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ЯЗЫКОВЫЕ НОРМЫ В СМИ – УТОПИЧЕСКАЯ НАДЕЖДА ИЛИ СУЩЕСТВУЮЩАЯ РЕАЛЬНОСТЬ?

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Проблема и цель. *Авторы предпринимают попытку рассмотреть лингвистическое творчество в новых средствах массовой информации с позиции, что СМИ являются создателями нашей реальности.*

Методология. *Анализируя доступные книги и статьи, индексируемые в онлайн базах данных, обсуждается этический подход к языку, на который влияют средства массовой информации. Исследование основано, в том числе, на личном опыте работы в вузе, подразделения которого связаны с дисциплинами, изучающими передачу информации.*

Результаты. *Появление сети Интернет, социальных сетей и смартфонов привело к революции способа общения людей и к изменениям в обществе и в самом языке. Во времена, предшествующие изобретению телефона, люди писали друг другу письма. Затем устная форма общения заменила письменную. Сегодня превалирует письменная форма. Web 2.0. – креативная форма общения в силу наполненности эмотиконами, акронимами, звуковыми имитациями и другими неформальными элементами. Те, кто никогда не писал бумажных писем, сегодня пишут электронные письма и сообщения.*

Заключение. *Таким образом, в ущерб языковой нормативности увеличился объем языкового творчества в новых формах коммуникации и новых видах средств массовой информации.*

Ключевые слова: *изменения; коммуникация; этика; язык; средства массовой информации; лингвистическая нормативность; языковое творчество.*

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The point of ethics and language in the media - utopian hope or real reality?

Abstract

Introduction. In this paper, the authors attempt to deal with the ethics and linguistic creativity of communication typical for the new media, through the media as the makers of our reality.

Materials and Methods. The authors discuss the ethical approach to the language influenced by the media analyzing available books and papers indexed in online databases. The materials are supported by personal experience of working at a tertiary institution whose departments relate to the media science.

Results. The appearance of the Internet, social networks and smartphones has led to a revolution regarding the way people communicate and to changes in society and the very language. It is known that in the time following the discovery of a telephone, letters were silenced in almost all the spheres of private life. Spoken form replaced the written form. Today, the written form of Web 2.0 prevails. However, this form of writing is extremely creative being full of emoticons, acronyms, sounds imitations, and other elements of casual style. Those who have not yet written a letter write e-mails or text messages today.

Conclusion. Consequently, linguistic creativity emerging in new forms of communication and in the new media has increased due to the reduced (linguistic) normativity.

Keywords

Changes; Communication; Ethics; Language; Media; Linguistic normativity; Language creativity.

Introduction

Homo sapiens is *Homo loquens*, *Homo scriptor*, *Homo lector*, *Homo videns* and *Homo somnians*. By continuously searching for meaning and significance this man has the need to realize himself. He does this in many ways: through art,

science, speech, and music; through reviewing past events, through living now, in this moment of time, but with an eye on what lies ahead, in the future.

Now more than ever, ethical behavior in any area of life has become a major challenge considering the prevailing trends in many societies. When watching the news one gets the impression that ethics is the last thing on the mind of those who report news, record popular shows, series and movies. Thus, profanity, nudity and similar content during prime time become acceptable to society. It seems that the editors of the shows are interested only in the percentage of viewers and advertising revenue [1] and they seem to forget about taking ethics into consideration.

Ethics is the philosophical study of morality. The word is also commonly used interchangeably with "morality" and sometimes it is used more narrowly to connote the moral principles of a particular tradition, group, or individual [1] . Nevertheless, ethics is a rather obscure topic. If we reach for a book or an article on ethics, we can conclude that there are many disagreements, even contradictions in this regard. However, what we do know is that ethics is the study of what we should do. Ethics is related to duty – duty to yourself and to others. Ethics is private and personal even though it refers to the obligations and duties toward others.

Media ethics is not an oxymoron – a contradiction in terms – nor is it a fixed set of rules and laws (as in the profession of medicine). Rather, it is a process that evolves with the world in which the media operate, and on which the media report [2].

Media ethics concerns right and wrong, good and bad, better and worse actions taken by people working for the media. Media themselves cannot be ethical or unethical – only their staff members can. There is the question of ethics regarding live transmission, the killings, the outbreak of war, the suffering of people due to certain natural disasters (such as flood, fire, earthquake, epidemic, etc.). The journalist and the media people are always in between "the people's right to know" and respecting someone's privacy.

Truthfulness, accuracy, fairness and balance have been and have remained the characteristics of credibility and ethicality of messages in mass communication. [Educated and responsible] journalists should bear in mind these criteria [3].

The subject of media ethics is no longer the exclusive privilege of those who live of the collection, processing and dissemination of information to the audience. Tim Atsef, a chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Associated Press Managing Editors noted that what used to be debated in newsrooms and at annual meetings is now the subject of daily conversation of discussion groups and forums on the Internet – something happens and immediately everybody has an opinion on the ethical consequences [4]. The media should be of service to the public and serve primarily to inform it, rather than directly manipulate it by presenting semi-reliable or incomplete information, gossip, fabrications. Today, information has become a traded commodity – its price is proportionally great to the great interest of the audience and "interested" public. Readers-reporters who earn some money by selling the photographs and stories of unusual events unfortunately contribute to decreasing professional journalistic standards.

Ethics in the system of mass communication is discussed today depending on

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[1] Audi R. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. 2nd ed. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 284.

individual cases which rock the boat. Mass media are closely related to emotions – they strongly affect people on the emotional level [5]. However, a continuous, thorough and professional discussion of all the stakeholders (primarily journalists and media institutions and professionals) is missing. We often witness the abuse of data on social networks, insults, belittling anyone whose opinion differs from the general opinion of a community. More than ever, today's "online" communication allows for anonymous comments on internet portals using speech full of hate and intolerance usually with a low literacy level.

Who writes letters these days when there is email, SMS, Skype, Facebook or Twitter? Web 2.0 tools emphasize the concept of collective intelligence, the idea of creation of a new value due to the increasing availability of knowledge [6]. We have come to the point where mass communication is at its peak. The language that is used in the media is closely related to the question of ethics [7]. However, ethics seems to be secondary in this process. Is this even possible when we know that in any type of linguistic research ethics cannot be avoided – the concept of 'ethical literacy' is the key concept of any research [8].

Where are we in all of this?

Materials and methods

There is an interesting amount of literature available on the topics of ethics, language and the media and is differently illustrated and covered in literature. The authors of this paper have analyzed available literature – books and papers included in WoS, Scopus and other databases. It has to be noted that the combination of these three terms (language, media, ethics) is poorly covered according to the Web of Science citation report[2]. However, each of the two terms combined show different results: With regard to the published items and citations, an increased interest in these terms (language and media; media and ethics; language and ethics) has appeared in the last ten years of academic research according to the Web of Science citation report[3]. In the paragraphs that follow, an overview of the present situation regarding the ethical approach to the language influenced by the media is given. The languages that are frequently referred to in the paper are English and Croatian, since both authors work at the same tertiary institution whose departments relate to the media science and therefore deal with these two languages.

Results

In the beginning, there were no media [9]. Or is maybe this thesis incorrect? The media, a term that derives from the Latin *medius* meaning middle, which is in between [10], in its first sense represents the medium of communication. In the beginning, the fundamental way of human communication was oral and pictographic. The advent and development of the alphabet triggered a paradigm shift, as this radical change in the social cognitive mode was called by a philosopher Thomas Kuhn – it is a change that enabled the medium of alphabetical letters to become the primary form of encoding and knowledge sharing[4].

In a modern society, television has been a very influential medium. People have collected a lot of information, intellectual stimulation and entertainment particularly through television in the past thirty years. The world, thanks to

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[2] *Web of Science.* URL: http://bit.ly/2n2TedY

[3] *Language-media.* URL: http://bit.ly/2nZ7kwi; media-ethics: http://bit.ly/2mKMhMK; Language-ethics. URL: http://bit.ly/2mo1Sqg

[4] Danesi M. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics, Media, and Communications*. Toronto, University of Toronto Publ., 2000, pp. 141–142.

television, became a TV village. Internet has gone one step forward.

Internet integrated the already existing forms (sound, picture) and improved their application. It represents a medium that amalgamates the function of publishing information (like newspapers and radio) and individual communication (like writing letters and using landline phones). It allows access to and creation of professional and nonprofessional content.

Today, instead of looking at the world around us, we interact with it. Data show that there are more smartphones and computers in the world than the number of people living on the planet. However, there are two sides of a coin – a frequently discussed topic is information overload [11].

Mass communication is defined as "...a society-wide communication process in which an individual or institution uses technology to send messages to a large, mixed audience, most of whose members are not known to the sender"[5]. This process therefore includes a larger number of recipients who consume the media content in various conditions. Some of the content that is offered is intended for short-term use (news, entertainment), and some is produced in formal organizations with the help of highly developed technology and different techniques. Mass communication enables the media to communicate to more people at the same time and these are anonymous for the communicator. The public is addressed unilaterally (communicator and the recipient cannot replace the position and their relationship is asymmetrical in favor of communicators) and indirectly (without direct feedback). The media offer their content with a

certain periodicity of production, continuous and limited access. These criteria are appropriate for the description of mass communication for the media such as print, radio and television. However, they do not apply to the new media.

Communication between humans has evolved with time. With the advent of the *network of all networks* and smartphones, there has been a revolution in the way people communicate. Moreover, there has been a change in society, but also in the very language. Thanks to the World Wide Web and the Internet, a new branch of linguistics has developed – computational linguistics – and the change of language and communication forms has been brought about[6]. With the appearance of the new media, new forms of communication have influenced linguistic creativity, which has become more prominent due to reduced (language) normativity.

A famous philosopher Martin Heidegger wrote: "Only language enables humans to be those living beings which they are as humans." [12, p. 138]. People actualize themselves through language and communication searching for meaning – in themselves and other human. Human beings' unique relation to language is such that as language goes, so goes the quality of our shared being-in-the-world [7].

Relying on the famous American linguist Charles F. Hockett, language is understood as a system of signs that, on the basis of a large number of potential combinations, enables a being to transmit and understand an infinite number of messages [13]. Language is the most important and the most differentiated system of symbols in human communication. Communication presupposes the existence of a common code between the partners that

[5] Hanson R. E. *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World*. 4th ed., London, SAGE Publ., 2014, p. 6.
[6] Jurafsky D., Martin J. H. *Speech and Language Processing: An Introduction to Natural Language*

Processing, Computational Linguistics, and Speech Recognition. 2nd ed., New Jersey, Pearson Education Publ., 2009.

communicate. The point of a symbol is to stand for something, to symbolize something; signs are based on the relationship between the form (e.g. voice, word, letter) and the content. In relation to the language this means that the symbols in the form of characters and character chains or words of which language is made are to be used and interpreted in the same way. Three dimensions are crucial here: 1) syntactic dimension (the ratio of characters, grammar); 2) semantic dimension (the meaning of characters and character chains, i.e. the relationship between the characters and objects to be communicated on); and 3) the pragmatic dimension (the use of characters; the relationship between the characters and the user or interpreter of characters). Partners in communication can understand each other without errors only if there is concordance in the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic form [14].

Today, English is a favorable language of communication, especially in relation to the media [15]. This is quite obvious among young people using English in their communication in Croatian – frequent usage of English words in regular communication in Croatian is related to higher rating of social attractiveness [16]. The use of English even influences intergroup favoritism [17; 18; 19]. It is desirable to use English and therefore Croatian is full of foreign words and loanwords called alloglottic elements. A large number of Anglicisms appear in the Croatian language used both in everyday speech and in written and spoken media with no tendency to modify foreign words to conform to the standards of the Croatian language; even the short text messages (SMS) or messages sent via e-mails use different abbreviations, such as LOL, BTW, CU, FYI, TNX, JK, ASAP, or AFAIK.

Another use that frequently appears is the use of neologisms, or newly coined words or expressions. For example, words such as leasing, press center, chat, hands-free, rating, or e-mail are terms normally accepted in everyday communication – not only in everyday colloquial communication, but also in the media space of radio and television. However, the difference between the use of the language of the new media in private communication and the standard language used for work or school purposes is still noticeable [20].

Acronyms, emoticons and other "signs" are part of our everyday life: from text messages to advertising messages on television or billboards. How normal this form of communication has become is evident from the following example: for the first time ever, the Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2015 was a pictograph, officially called the 'Face with Tears of Joy' emoji. It was chosen as the 'word' that best reflected the ethos, mood, and preoccupations of 2015.[7]

Conclusion

Man is a being of communication. A modern man, the man of the 21st century, has been using different types of media to communicate (phone, e-mail, Internet). The most vulnerable part of this new paradigm of mass and continuous communication is ethicism. This can be seen in the previously mentioned data obtained using the WoS citation reports. As a rule, the audience that consumes information and news is not concerned with manipulation or unverified information that appears on the front pages of the print media, but spreads at lightning speed across the news portals. What happens is that the news, data, information circulating the network of all

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[7] *Oxford Dictionaries.* Available at: http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2015/11/word-of-the-year-2015-emoji/. (Accessed 15 June 2015).

networks are being copied, processed and published as copyright property of the person who published the news [3].

In not so recent past, children and young people wrote journals and diaries describing everyday events, thoughts and difficulties, which were regularly kept in secret places so that no one would read them. These days, thoughts, events, joys and sorrows are shared on social networks with accompanying photos. Today the issue is whether these thoughts and described events are not read, commented, or 'liked'. This is closely related to people's "...instinctive need to disclose to other people when they experience emotionally charged events" [21, p. 125]. However, there is an increasing number and more examples of electronic violence and frequent abuse (bullying and/or mobbing) on social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Instagram, Pinterest, Edmodo). Some of these acts end in suicides of young people who have been abused in the public space. On the other hand, a journalist Merita Arslani pointed out in her article published on a Croatian portal[8] that by the end of 2012 around 30 million Facebook members died while their profiles are still active.

Personal data are available on the click of a mouse to a large number of people. There are more and more controversies and disputes over the ownership of published material in the cyber sphere.

Not so long ago the media were used to inform (brought us news), educate (we learned through the media), and entertain (media content helped us to have fun and relax). Today, it seems that the media are primarily used just for fun and entertainment. Although we use them more than ever, it seems that the vocabulary of media users is getting more modest whereas linguistic competences of younger generations are becoming lower. Even the standard language, which used to be the desirable variant of the language of the media, is relativized. The problem is that even the media relativize it – the reasons range from laziness through lack of knowledge to globalization [22].

In a time of mass and constant communication, a new postulate has been created: to be means to communicate. There is a connection between what we do and what we say: "Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words."[9]. The appearance of new media opened certain doors to our global village: technology development has connected people and therefore triggered various changes not only in language and in literary practices, but it also affected identity, which has become "more complex and fluid" [23, p. 536]. This combination of technology and language affects people; we perceive people based on the way they communicate with us using various available media.

The aforementioned reduced linguistic normativity, an increasing exposure to the English language, and the tendency of a language to constantly change affect the absence of the need to adapt the alloglottic elements to the Croatian language. Therefore, they are used in their original (English) form. The need for their translation does not exist since their users are well aware of their meaning since they use them on a daily basis. It just proves that no care is taken to think of a word in Croatian, but the presumption is that everything that is in English is better, more precise and smarter [22]. It seems as if in order to understand the language of the Croatian media one has to speak English [24].

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