The main *purposes* of the review competition are improving the professional level of the electrical networks' dispatching personnel, *sharing* advanced *methods* of operational work and new forms of training dispatching staff. Another important goal is the *introduction* of modern computer simulators and automated training systems. The third component is checking the staff *qualification level* and, finally, *determination* of required organizational and technical measures aimed at the *improvement* of work with operational dispatch personnel (5.06.2012).

Informational and analytical articles are characterized by the active inclusion of additional background information - to establish the connotative relationships that determine its better assimilation. Such contexts' syntagmatics is extremely broad due to the information diversity and purpose of such articles: ‘It is no secret that since the invaders were driven out of the country, Soviet Union immediately proceeded to recovery. Invaluable assistance came from electric trains, which served as small mobile power stations. The industry built more than 20 electric trains with the total capacity 21 thousand kW in 1942-1944. Since 1944, more than 650 cities, factories and construction sites were provided with electricity by those trains. During their existence, they generated about 40 billion kilowatt hours. Unfortunately, this experience is forgotten today, but people from the power industry believe it is still relevant in conducting large-scale rescue and recovery operations in the areas of emergency situations’ (18.07.12).

Cognitive-pragmatic features of PR-texts are implemented through various genres. Correct genre choice ultimately contributes to effective impact on the addressee's consciousness and sub consciousness. Following E.V. Shelestyuk, we treat the method of linguistic manipulation as a set of practical activity's techniques and operations correlated with the acting subject's illocutionary purposes and subordinated to solving his/her specific tasks. We also consider the technique of linguistic manipulation as the influencing subject's specific psychological, pragmalinguistic and semiotic actions aimed at achieving his/her immediate illocutionary goals and control over the speech situation (Shelestyuk, 2009).

We believe that in the multicultural environment of the Northern Caucasus, the most frequent kinds of PR-texts are press releases, image articles, by-liners, backgrounders and feature-stories; it is evident from the analysis of the corporate media material. Such genre selection is primarily determined by the specifics of PR communication implementation in the multicultural environment of the Northern Caucasus, as well as by linguistic-pragmatic features of the indicated genres.

The concept of this study postulates the significance of qualitative and quantitative variety of suggestive PR techniques appealing to the unconscious and the subconscious rather than to persuasion. This significant characteristic certainly stems from the increased manipulative capability of PR-texts in the implementation of the linguistic pragmatic model of the Russian-language PR-discourse.

This study has given a possibility for an attempt to determine the ontological status of the Russian-language corporate PR-discourse based on a comprehensive linguistic analysis of PR-texts – for the full characterization of this institutional discourse type in the media space, as well as within the Russian-language picture of the world.

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