

# *Impact Modeling (Case Study of Political Talk Shows as Multimodal Events)*

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**Abstract**—On the material of the political talk show *Maybrit Illner* and pre-election debates, the article analyzes the mechanism of influence implemented by a combination of semiotic means within the multimodal interaction. The cognitive impact model in multimodal interaction takes into account components of different sensory modalities that are relevant for the addresser to form the target model of addressee's perception, multi-level cognitive processing of information encoded by different types of characters, integrity of the image formed on the basis of needs and expectations, experience and primary sensations of the addressee. All sensory modes are treated as equal. The analysis of patterns of the influence of a speaker carried out in accordance with the presented model reveals the mechanism of interaction between verbal and kinetic components. Communicative contributions realized by these components may be different. Interaction of scenarios launched by critical elements of the verbal and kinetic content generates the target model, i.e., the response of the addressee.

**Keywords**—*political talk show; scenario; model; impact; perception*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In modern society, public policy influences the mass addressee by constructing media reality and is characterized by mediatization, visualization, and virtualization.

The modern media are the only widely demanded means of public policy reflecting its events and phenomena.

Media constructs of value-semantic spaces, virtual constructs of real political processes replacing and shaping reality arise the problem of multimodal perception and influence in multimodal interaction.

Popularity of these genres (TV political talk shows and election debates) is due to their dialogue nature, lively discussions, relevant topics, emotionality based on radicalization of positions; illusion of involvement in the problem; serial nature [4; 9].

The communicative meaning transmitted during the modal interactions is construed by different components - verbal, nonverbal (mimicry, gestures of communicants), behavioral.

Interaction of these components determines perception of the complex content transmitted by different semiotic systems, arrangement and assimilation of the meaning packed in this

content. Meaning generation is based on various codes which involve the conjugation of semiotically diverse works [17].

Communicative tasks are solved through the "community" of heterogeneous components. Their implementation should be interpreted in terms of synthesis of different modes as interaction resources (see the concept "multimodality" as a combination of different sensory perception modalities [1; 2; 6; 12–16]).

## II. METODOLOGY

The genres of political media discourse perform the influential (often suggestive) and informative functions. Pre-election TV debates as an open confrontation of candidates attract attention due to their more pronounced (compared to political TV interviews) agonality. It assumes the use of various methods of influence on the opponent and external (mass) addressee, voters. Another feature that determined the choice of the research material characterized by spontaneity, polycodularity and multimodality is high, poorly regulated dynamics of communicative roles: the addressee should follow time constraints and is often interrupted by his opponent. This fact determines maximum information-emotional saturation of messages, speaker's efforts to preserve domination and intensification of sensory impacts, active use of gestures expressing emotions and dialogue signals (regulators, iconic and symbolic emblems, illustrators).

Along with production elements, discursive behavior of communicants can be relevant. Unlike TV debates, this genre uses a visual conceptual support (for example, screen savers, short plots performing a suggestive function).

Various signals are a prerequisite for the convergence of produced and perceived meanings; communication is a multimodal event in a single interaction space which implies (as a prerequisite) mutual perception [16].

To study the interactive behavior of communicants, a multimodal approach can be used. Manipulative techniques used in political TV talk shows and debates are coupled with suggestion and counter-aggression [9]; they are aimed at changing cognitive, motivational and axiological components and initiating the perception of the meaning "packed in the content" [5; 17].

Contents transmitted by semiotic systems may be different [8; 10]. Non-verbal signs characterized by a more significant suggestive potential are able to supplement, duplicate, replace information transmitted verbally, or contradict it. Their suggestive status is determined by their focus on the sub-consciousness of participants, increasing motivation at the sensory level [3; 11].

When describing the interaction of participants and the impact within the multimodal interaction (political TV talk shows / debates), we used the model developed by A.A. Kotov [7] to study the discourse impact. We modified the model in accordance with our research objectives and materials which allows perception simulation for a multimodal event and prediction of perception results and content processing.

The impact involves construction of a semantic representation of the message (a linguistic component), fixation of a fragment of reality in the model (a cognitive component), recognition of a set of influencing meanings.

The main element of the Kotov's model is a scenario reflecting the relation of a certain semantic component (a critical element) and the result of content perception and processing [7]. The corresponding scenario is launched when the addressee recognizes a certain attribute model of a reality fragment (the structure of attributes attributed to the object by the "author" of the model) [7]

Scenarios can be rational (they provide for the construction of implicative meanings when processing conceptual information, correlate initial and final attribute models; they are aimed at initiating rational behavior) and dominant (they constitute an impact modeling unit, link the initial attribute model and impact responses).

The purpose of the impact is intentional activation of the dominant scenario (d-scenario) or elimination of undesirable counter-scenarios (neutralization of the impact of the addresser when the addressee recognizes the d-scenario model). The message of the addresser may result from the emotional state, preceding activation of the d-scenario aimed at activating the relevant d-scenario of the addressee (the emotional state of the addressee as a reaction to the emotional state of the addresser).

The scenarios were combined in the following groups:

- a) actions taken by the aggressor on the victim;
- b) actions carried out by the aggressor associated with the victim;
- c) position of a victim [7].

The main valencies are AGGR (aggressor) and VICT (victim). The valences of the aggressor and the victim are updated by different participants of communication: the addresser, the addressee, the addressee's group (identification with the addressee), the counter group, the external addressee (e.g., audience).

Critical elements (special semantic features corresponding to scenario valences) allow the addressee to recognize the model (e.g., quantitative characteristics of the aggressor,

intensity / temporal parameters / effectiveness / danger of actions, etc.).

Transformation of critical elements can be used as a means of manipulation. Scenarios can have a set of integral critical elements and different critical elements.

We consider different sensory levels as equivalent. This article is devoted to the interaction of two components: verbal and kinetic. Kinetic means as signs, in which the significatum corresponds to the signifier, perform the following functions: 1) express additional information; 2) compensate for the missing verbal component; 3) duplicate the verbal content.

We distinguish between kinetic means organizing current interactive activities of a "legitimate speaker" (e.g., accentuation, regulators, sensory suggestion, associative thinking), and kinetic tools organizing interactive activities of the suggestant (dramatization, forcing) during verbal pauses.

Perception is determined by the impact of objects on different senses, builds up perceptual hypotheses that take into account subject's experience forming a model of the perceived object. It synthesizes perception of different modes into a complex system.

Addition of one more input of the semiotic system (a kinetic component) into the model developed by A.A. Kotov will reveal the mechanism for processing the complex content and illustrate construction of an integral perception model in multimodal interaction (see Figure 1).

These components (S1, S2 in Scheme 1) express their meanings containing semantic components, appealing to initial scenario models.

Recognition of the models launches scenarios whose interaction generates the target model, that is, the addressee's response. During the verbal pause, one of the inputs will be empty, the model will reflect the addressee's response to kinetic meanings

The "legitimate speaker" activates the addressee's d-scenarios, while other participants, in accordance with their role characteristics, interact processing information and responding to the message of the legitimate speaker using kinetic means. The illegitimate participant wants to dominate.

Video analysis is an effective method for studying multimodal interaction which helps fix verbal and non-verbal actions of participants, the sequence of their communicative contributions, describing different forms of perception and interaction of participants.

### III. RESULTS

Let us illustrate the analysis carried out using video clips of the German political talk show *Maybrit Illner* televised by ZDF (the second central public channel). The length of video materials is more than 15 hours.

Example 1 is described below ("Maybrit Illner", 7.03.2013, "Chaos, Clowns und Euro-Krisis" [19]; the analyzed fragment lasts for 47:28) [Retrieved from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy4P0ICpvMU>].



Fig. 1. The legitimate speaker is a representative of the AfD party (Alternative für Deutschland - Alternative for Germany) Berndt Luka.

**Bernd Lucke: Dass die Italiener heute nicht mehr wettbewerbsfähig sind, liegt daran, dass sie keinen flexiblen Wechselkurs haben. Es liegt daran, dass die Preise für Italiener relevant zu hoch sind. ... Die Preise sind ungefähr 30 % höher, als sie sein sollten.**

Das heißt, dass, wenn Sie jetzt sagen, wir müssen jetzt machen, dass da sich die Italiener anpassen, dann sagen Sie die Löhne müssen sinken um 30% und dann frage ich Sie, wollen Sie das wirklich, wollen Sie das wirklich, dass Italiener auf 30% ihres Einkommens verzichten ...

- Berndt Luka: The fact that Italians are no longer competitive today is due to the fact that they do not have a flexible exchange rate. The reason is that prices are too high for Italians. And here you can talk about quantitative indicators ... Prices are about 30% higher than they should be.

This means that if you say that we must adapt the Italian model, then wages should decrease by 30%, and I ask you, do you really want it? Do you really want the Italians to give up 30% of their income ...

The processing of the verbal content launches several scenarios.

Participants are discussing the euro crisis and possible ways to overcome it and common European currency.

Verbal component A (see bold italics) includes semantic components indicating the initial model corresponding to the scenario "ASSIGNMENT" (the meaning is "those who want to save the euro deprive Italians of their resources and capabilities").

Initial attribute model: ASSIGNMENT (AGGR, VICT, PAGGR, R1) - the aggressor AGGR as a result of the action PAGGR selects or destroys the resource R1 belonging to the victim VICT.

The critical element is quantitative characteristics of the resource (lexical expression is *sinken um 30%*).

Actants who realize AGGR valency are as follows: a) the consecutive addresser sAnt (Reiner Brüderle), who previously transmitted the message to the current addressee B - Luka; b) a group of the consecutive addresser (supporters of the euro).

Actants who actualize the VICT valency are the counter group of the consecutive addresser ContrgsAnt (opponents of the euro, including external addressees).

The verbal component B (see highlighted italics) includes semantic components referring to two different models launching two different scenarios:

1) "INCONSISTENCY" (the meaning is "it is not clear what you want"); initial model: INCONSIST (AGGR, VICT, PAGGR (P1, P2 ... Pn)); critical element is the difference between PAGGR (lexical expression is *Das heißt, dass, wenn Sie jetzt sagen ..., dann sagen Sie - this means that when / if you say ... then you say / this means that ...*);

2) the scenario "INADEQUACY" (the meaning is "you have inadequate interpretation of the situation, consequences of your own actions"); the initial model: INADEQUACY (AGGR, VICT, PAGGR, M0), AGGR has a mistaken view of the current situation M0 MR. The valences of AGGR and VICT are realized by the same actants (see verbal component A).

The kinetic component (Fig. 1) is a pinch gesture, which is a confirmatory gesture aimed at focusing / refocusing the addressee's attention on any quantum of information.

It reinforces the verbal content counteracting the erroneous interpretation or shift of the communicative focus.

The traditional verbal accompaniment of this gesture includes lexical units: *eben; ebendarum; ebendeswegen; ebendaher; ebendeshalb; gerade; gerade deshalb; geradeso; gerade deswegen; das ist es ja eben; eben nicht!; gerade das Gegenteil; So ist es eben (bei uns / bei euch!);* metacommunicative constructions: *„jetzt will ich Sie darum bitten...“; „ich beweise...“; „ich nenne die Gründe ...“; „ich plädiere eben dafür“; „ich untersage...“; „und dann frage ich Sie ...“; „und dann bin ich damit nicht einverstanden“; „ich will dies nicht bestreiten...“ / „damit bestreite ich“; „ich will gerade betonen, dass ...“; „ich beschreibe nun ausführlich...“; „ich stimme nämlich zu“; „ich bestätige ...“; „ich bezweifle“.*

The suggestive potential of gestures is determined by their control of the communicative focus, ability to set the informative value of individual fragments and direction of interpretation.

The meaning conveyed by the kinetic component is "attention, this is important!". Semantic components point to the attribute model corresponding to the scenario ACCENTING (AGGR, VICT, PAGGR, Mtsen +) within which the content is presented as the most valuable. Addressee's perception is controlled.

Video analysis demonstrates interaction of scenarios that are launched by initial attribute models of the fragments of reality during the processing of verbal and kinetic contents. Their interaction generates a target model that describes the impact of the addresser and the intended response of the addressee.

The kinetic component enhances the verbal content supporting verbal scenarios (INCONSISTENCY AND

INADEQUACY). In this case, the target model promotes corresponding d-scenarios taking into account selectivity of the addressee's attention and variability of perception characteristics.

The result of the simulated impact should be the desired response of the addressee (the meaning is "I cannot ignore that inadequacy and inconsistency of actions of euro supporters have negative consequences").

Let us illustrate the video analysis of pre-election TV debates of German politicians (the total length is more than 7 hours). Example 2 is a TV debate of A. Merkel and G. Schroeder [18].



Fig. 2. The legitimate speaker is the German chancellor G. Schroeder,

*Ich finde, mit all dem, was wir getan haben, sowohl in der Außenpolitik als vor allen Dingen auch in dem, was wir in den ökologischen Fragen tun, ist dieses Land stärker geworden. –*

*I believe that thanks to our activities in foreign policy and ecology, the country has become stronger.*

G. Schroeder as a legitimate speaker often talks about activities of his government. When processing the verbal content, semantic components related to the SUBJECTIVENESS scenario (SUBJECT (AGGR, VICT, P M1 (goal)) reflecting the impact on the addressee were identified. G. Schroeder uses subjective references: "this is my assessment, I am satisfied with my work" - *Ich finde ... ist dieses Land stärker geworden*). Quantitative indicators of assessed objects indicating the significance of his actions are critical elements (*all dem, stärker*).

Actants implementing the AGGR valency are a) the addresser (G. Schroeder); b) the group of the addresser (members of his government and a part of the external addressee supporting his policy). Actants actualizing the VICT valency are the addressee (A. Merkel), the addresser's counter group (party associates of A. Merkel, a part of the external addressee who are opponents of G. Schroeder).

The kinetic component - a "raised thumb" - reinforces the content of the verbal component meaning the positive assessment. The gesture accompanies the statement *was wir*

*getan haben* and anticipates the verbal content "our actions made the country strong", anticipating the assessment (before presenting the argument and the assessment replacing the verbal component), preparing the addressee for the desired perception, controlling his perception.

Video analysis shows formation of a target model during the interaction of scenarios actualized when processing verbal and kinetic contents (the cumulative meaning is "share my positive assessment of the work"). The target model aims to initiate sharing of the assessment and predicts the addressee's response.

Example 3 was selected from the same TV debates [19].



Fig. 3. Legitimate speaker - A. Merkel, a candidate for the post of Chancellor

*Merkel: ... deshalb kann ich nur sagen, was in meiner Macht steht, werde ich tun. ...Dafür werde ich kämpfen. ...*

The PLANNING scenario (the meaning is "I am going to do a lot if I am elected", the critical element is an indicator of intensity of aggressor's actions *in meiner Macht, kämpfen*) actualized during the processing of the verbal content is intensified by the kinetic content (the gesture "linked hands" indicates readiness, aggression, ensures the congruence of utterance tonality expressing the meaning "I am ready, determined"). The cumulative meaning: "Believe me, I will definitely fulfill my plans." The predicted reaction of the addressee is trust in the candidate, faith in future positive changes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Political TV talk shows and election debates that have become popular due to active processes of mediation and virtualization of public politics and their distinctive features use suggestive mechanisms in order to increase the impact on the addressee. They are verbal, spontaneous, dialogic, have a single interaction space. They are characterized by mutual perception of participants and present multimodal events. Within the multimodal event, the content is presented and transmitted by different semiotic systems coupled with different modes of perception.

The mechanism of influence and prediction of the addressee's reaction can be described by means of a cognitive model taking into account different modes of perception,

interaction of scenarios actualized by semantic components identified during the processing of the content expressed by different semiotic components with certain characteristic models of reality.

The result of interaction of scenarios becomes the target model reflecting the reaction of the addressee. The purpose of the impact is to activate a dominant scenario realized by the addressee or prevent the addressee from actualization of the counter-scenario.

The main valencies are the aggressor and the victim which are replaced by different participants (addresser, addressee, addressee group, addressee counter group, external addresser, external addressee, consecutive addresser).

The interaction of verbal and kinetic components, peculiarities of addressee's perception in a multimodal event were analyzed using the materials of German political talk shows and pre-election TV debates.

The target model is presented as a result of activation of scenarios: the kinetic component compensates for the verbal one, duplicates it, intensifies it or contradicts it.

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