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Functions of factual information in French “star” interview

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Abstract: This paper studies the functional particularities of factual information in the French “star” interview that is considered as one of important semantic components of the dialogic discourse under the analysis. The difference between functional characteristics of factual information in the speech of journalist and respondent is investigated.

Keywords: “star” interview, factual information, journalist, respondent, potential reader.

Interview as one of the genres of mass media discourse represents a major interest to philological analysis, which may be explained by the general tendency of modern linguistic science to study particularities of various texts, including mass media that have pragmatic and communicative potential and orientation to potential social addressee [5, p. 174]. There are numerous researches devoted to the study of this genre (G.P. Apalat [1], O.V. Romanova [8], O.O. Salamatina [9]) including the analysis of french interview and its structural and semantic characteristics (N.H. Vartanova [3], N.E. Hapotchenko [4]). French “star” interview has not been subjected to a complex linguistic analysis, although there are available some works that reveal several aspects of this sub-genre (for example O.O. Borisov, K.S. Botvynko [2], O.A. Makurina [6-7], E.V. Shvets [10]). It should be noted that the “star” interview stands out as a relatively new kind of mass media text [10, p. 4] and it is still in the process of conceptualization. The “star” interview is a dialogical discourse, which combines the elements of informative, analytical, portrait interviews. The choice of the journalist’s interlocutor is very important to this type of discourse, he/she must be a representative of a certain part of society, a public person that belongs to the sphere of show-business, sport or other public profession. It means that the structure and content of “star” interview are modified by specific characteristics of the personality “star” [6, p. 290]. According to E.V. Shvets, “star” interview has some specific features such as, for example, alternative forms of introduction, dependence of content and structure from the social status of the interlocutor, the active role of the journalist who sometimes represents the main source of information, violation of some thematic and ethical taboos, etc [10, p. 13]. The above mentioned communicative and structural features of “star” interview allow the researchers to relate it to a specific sub-genre.

The analysis of 400 samples of French “star” interview let us to single out several types of semantic information that are represented in its semantic structure. They convey different data and therefore realize various functions in the text. One of abovementioned types we call the factual information and define it as verbal information that conveys the message about the facts, events, phenomena of reality and have zero author’s interpretation. This type corresponds to one of the leading functions of “star” interview, namely informative function that consists of the transmission of specific information to a potential reader. We can call this information objective because the texts of the interviews are based on real facts that have certain temporal and spatial characteristics. The factual infor-

mation is also characterized by a certain measure of subjectivity that is shown in the selection of facts and avoidance of negative events from the “star” biography.

The functional characteristics of factual information depend on the sender. In the speech of reporter and interviewee it is used with different purposes. In replicas of the journalist the factual information is most commonly used as a background, which serves as starting point to the question “”:

- *Scarlett Johansson, l’une de vos partenaires, en est à son troisième film avec Woody Allen après “Match Point” et “Scoop”. Leur évidente complicité portait-elle ombrage aux autres acteurs sur le tournage?*

- *Pas du tout. Il est indéniable que leur relation est très forte. On ne sait pas très bien comment la définir: grand frère-petite sœur, père-fille... Je connais Scarlett depuis longtemps, on s’est rencontrées à Los Angeles... (<http://www.elle.fr>).*

In this example, we see that the reporter uses the facts of the biography of the respondent to ask a question. This technique is quite common in the French “star” interview and it permits to expand the reader’s knowledge about the “star” identity. It also shows the active role of the reporter in the construction of semantic content of the text. In his turn, the respondent doesn’t content himself with a concise answer to the question, and provides clarifying factual information (“...Je connais Scarlett depuis longtemps...”).

The reporter uses the factual information in the form of comment with similar function. The journalist’s replica is represented like an incomplete statement that stimulates the immediate response of the interlocutor. The comments represent the selection of information that helps to discover the particularities of interlocutor’s identity or expand the interview’s theme. In this situation the respondent doesn’t answer any question but continues the reporter’s thought/judgment:

- *A l’origine, “Boy A” était un téléfilm...
 - En effet. Quand Channel 4 m’a envoyé le scénario de Mark O’Rowe, qui avait déjà écrit mon premier film, j’étais sur le point de tourner un autre projet avec Michael Caine mais celui-ci s’est vu retenu par le tournage de “The Dark Knight”. J’ai profité de 6 mois de flottement pour tourner “Boy A”... (“TéléObs”, №2312, p. 22).*

The reporter also uses the factual information to change sub-topics of the conversation. In such cases, in the beginning of journalist’s replica new information is represented that serves as a signal of passage to a new topic of conversation. The questions usually follow the new information. Thus the factual information of this type

assures coherence and consistency of the question-answer sequences and provides the information required to understand the general content of the interview:

- *Votre vie a-t-elle changé avec le succès ?*
- *Ma vie professionnelle est beaucoup plus chargée mais techniquement, matériellement non...*
- *Vous n'avez pas peur d'attraper la grosse tête ?*
- *Je pense que c'est quelque chose dont on ne se rend pas compte. Mais pour l'instant les gens autour de moi ont l'impression que je n'ai pas changé.*
- *Vous avez rejoint la troupe des Enfoirés en 2010. Comment avez-vous été abordé pour rejoindre ce cercle fermé ?* (<http://www.cosmopolitan.fr>).

The given example illustrates that factual information provides a smooth transition from one topic to another, and allows the reader to grasp the thread of conversation. It should be noted that the reporter should have some background information about the interlocutor to consciously choose the data that would not only be interesting for the potential reader, but also won't cause any conflicts during the conversation. With the help of such information, the reporter also fills the reader's information gaps concerning "star" biography and professional activity:

- *Pour la première fois, vous avez tourné devant la caméra de Woody Allen. Vous êtes perfectionniste, il est connu pour ne faire que deux prises. Entrer dans son monde était-il aisé ?*
- *J'étais pétrifiée. Je suis une grande fan de Woody Allen. Est-ce que j'allais être à la hauteur ? Allait-il regretter de m'avoir choisie ? Pas évident...* (<http://www.elle.fr>).

The reporter's factual information that complements the general knowledge about the respondent may be also represented without interrogative constructions. In such case, the respondent does not disprove or confirm the reporter's statement but supplements it with personal information:

- *Votre dernière apparition sur les planches, du moins en France, remonte à plus de vingt ans: c'était dans "la Mouette", de Tchekov, dans une mise en scène du cinéaste russe Andreï Konchalovskiy, en 1988.*
- *Le théâtre est mon grand amour, et il ne m'a jamais quitté. Il a à voir avec des sensations d'enfance en coulisses, un mélange d'odeurs, des lumières, d'atmosphères...* ("Le Nouvel Observateur", № 2434, p. 120)

In case of impossibility to place all the necessary factual information in the question replica, the journalist may introduce the background data to the potential reader with the help of author's comments that are submitted in brackets marked "NDLR" (author's note) and used to explain various facts about "star":

- clarification of the biography
- *Ce que vous possédez de plus cher ?*
- *Une famille. Je rêve déjà de la mienne. J'aimerais avoir un mari et trois enfants, un fils suivi de jumelles. Le grand frère protégerait ses petites sœurs, comme ce fut le cas pour moi (Chloë a trois frères aînés, NDLR)* (<http://madame.lefigaro.fr>).
- clarification of career details
- *Quelles différences y a-t-il entre le 1er et le 2e album? A-t-on été plus exigeant avec vous ?*

- *On ne m'a rien demandé. C'est moi qui ait décidé de revenir si rapidement après Toi + Moi [sorti le 22 septembre 2008, ndlr]... Toi + Moi était une carte de visite et là je rentre un peu plus dans le détail avec Danse notamment [son nouveau single, ndlr]* (<http://www.cosmopolitan.fr>).

- citation of the titles of albums and films
- *En 2009, vous receviez un César, visiblement très émue...*
- *Ce fut une ponctuation dans ma vie, et un vrai bonheur. D'autant que je l'ai reçu pour un film de Philippe Claudel (Il y a longtemps que je t'aime, NDLR), qui avait écrit le rôle pour moi* (<http://madame.lefigaro.fr>).

- explanation of different abbreviations used by the respondent
- *On soutient suffisamment les jeunes créateurs en France ?*
- *Pour bien faire, il devrait y avoir une seule Chambre syndicale française, prêt-à-porter et haute couture réunis, et pas deux, c'est une aberration historique. Aux États-Unis, il y a le CFDA (Council of Fashion Designers of America, NDLR), un seul interlocuteur pour les pouvoirs publics...* (<http://madame.lefigaro.fr>)

With the help of author's notes, the reporter can interfere in the speech of the respondent and in this manner help potential readers to understand some vague or uncertain replicas. In most cases, the journalist reveals a broad awareness of the subject of the conversation, but we can also meet the cases of his incompetence. For comparison, let us study the following examples:

- *Vous dédiez à Sophie Calle une chanson étonnante, "Le Banquet", qui se termine par ces mots: "Chaque femme que tu as quittée/je l'inviterai/à se rendre au grand banquet où toutes les femmes qui t'ont aimé/ne feront sans se priver de ton petit dard dressé/qu'une seule et langoureuse bouchée"...* (<http://www.elle.fr>).
- *Why I Was Born To Die, votre chanson pour l'album best-seller de Susan Boyle...*
- *La chanson était Who I Was Born To Be.*
- *Oups...* ("Libération", № 9583, p. 25).

In the first example, the journalist is familiar with the works of the respondent, he cites the song's name, mentions to whom it is dedicated to and also quotes the elements of text. In the second case, the reporter makes a mistake in the name of the song in question. Such journalist incompetence can lead to communicative deviations therefore such cases are very rare (one case per 1000 analyzed replicas).

We also should note the importance of reporter's replicas that stimulate the introduction of factual information in the speech of the respondent. Such statements may contain questions that establish the truth of factual information or clarify some data (est-il vrai que..., vous voulez dire que..., cela signifie que...):

- *On dit que l'un de vos romans est né d'une vision hyperréaliste, une fissure dans un mur. C'est vrai ?*
- *Oui. J'étais à Nancy, dans une fête. Et j'ai eu une sensation de "déjà vu", en observant cette fissure...* ("Le Nouvel Observateur", № 2335, p. 68).

The leading function of factual information in the speech of the respondent is the informative function, which consists in satisfaction of reporter's informative requests. This function is manifested in the immediate re-

sponse to a reporter's question and the tendency to provide information that meets the expectations of the reporter as well as potential reader. The replicas that realize this function are characterized by consistency and accuracy:

- *Un objet indispensable ?*

- *Mon iPhone* (<http://madame.lefigaro.fr>).

This type of information is evaluated from the point of final addressee and is considered to be objective and valuable due to receiving it from the source. But sometimes the respondent refuses to provide complete factual information, and represents only partial data:

- *J'avais déjà vécu des répétitions où le metteur en scène – je ne donnerai pas le nom – a parlé pendant 70% du temps... les plus grand moments pour un acteur sont ceux où il lâche quelque chose de lui-même sans le vouloir. Cela m'est arrivé parfois, mais rarement. Il faut alors avoir toute l'écoute du metteur en scène. Pas de noms, là non plus* ("Le Nouvel Observateur", № 2434, p. 122).

Such cases are very rare in the "star" interview, the respondent is usually open in his answers and gladly provides even additional information. The fact that the respondent sometimes avoids a complete answer may be explained by the existence of certain taboos in mass communication and by general tendency to evade providing controversial or provocative information. The respondent also uses factual information to influence the course of conversation. With additional factual information, he is able to change the content of conversation by introducing new sub-topic:

- *Votre implication dans la marque Mango fait-elle partie de ce désir ?*

- *Exactement. Travailler avec ma sœur pour notre collection est très excitant. Dans un premier temps, on s'est beaucoup inspirées du cinéma italien des années 50 ; maintenant, on s'intéresse au look des pin-up... Nous avons trois ans d'écart avec ma sœur, mais on fonctionne un peu comme des jumelles. Nous avons des goûts similaires et, physiquement, on se ressemble énormément.*

- *La famille est importante pour vous...*

(<http://www.elle.fr>).

As part of the answer the factual component of the replica can be used to confirm the respondent's own judgment. In this case, the facts are provided immediately after the judgment and thus increase its impact on the reader:

- *Etiez-vous obligé de montrer tant de violence ?*

- *L'Amérique a une culture de la violence. La guerre des narcotiques avec le Mexique a fait plus de 50 000 victimes...* ("ParisMatch", № 3306, p. 18).

Since the "star" interview traditionally aimed at creating positive image of the public figure, the respondent also tries to meet several goals with the help of selection of factual information: to answer questions, provide information that is interesting to the reader, support or create positive image. Therefore, the factual information is often accompanied by additional facts related with the respondent's private life:

- *Le principal trait de votre caractère ?*

- *Je suis un grand "encaisseur". Un vrai boxeur. Je peux tout supporter... C'est ma grand-mère chinoise qui m'a appris à me taire et à m'endurcir. À l'époque, nous vivions en pleine révolution culturelle. Encaisser était une question de survie.* (<http://www.madame.lefigaro.fr>).

The informative function often comes into conflict with the attempt to create a "star" image, to provide as much information about oneself as possible that causes tendency to neglect accurate answers in favor of broad, detailed answers, including additional personal information:

- *Votre héroïne dans la vie ?*

- *Audrey Hepburn. Pour son allure innée et son talent d'actrice, mais aussi pour sa générosité. Son engagement humanitaire, son sourire, son élégance la rendent unique à mes yeux. Je rêve de devenir comme elle...* (<http://www.madame.lefigaro.fr>).

Such replicas help to create a relaxed atmosphere and support the impression of improvised conversation between reporter and respondent that certainly helps to attract the reader's attention.

Thus, the factual information in the "star" interview not only conveys the data about events and facts of reality, but also has the function of coherency and gradual development of communication between the interlocutors. The choice of the elements of factual information are guided by certain criteria that allows to the communicants to achieve communicative goals, the most important of them is formation of positive image of the interviewee. As one of the perspectives of our further research, we consider the study of the relationship between different types of semantic information in French "star" interview.

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Мозолева А.С. Функции фактуальной информации во французском “звездном” интервью

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются функциональные особенности фактуальной информации “звездного” интервью, которая является неотъемлемым элементом смыслового наполнения данного вида диалогического дискурса. Обращается внимание на несоответствие функциональных характеристик фактуальной информации в репликах репортера и респондента.

Ключевые слова: фактуальная информация, “звездное” интервью, журналист, респондент, потенциальный читатель.