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Structure, Semantics, and Functions of Linguistic Signs in the Television Graphics of Sports Events Broadcasting

Natalia N. Bobyreva
Kazan Federal University, Institute of International Relations, History, and Oriental Studies, Russia

Abstract

The interest in studying the language of sports mass media is explained by the extralinguistic factors, such as social demands and high rates of TV sport programs. Linguistic factors are also significant: people involved in sport use special linguistic means in this sphere of communication, which express sports-related realia. Television graphics is viewed by the author as a subgenre of sport media discourse. Language signs used in the television graphics in sports events broadcasting comprise a unique system which is characterised by its own lexical and syntactic organization. The author of the paper is aimed at describing the structural and semantic features of these linguistic signs with a corresponding reference to their functional peculiarities and extralinguistic background. These factors predetermine the use of thematically various lexis, such as proper names, terminology and commonly used words. The compositional and organizational peculiarities of the television graphics result in the use of headlines, prevailing of notional words, abbreviations, limited use of grammatical words and punctuation. The main method used in the research is the descriptive analysis of form and meaning. The research based on this material is of interest for LSP studies, bases of sports journalism, sociolinguistics, and semiotic studies.

Keywords: Language; Culture; Society; Sport; Term; Language.

1. Introduction

One of the tasks of modern linguistics is to investigate the process of professional communication in different spheres from both theoretical and practical sides, such as compiling LSP dictionaries. Studying the language of sport is influenced by the necessity to get practice-oriented results taking into account the multidisciplinary character of the research. The multisided description of the linguistic means used in texts related to sports contributes to studying the specific character of communication in this field. The author's attention to the role of linguistic signs in the television broadcasting of sport events is predetermined by a certain background. Firstly, sport broadcasting attracts more and more people to TV screens, sport gets more attention of both mass media and society (Ismaeva, 2012). Secondly, the study of professional discourse, sport mass media in particular, is within the general research interest of sociolinguistics. Different aspects of sport terminology and sport discourse have always been paid attention to in linguistics and are still within the focus of works. Mass media texts related to sport events become a base for complex linguistic analysis in works of researchers. In the study of the sport discourse much attention is paid to analyzing the speech of sports commentators of matches and other competitions. The interest in this material has increased for the previous decade, which is reflected in a large number of books and papers dedicated to sports media discourse. The authors devote their works to linguistic description of genres of sports journalism, linguistic peculiarities, verbal behaviour of people participating in the process of communication. This interest in this material may be explained by the fact that these texts are addressed to the society of non-specialists, i.e. a wide range of recipients (Abrosimova and Borganova, 2015).

The texts of online live commentaries has recently been considered as an innovative genre of sports media discourse. They include updated online written comments about a competition and graphical signs accompanying the textual information. From our point of view, there are prospects of studying this kind of material as the research based on online comments is relevant within modern linguistics. We suggest considering television graphics as a subgenre of sport media discourse. Studying verbal means functioning in the television graphics involves not only merely linguistic analysis, but demands special knowledge in the sphere of sport (Antúnez, 2015; Boyle, 2006)

2. Methodological Framework

2.1. Objectives of the Research

The paper aims at describing the structural and semantic features of linguistic signs applied in television graphics in broadcasting of sport events. The objective of the article is to identify the principles of text organization of information on the screen by linguistic means. The material is studied from two points of view: 1) the semantic features of vocabulary; 2) the structure of words and phrases (Ageeva *et al.,* 2016).

2.2. Factual Material of the Research

The paper presents the results of the research based on the material of TV broadcastings from several sport events:

- The XXIII Olympic Winter Games held in PyeongChang, South Korea in 2018;
- The 2018 World Figure Skating Championships held in Milan, Italy;
- The 2017 IIHF World Championship hosted by Paris, France, and Cologne, Germany;
- The 2018 IIHF World Championship hosted by the Denmark cities of Copenhagen and Herning;
- The 2016–17 and 2017–18 Biathlon World Cup.

The studied material is referred to the broadcasting of competitions in 15 kinds of sport: Alpine skiing, biathlon, bobsleigh, cross-country skiing, curling, figure skating, freestyle skiing, ice hockey, luge, Nordic combined, short track speed skating, skeleton, ski jumping, snowboarding, speed skating. Television graphics is viewed as a polycode system of signs supplementing the broadcast of sport events on a TV display. Television graphics contains language items, and that makes it subject for a linguistic study. That makes us suggest that as part of this system, language signs used in the television graphics in sports events broadcasting may be characterized by a special, unique lexical and syntactic organization (Belyutin, 2013).

2.3. Methods of the Research

Within the research, the following methods are applied:
- The method of data sampling presupposing studying the textual information provided on the screen during the sports events broadcasting;
- The method of description of language units involving identification, observation, and classification;
- The analysis of structure and composition of textual information presented on the screen to describe the morphological and syntactic features of the studied material;
- The functional and semantic analysis aimed at studying the content of information, thematic relatedness of words and phrases (Bobyreva, 2016; Seisenbayeva *et al.*, 2018).

3. Results

Television graphics includes nonverbal signs and symbols, such as numbers and state flags, but verbal elements are also relevant, contributing into this complex system. Evidently, a great role belongs to the English language as an instrument of international communication. Consequently, television graphics made in English for TV viewers of different countries becomes part of global information space. As the broadcasted sports event is normally commented, television graphics serves as an additional, supplementary instrument of conveying information, presenting facts and describing events. Nevertheless, some live broadcasts shown online do not involve any work of sports journalists and television graphics becomes the only source of information about the venues, statistics, participants, scores, etc. It may even be considered as a means of attracting and holding viewers' attention. Being relatively simple but informative from the point of view of its content, television graphics promotes to the better understanding and perception of the broadcasting content (Gafiyatova and Solnishkina, 2015).

The broadcasting of a sport event usually starts with the name of the place and venue where it is being held or its area, verbally presented on the screen. For example: cologne, germany; kontiolahti 2017; yongpyong alpine centre; warm up area; pursuit start control; pit stop. The weather condition is described by means of meteorological terms: Air temperature; snow temperature; humidity; wind speed; wind direction. Information about the piste or course is given using such terms as course data; start; finish; vertical drop; length. In some cases, the commercial information is provided: bmw; ifs business software; polar. One of the functions of the verbal part of television graphics in sports event broadcasting is to introduce the participants of the competitions or ceremonies. For instance, when concrete athletes, coaches, etc. are shown, their names and additional information about them is provided on the screen: player of the game; game officials; scoring leaders; head coach; member of the international olympic committe. Names of different sport organizations are used in the form of abbreviations in the phrases nominating their representatives: isu honorary member (isu – international skating union); iihf council member and president of the russian ice hickey federation (IIHF – International Ice Hockey Federation). The names of countries, whose representatives are competing are used in both full form and abbreviation: GER Germany; AUT Austria; FRA France; ITA Italy. The names of teams whose representative is shown on the screen is shown during hockey matches: Philadelphia flyers; New York rangers. In figure skating broadcasting viewers see the textual information including: age; coaches; rank after sp (short program) and the names of the song and singer, such as ne me quitte pas performed by c. Dion; don quixote by leon minkus; nocturne by frederic chopin.

The verbal part of television graphics is applied to inform about the following:
a) the kind of sport and kind of competition broadcasted: men 12,5 km pursuit; men's slopestyle; men's giant slalom; ladies sprint (classic). The first word in the phrase indicate the gender of participants.
b) What kind of event is broadcasted: world championship; venue ceremony; victory ceremony; quarterfinals; gold medal game?
c) The stage of the tournament, competition, or match (often combined with numbers): heat 2; shooting 3; end 5; finish; exchange 2; start of third; end of second; playoff.
d) THE current situation of the competition or match: 4 on 4; 5 on 3; timeout; full strength; power play.
e) The results, the score, and its components: total; wind points; technical elements; presentation; deductions.

The specific character of sport activity implies using the abbreviated names of units of measurement in phrases denoting distances: to beat 93.0 m; 98,5 m; 4.3 km; take-off 85,4 km/h – 31 cm early. For giving information about penalties in hockey the time is written: 2 MIN (Korytkin, 2015).

Television graphics also uses genuinely sport terms, for example items denoting infractions in hockey: interference; slashing; holding; tripping; roughing; hooking; kneeing. The use of terminological nouns in the plural

form is typical for the texts representing the statistics in games: assists; goals; points. Plural noun-based phrases are also used to demote more specific referents: shots against; goals against; shots tonight; penalty minutes. In case of showing statistics the television graphics is used to convey information about previous results, for providing the logical connection of this broadcast with prior ones. Abbreviations are also used for this purpose: SVS – savings (save percentage); SB – season's best; RK – rank. In figure skating all the elements included into the program are indicated as well as their level of difficulty: step sequence 4; 3 lutz – 3 loop; layback spin 4; fly camel spin 4. The textual information of this kind requires background knowledge of terms and their meanings from the viewer for understanding it completely. However, the explanations of commenters and commenting athletes or coaches facilitate the process of terminology learning and coping with linguistic difficulties (Aiyzhy and Shantaev, 2018).

From the structural point of view, the terms in the television graphics may consist of:

- One word: goal; tournament; current;
- Combination of two nouns: puck possession; penalty killing;
- Combination of an adjective and a noun: high sticking; previous results; final score;
- Combinations of numbers, last letters of ordinal numerals and terminological nouns: first period; 2nd period; 3rd period.
- More expanded word groups including those with prepositions: power play efficiency; third period shots on goal; rank after sp (short program).

We suggest that it could be useful to create a specialized lexicographical resource including the lexis regularly used in television graphics. Such a glossary should be divided in sections according to the themes each referring to a certain kind of sport. The glossary entry may include the English abbreviation, its full form and the equivalent abbreviation (if it exists) in the second language and its full form. This kind of structure is optimal for users and can promote to the special erudition of fans and wide range of people interested in sports. The television graphics is well-structured, which is also achieved by means of particular language patterns. The verbal information may be given by means of separate words or phrases as well as in the form of tables, and this kind of data presentation involves using headlines. For example: women's world cup total score; start list; intermediate standings after 8 competitions; standings shooting 1. The conciseness of verbal means in television graphics is explained by the limited space of the TV display and short time of fixation on it Stofer *et al.* (2010). This tendency of economizing is mainly expressed by means of wide range of abbreviations. For instance: OT overtime; PTS points; PF photo finish; PP power play; BV base value. The tendency to concise formulating may also be observed at the syntactic level in elliptical structures: all starts regular; no time adjustments; too many men. The use of punctuation also looks limited. Only rare cases of dashes, slashes and full stops may be observed. The marks of dash and slash are used to make the information more structured and avoid the use of grammatical (functional) words as conjunctions and prepositions: 2016/2017 women's world cup pursuit score; saves/shots on goal; leg 2 – 1.1 km. The form of television graphics presupposes its being brief and laconic, but informative and sufficient to achieve the aim of providing viewers with necessary information. The important fact is that the television graphics is part of global information space and, being created in English, is aimed at speakers of different languages. As television graphics is on display during several seconds only, every sign is to be highly informative, but concise. The linguistic patterns used in television graphics play a great role in this target, economizing the linguistic means by the use of abbreviations and shortened forms. The nominating character is achieved by the wide use of notional words and limited use of functional words.

4. Conclusion

Television graphics is designed for communicating information about different sides of the broadcasted sport event. Alongside symbols and numbers, it contains textual elements, thus has a complicated polycode nature. The target recipients of the information are sport fans from different countries, not necessarily having a good command of English. It may be concluded that thematically the lexis given on the screen belongs to different groups: proper names, general English vocabulary, general sport lexis, and sport terms referring to corresponding kind of sport. Structurally the language items may be represented in the form of a word, word group, abbreviation or elliptical construction. On the one hand, the verbal means of television graphics are a secondary source of information. However, it turns to be highly informative: it informs about the participants, location and circumstances of the sport event, previous, current and final results and statistics.

5. Discussion

Being a component of the sport broadcasting, language means of television graphics may undergo linguistic analysis as well as other forms of textual information related to the sports discourse. The findings and results of the paper may become of interest and use for linguists who study languages for specific purposes (in particular, the sublanguage of sport), bases of sports journalism, sociolinguistics. This research can find its prospects in broadening the factual material and studying it from the retrospective point of view, with reference to how the verbal television graphics has changed within the history of sport broadcasting. Moreover, the results of the study may be used for comparative analysis of linguistic means of television graphics in different languages, as local competitions do not always use English in the textual information shown on the screen. The factual material of this research may find its application in the practice of compiling bilingual dictionaries of vocabulary frequently used in television graphics.

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