

А.Н. Чекова (Москва, Россия)

Актуальные события в газете и онлайн: филологический анализ

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются способы подачи одного и того же события в печатных СМИ и интернет-публикациях. Материал состоит из трех текстов, опубликованных в Daily Mail, Independent и на сайте BBC и освещающих одно и то же событие, которое произошло в Дареме, Англия, в мае 2017 г.: местная жительница обнаружила тропических пауков внутри бананов из супермаркета. Сравнительный анализ лексики трех статей позволяет заметить, что эмоциональная окраска онлайн-публикаций значительно меньше, чем эмоциональная окраска газетного текста.

Ключевые слова: язык СМИ, газета, Интернет, значимые события, лексика, выразительность, эмоциональная окраска

A.N. Chekova (Moscow, Russia)

Topical Events in Newspaper and Online: Philological Analysis

Abstract: The article analyses the way the same event is presented in print media and online. The focus is on the three texts published by *the Daily Mail*, *the Independent*, and *BBC Online* and covering an incident that took place in Durham, England in May 2017 – a woman found poisonous spiders inside the bananas she had bought from a local store. The comparative analysis of the lexis used in the texts demonstrates that style of online publications is significantly more neutral than that of print media.

Key words: the language of the mass-media, newspaper, Internet, topical issues, lexis, expressiveness, emotionally coloured

Mass media have long become an inseparable part of everyday life. They are an effective means of delivering information to the people, as well as of shaping their opinions. Besides, as every nation and every culture has its specific worldview, mass media reflects all these aspects and details typical of this or that country. The general topics are approximately the same in most countries, but their presentation is different. Each worldview has its own aspects and details, and some of them are likely to attract close attention, while others are normally ignored. Moreover, the language of the media is dynamic and reacts to the smallest changes in the mass consciousness, reflecting it and shaping it simultaneously.

Therefore, the study of the mass media materials has a great role to play in philological education, both preparing a foreign learner for a closer acquaintance with the culture of the people whose language one is trying to learn – which is, in our case, the English language – and raising one’s level of proficiency in using this language.

However, foreign learners cannot be expected to follow the English life day by day and to be aware of the intricacy of all the events recorded by the media. For this reason we suggest focusing the attention on topical issues, or events, alone.

This, however, calls for an explanation: what do we mean by “topical issues”? A topic is a theme, subject, or thought, subject of discourse, conversation, discussion, etc; one of the forms of argument employed in probable, as distinct from demonstrative, reasoning; source from which arguments may be drawn. The adjective ‘topical’ is therefore understood as ‘connected with a subject of current or local interest, of the nature of a topic or general principle’¹.

To analyze the presentation of such topics in print media and online, three types of sources were chosen: *the Daily Mail*, a British daily middle-market tabloid newspaper; *BBC Online*, the website of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the oldest national broadcasting organization in the world; and *the Independent*, a British online newspaper.

According to the 2016 National Readership Survey², *the Daily Mail* is the most-read UK-wide newspaper if its print and online readership are taken together. It should be noted, however, that in the current research the online version of *the Daily Mail* is not taken into account due to the fact that the content of the printed and the online versions is mainly identical. The same survey states that *BBC Online* is the most actively used internet news platform in the United Kingdom: 56% of adults use it for news monthly³. These two news platforms were therefore used as the main sources of materials. *The Independent* was added to the list due to the fact that it dominated the first page of *Google* within the framework of the topical issue chosen for analysis.

This issue is an incident that took place in May 2017 in Durham, England. Gemma Price, a local resident, found a cluster of venomous tropical spiders, probably Brazilian Wandering spiders (*Phoneutria*), in a banana she had bought from *Asda*, a large grocery retailer, and was forced to evacuate from the house with her seven-month-old son. An incident of this kind was bound to trigger public reaction, as *Asda* is most widely used by the British, which means that anyone could be at risk of finding themselves in a similar situation. Besides, it appears that finding venomous spiders in grocery is not unprecedented: there are numerous articles devoted to similar situations in *the Daily Mail* archives starting from 2008 and following through to 2017, and *the Daily Mail* article chosen for analysis mentions three more cases of finding venomous spiders in British stores.

The topic is discussed in three articles published almost simultaneously on May 1 and 2, 2017 by *the Independent*, *BBC Online*, and *the Daily Mail*. The articles from *BBC Online* (“‘Deadly spiders’ in banana force family from County Durham home”⁴) and *the Independent* (“Mother discovers cluster of spiders in a banana she bought from *Asda*”⁵) consist of 269 and 355 words accordingly, while *the Daily Mail* article, titled

¹ Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009) Pearson Education Limited. P. 1864.

² News consumption in the UK – 2016 report. (2017, June 29). P. 29.

³ Op. cit. P. 38

⁴ ‘Deadly spiders’ in banana force family from County Durham home. Tyne and Wear (2017, May 02). Retrieved from: www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tyne-39783948

⁵ Mother discovers cluster of spiders in a banana she bought from *Asda* (2017, May 02). Retrieved from: www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/banana-spiders-asda-mother-discovers-baby-eggs-a7714096.html

“Banana split! Mother flees her home after cluster of the world’s most deadly spiders burst out of fruit from Asda”¹, is the longest, consisting of 1,300 words, although it was the first of the three to be published. Thus, it is clear that the first two articles are quite laconic and contain only the basic and the most important information about the event, while the third one is much more detailed. Not only does the Daily Mail tell the readers about the spider accident but it also speaks about the store from which the bananas were bought, adduces the detailed information about the species of the spider, and refers to similar cases.

Let us focus on the lexis of the texts chosen, as their syntax is quite similar and does not present much interest for analysis. A look at the lexis of the articles suggests that the style of the texts published by BBC Online and *the Independent* is chiefly neutral and more impersonal, whereas the level of expressivity of the third text is much higher. This is to be expected, as *the Daily Mail*, the source of the third text, is considered a tabloid, and a high level of expressivity is one of the characteristic features of such publications; besides, it contains twenty-one quotation from the Asda representative and Ms Price herself, while in the other two articles put together there are eleven quotations.

The layer of negatively connoted words and phrases within the three texts is not as large as one could expect given the topic. Most of them come from the quotations from Ms. Price used in all the three articles to render the victim’s fear and distress: ‘the shock of one’s life’, ‘to freak out’, ‘to scream’, ‘to kill’, ‘absolutely disgusting’, ‘to turn one’s life upside down’. The others are mainly used in the Daily Mail only and help to emphasize the danger the woman found herself in: ‘death’, ‘murderess’, ‘poison’, ‘dangerous’, ‘extreme’, ‘toxic’, ‘split’, ‘to burst apart’, ‘to flee’, ‘the screaming mother’, ‘the offending banana’ etc. There are also words that support the idea of danger indirectly, such as the verb ‘to evacuate’, which means ‘to send people away from a dangerous place to a safe place’².

The word ‘spider’ is used forty-seven times throughout the three articles, and thirty-four times out of these forty-seven, it is accompanied by an attribute. In most cases, the attribute is stylistically neutral, referring to the type of the spiders (“The creatures were reportedly Brazilian wandering spiders”³, “it’s even less likely that a tropical spider could survive outside of their warm climate”⁴), their size (‘little spiders’, ‘tiny spiders’), or age (‘adult spider’). However, expressive adjectives such as ‘deadly’ or ‘venomous’ are used actively, sometimes in the superlative degree, and there are also a number of synonymic words and word-combinations used to refer to the Brazilian wandering spider periphrastically, most of them emphasizing how dangerous the creature is. For example, *the Daily Mail* calls the spiders the “world’s most venomous arachnids” twice, and the *Independent* uses the word-combination ‘venomous insects’. The Daily Mail also refers to them as “creepy crawlies”, and here the emotional colouring of the phrase is further supported by the use of alliteration.

The headlines of the articles deserve special attention. They are a primary means of capturing the reader’s attention; hence the big-sized fonts. However, the content of the headline is even more significant than its visual aspect. A headline can be created mainly to intrigue the reader, or it can be the key to the proper understanding of the whole

¹ Moore, Charlie. (2017, May 01). Banana split! Mother flees her home after cluster of the world’s most deadly spiders burst out of fruit from Asda. Retrieved from: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4462292/World-s-deadly-spiders-burst-Asda-BANANAS.html

² Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009) Pearson Education Limited. P. 576.

³ Mother discovers cluster of spiders in a banana she bought from Asda (2017, May 02).

⁴ Op. cit.

article¹. Most of them contain the main information included in the body copy, which is the main text part of an article (as distinct from the logogram, headline, subheadings, illustrations, and captions), giving the reader a fairly clear idea of what the article is going to be about or even summarizing the text.

It is clear that all the three headlines of the articles under analysis provide the reader with the basic information about the event; however, it is also easy to notice that they have various degrees of expressivity. *The Independent* has chosen the most neutral headline: “Mother discovers cluster of spiders in a banana she bought from Asda” is a laconic phrase that contains all the necessary data – what happened, who was involved, and where the event took place – and nothing more. The *BBC Online* headline ““Deadly spiders’ in banana force family from County Durham home” is also laconic and answers the same questions as the previous one but it is more expressive as it contains an inherently connotative adjective ‘deadly’. Finally, the headline of the article published by *the Daily Mail* is the longest and not at all neutral, though no less informative than the previous two. It contains an exclamation (‘Banana split!’), which alone is a powerful device enough to make the phrase emotionally coloured; and the expressivity of the headline is also supported by the use of such a word-combination as ‘the world’s most deadly spiders’. The sentence about a mother fleeing her home and about a family being forced from home, used by *the Daily Mail* and *BBC Online* accordingly, are also emotionally coloured and aimed at causing the reader to empathize with the victim.

The level of expressivity observed in the headlines is mainly in keeping with the general style of each article, thus confirming the fact that the article published by *the Daily Mail* is the least neutral of the three, while the articles published by *BBC Online* and *the Independent* are, although not fully neutral, less emotionally coloured.

Thus, the linguistic analysis of the articles shows that the level of expressivity of the printed text is higher than that of the online publications. This may be explained by the fact that the strong side of online publications is their promptness: they choose to provide the readers with data as soon as possible. Making a text neutral is a way of ensuring maximum comprehensibility of the gist of the issue under discussion. All additional information may be published later or even separately and discussed in comments or on forums. It is, therefore, the internet that people turn to these days in order to get immediate access to news.

The same cannot be said about print media. Newspapers are unable to compete with online publications in terms of speed, neither can they provide their readers with the opportunity to discuss the topics in the comments; and as the rhythm of life becomes swifter, their audience steadily decreases. It is no wonder, therefore, that they need other ways of attracting readers. Print media opts for providing the readers with maximum amounts of information in a single issue and presenting this information in the most interesting and engaging way possible. The high expressivity of the text is one of the most efficient means of attracting the readers’ attention on par with large fonts and illustrations. Thus, it is logical that print media publications are significantly less neutral in terms of style than the texts published online.

¹ Ксензенко О.А., Менджершцкая Е.О. Mass Media Language. P. 27.

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Сведения об авторе:

Алена Николаевна Чекова,
аспирант
филологический факультет
МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова

Alena N. Chekova,
Postgraduate Student
Philological Faculty
Lomonosov Moscow State University
alenschk_a@mail.ru