

Mass Culture and Mass Addressee Through Stylistic Mirror of Allusion in Modern Mass Media

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Abstract—The article offers a brief analysis of mass media authors and their collective address interaction. Issues relating to the essential features of journalists discourse strategies and the pains, taken by mass media in an attempt to persuade the address group and to move them to action, are touched upon. That includes a spotlight on factors that are instrumental in cementing received data in the readers' collective mind and changing their attitudes and behavior. As British newspaper texts analysis showed, such stylistic figure as allusion to facts of mass culture serves to depict the collective reader and is among the language means that allow a journalist to cooperate and stay in tune with mass reader, thus molding the way they communicate.

Keywords—*media discourse; mass media; mass addressee; allusion; mass culture*

I. INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that one can name a thing that can challenge mass media discourse in terms of its ability to influence and mold public opinion, define it, use and control it for its own pragmatic aims. Mass media are indeed will go any length in an attempt to change society's attitude to political figures, fast moving consumer goods, art and cultural events. By doing that, they aim at changing and regulating their target audience's behavior. And as we all know it is through certain nominative and discourse tactics and strategies, through a careful choice of expressive and emotively charged language means that mass media strive to build a model teaching what to think and how to reason, a model to adhere to. This model may be seen as a type of frame through which one should see the world. And it is up to mass media to try and integrate it into their addressee's minds for the latter to accept it [1] and thus become an easier target for manipulation and propaganda, which to a certain effect are underlying principles modern mass media stick to.

II. MASS MEDIA AND MODERN CHALLENGES OF NEWS ENVIRONMENT

The peculiarities that are typical of mass media and their target audience were looked into once and again during last decades, including the studies that looked at them in terms of functional stylistics. Yet the question of how time has

contributed to mass media making it more effective and influential, what language means are used to express ideas that will in time change the addressee's attitude to the world and things around them is still to be answered, as well as the one that concerns mass media addressee of today. These are, in short, the challenges that scholars are facing at the moment.

We understand that speech in mass media communication is expressive and depends on the so-called "immersing" effect on the part of an addressee, when the latter is introduced into the communicative tactics and strategy of the addresser. Thus, an addressee is encouraged to cooperate, to join efforts in order to achieve an agreement in the course of interaction [2].

Yet, making an addressee factor that important in communication by mass media discourse (due to a fierce competition among mass media, as well as due to the fact that this type of discourse is often used as a stage for election campaigns and political debates), in its turn, poses a few questions to mass media themselves, such as: how to define what your audiences are like, what their pragmatic values are, how to keep on attracting their attention. Mass media must have a clear idea what their readers, viewers, and listeners are like and in terms of the discourse strategy not to forget about that, as the way that the audience "feels about something" is often a result of mass media discourse in action.

Thus, necessity to adjust the message to an addressee's likes, tastes and interests seems to be vital for mass media, as it will let them increase their convincing power. But the moment they become aware of that, at least three issues seem to arise, and it is them that determine the final success of mass media communication.

III. MASS MEDIA ADDRESSER — ADDRESSEE ISSUE

The first issue lies in the fact that mass media addressee is multifaceted and often dual. The target audience is versatile, so that one can reveal a number of subgroups in it that are different in the size of their income, their social status as well as in their attitude towards the world and their knowledge of it. Despite the conventional view, according to

which both mass media addresser and the addressee are often collective by nature, it is worth of notice that we had better speak of a complex unity of individual and collective, both in terms of mass media addresser's status (editor's opinion, politics-related or any other interests of media magnates, the personality of the journalist as of a representative of some social doctrine and social ideas) and in terms of mass media discourse addressee (mass reader is a "non-defined" recipient and "formal" or "indirect" addressee, that is the object of mass media attention and criticism).

In any case, to some extent, mass media addresser has to construct the image of the target addressee according to logics, one's knowledge of the world and of how the subject under discussion is of interest to a mass recipient, whether he/she can fully grasp it. The addresser should also realize that the mentioned addressee may, above all, expect the addresser to work out a certain pattern or way of thinking for him/her [3].

Apart from a blurred status of an addressee, the second issue that mass media face may be the choice of facts to present to a reader or a listener. The transmitted data must be fairly accessible according to a typical representative of a language community for mass media to exercise and control its influence and public opinion molding.

Thus, for instance, to communicate and influence successfully, a journalist has to coordinate his/her knowledge of the world and pragmatic aims, such as a wish to express his/her creativity, with the aims, views and interests of the editorial board, the collective addressee, and eventually with experience and knowledge of a certain addressee that the latter possesses about the communicated matter. The addressers should also take into consideration that there is always an opportunity to resort to alternative sources of information that an addressee can rely on, communicating and interacting with other members of the language community, as well as the addressee's personal opinion of the matter in question.

What is more, a journalist may not forget that the art of convincing is based on "an effortless cognitive activity" [4], which will help the addressee to have a formed opinion of the communicated message as the one that manages or fails to meet the addresser's expectations. All this could be possibly done if there is a combination of the former's previous experience and the communicated message. Besides the extent of influence, one may have on an addressee, it is obviously linked to the latter's thought process, the way it goes, "the cognitive response" to the message, and not always so much to the type of communicated message.

While choosing some facts describing the world, mass media addresser is anxious as he/she has to reach a compromise on what kind of balance there will be between 'the order what to say or communicate', made by the addressee and what mass media agenda is. A journalist is at the crossroads when choosing carefully where to lay the stress, he/she tries to get a certain range of phenomena across to the recipient and, what is more, they do it so as to make it last. The agenda then becomes dependent on the manner of informing, thus becoming an indirect factor that may help to

influence and form a certain attitude to the world on the addressee's part.

The necessity to communicate one's personal view, some moral evaluation, to give a piece of advice, to direct and to instruct as to some further activity, to highlight something, ignoring some parts or aspects of it and pushing forward others at the same time — all this means to create a mass media news frame. That, in its turn, becomes the third issue that a journalist can face. The mentioned frame is vital for a straightforward activation of cognitive schemas to guide and control the addressee's perception and procession of the message. An addressee-related approach (together with the effectiveness of the news frames) is revealed in the choice of such language units, stylistic means and symbols, which could match the accepted discourse rules and standards, and be capable of forming an opinion of a certain thing, that seems familiar to an addressee, being part of his experience. This will allow for mass media discourse not to dictate the wishes and thoughts to the audiences but to engrain them into their minds thus achieving their aims and exercising an implicit communicative influence.

IV. ALLUSION AS A MEANS TO GET ACROSS TO A MODERN MASS MEDIA ADDRESSEE

To show the way stylistic means can characterize the type of interaction that exists between British printed mass media addresser and, addressee, we analyzed a number of so-called "problem articles" in "The Evening Standard" from August 2017 to May 2018 in order to reveal the type of Stylistic means that this newspaper uses when communicating with its readers. It is of importance to keep in mind that the readers (the target audience) of this newspaper are "unsophisticated" ones that can also be termed as "an average addressee". It is for them that the paper frames the news and stresses the importance of certain facts. The newspaper in question can be regarded as a tabloid and is meant for a "run-through" reading as it tells about everyday city life and events.

While looking into the way that journalists construct their dialogues with their target audience using certain language means, we saw an obvious bias towards such stylistic means as allusion which is used in feature articles and news discourse in abundance to describe things, people and phenomena of all sorts. First and foremost, this fact allows one to see the chosen cases of allusion so abundantly used in mass media discourse to describe and interpret objects, people, and what not. As our compilation showed the chosen cases of allusion, featured in media discourse as intertextual items, actually refer an addressee to mainly such facts of mass culture as TV movies and programs, various talk and reality shows, famous figures, such as Hollywood stars, pop-singers, names of popular songs. E.g.:

- From Freezing Shed to Frozen Drinks.... Rise of the Smoothie Operator.
- Meanwhile, across the pond, Donald Trump, a satsuma-coloured man with no political experience

other than navigating the boardroom of *The Apprentice*, was elected President.

Example 1 represents a young and resourceful businessman, and the journalist resorts to a vivid allusion based on the play of words (smooth – smoothie). That, in its turn, refers one to a British singer Sade’s 80-s hit song “Smooth Operator”.

Example 2 features US president-elect Donald Trump, and the journalist employs allusion that refers to a rather popular reality-show “*The Apprentice*”, where players are young and ambitious would-be entrepreneurs with Donald Trump as the all-time host of the show for fourteen seasons. That was done to explicitly suggest that Trump, a showman and a businessman, is a fact more logical than president Trump. What is more, one can feel a certain doze of humour, which is down to the fact, that a contributory epithet “satsuma-colored” and a metaphor “navigated the boardroom” — both reinforce the allusion.

Similar allusions could be observed in the article, telling about some resigned British politician:

The evictees from Theresa May’s Cabinet must not mope about but take a bag out of fun Ed’s book. Michael Gove had ukulele lessons so he might want to give Britain’s *Got Talent* a shot... And I’m sure Lord Sugar will let George Osborn take part in the next series of *The Apprentice*... we were with some serious female political journalist going to some boring factory visit but it all ended up turning into a surreal version of the *Great British Bake Off* when Ed arrived with a tin full of cupcakes.

The article focuses on the fact that some former members of government and key politicians have gained notoriety, which was down not to their successful political career, but to a number of pitfalls and faux-pas, that often made them a subject of ridicule. The journalist ironizes, resorting to allusion, suggesting that it was only too natural for some of these “figures” to pursue a career in show business rather than in politics. By means of allusion he refers his reader to the above-mentioned TV show “*The Apprentice*”, and also to two more highly popular prime-time entertaining TV shows “*Britain Has Got Talent*” and “*The Great British Bake-Off*”.

For a better and fuller understanding of what role stylistic allusion plays in feature articles, one should, starting from the analysis of the actual nature of this language means, do some research into the ways allusion contributes to the process of interaction between the addresser and the addressee, and then on the basis of the results obtained in the course of it, to try and look into precedent phenomena that some allusions are based on. These precedent facts are of significant cultural importance and they may also be of help to us in our attempts to create an image of mass media addressee.

As we may know, stylistic allusion is a deliberate subjective reference or hint that carries an implicit comparison, when some feature of some person in question is ascribed to some other person or phenomena. In fact, mass media allusion is seen playing the role of some secondary naming, that has an indirect reference to different facts of

everyday life of communities, and as it is often based on well-known facts (in our examples these are references to popular TV shows), that are easily decoded by the readers [5], [6], [7].

Through stylistic allusion referring to everyday life, facts of mass culture, that are so easily recognizable and popular, deep-rooted stereotypes, the addresser manages to communicate messages while sharing the same language environment with the addressee. The irony that springs from the opposition of the primary meaning and another one that is added by the journalists themselves contributes to establishing the ties between an addresser and an addressee on the basis of common culture of popular laughter. That, in turn, increases the degree of confidence in the news source. We can also suppose, that turning to allusion to different phenomena, that arouse pleasant emotions (for instance, the entertaining aspect of shows is aimed at that), the addresser secures the so-called “passive reception of information” on the addressee’s part.

Cases when iconic symbols of Christian culture are presented in mass media discourse through a “mass culture frame” are also numbered in our compilation. What attracts our attention is the fact that similar cases are quite numerous in “*The Guardian*” news headlines pertaining to different spheres of life. Until recently this newspaper was regarded as a “quality” one, but in 2017 “*The Guardian*” announced it was going tabloid in format. The following examples illustrate this fact to the best advantage:

- Jesus Christ Superstars: Meet the Modern Messiahs.
- How Meghan Markle Might Bring the Royals Closer to Christ the King.
- Theresa May is Like Jesus? Let’s Examine This.
- The Passion Review — Jesus Christ Turns Superstar in Live Broadcast.
- What Jesus, Judas and Nutella Can Tell Us about Women’s Bodies.

As we can see through allusion to Christian symbols the precedent situation is set in motion. This precedent situation is some ‘ideal’ situation which is rich in connotations and arouses predictable emotions and feedback, the fact that the addresser is well aware of. Thus, we can see mass media can ‘sell’ any fact, resorting to easily recognizable symbols.

V. CONCLUSION

There is little doubt, that mass media may present facts in various ‘stylistic shell’. The language they use (“the shell”) to present facts seem to acquire even a greater importance than the facts themselves. The author’s style and its originality are seen as advantages in today’s informational society with mass media doing informational business. Thus, information itself is no longer of interest. Presenting it in a shell, that refers to some facts of mass culture, through easily recognizable images, boosts mass media influence on the key aspects of social life and the cultural environment, creating

situations where mass media overlap some socio-cultural phenomena.

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