Covid-19 pandemic in linguistic strategies of Ukrainian media: image aspect

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Abstract. The author analyzes linguistic peculiarities of modeling the image of Ukraine in modern media in the period of Covid-19. In the context of linguistic imageology, attention is paid to the need to construct successful linguistic strategies and their correct implementation in the media space. In this research discourse, the author explores meliorative and pejorative image texts about Ukraine, which are provided at the linguistic level by different linguistic means and have different image-forming effect – positive or negative. Thus, it is concluded that the current image of Ukraine in media space is quite contradictory, which is due, among other things, to the influence of Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: linguistic imageology, image of Ukraine, linguistic strategies, image text, Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction. Modern neolinguistics focuses on the problem of interdisciplinarity in science, which is especially important in the period of dominance of communicative-cognitive scientific trends. In the outlined scientific discourse, linguists pay attention to a new linguistic direction that is syncretic in nature – **linguistic imageology.** This branch of linguistics began to take shape in the last decades of the 20th century as a scientific field that analyzes the linguistic component of the formation of the image of an individual, organization, territory, city, country, etc. In fact, it is a study of the language tools of image creation and analysis of those linguistic units that directly affect the construction of image.

Brief overview of related publications. As a scientific field based on the concept of interdisciplinarity, linguistic imageology attracts the attention of completely different scientists – from sociologists [2, 6, 9], psychologists [5, 13] and culturologists [3,11] to political scientists [7,10] and specialists in the field of mass communications [12]. Linguists in this aspect are interested in the linguistic mechanisms of modeling the image of a famous person [4,15],organization [8], politician [14], TV presenter [1] etc. Undoubtedly, the outlined directions of image research are relevant and represent a great scientific perspective.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the language tools for creating the image of Ukraine in media in meliorative and pejorative image texts, determine effective linguistic strategies for construction the country's image, study the image potential of the Ukrainian literary language in the process of state image creation.

Materials and methods. The material of the research is image texts about Ukraine in modern media (2017-2021). In the context of linguistic methodology, we used the methods of linguistic research of media text, in particular **the method of media monitoring** (for analysis of image information about Ukraine in modern media resources), **the method of critical analysis in media** (for giving the most objective assessment of image texts about Ukraine taking into consideration extra-linguistic factors that influenced its creation) and **the method of linguistic expertise of media texts** (to identify and analyze specific language tools by which the author forms in the imagination of the recipient a positive or negative attitude towards the state, and thus creates a positive or negative country's image).

Results and discussion. We analyze the linguistic features of the creation of image in media space which can be done in the context of media linguistic imageology. As a scientific field, media linguistic imageology is just beginning to take shape, which forms the relevance of the study. In the discourse of neolinguistics, media linguistic imageology, in our opinion, is most closely related to such areas as media linguistics, PR-linguistics, psycholinguistics and suggestive linguistics. The connection between media linguistic imageology and media linguistics or PR-linguistics lies in the commonality of the object of the study – the media space, in addition, the process of linguistic image construction is an integral part of any PR-campaign. The closeness of the analyzed linguistic direction with psycholinguistics and suggestive linguistics can be explained as follows: in order to create a successful image of an object / subject in the mass consciousness, the image maker needs to understand the psychological dominants of the image audience. Using various image strategies, specialists in the field of image technologies use those language formulas that have suggestive properties, which leads to a communicative impact on the language consciousness of the recipient.

Working with media texts, we investigate the image of Ukraine, which is formed in image texts of different types. Media linguistic imageology focuses on the process of cognition of communicatively oriented texts that are consciously verbally marked. Texts aimed at forming a positive perception of the object of image in mass communication are classified as meliorative in linguistic imageology. A special type of meliorative image texts is considered by media linguists when there is a need to repair an imperfectly formed image, improve or correct its dominant verbal and semantic components. Accordingly, the absolute verbal, stylistic, semantic and compositional-architectural communicative antinomy to meliorative image texts are media publications that are aimed at discrediting the image of a certain event / action, person / enterprise, organization / country, etc. In such circumstances, it is a purposeful creation and dissemination of pejorative image texts, which involves the formation of a negative, unfavorable, unsuccessful representation of the object of image. Thus, the question arises about the analysis of stylistic principles of image text creation and scientific interpretation of language characteristics in the construction of Ukraine's image in the media.

Scientific objectification in this case focuses on: the principles of broadcasting information about the state, which will provide a stylistically modeled therapeutic communicative effect and, accordingly, the possible avoidance / leveling of pathogenic image texts. Therefore, in order to explain the objective picture of the image of our state formed in the minds of recipients, as well as to substantiate the linguistic potential of communicative tools of image creation, we analyze the most representative stylistic resources of therapeutic

and pathogenic image texts.

In the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, much of the media content is devoted to coronavirus infection and its impact on various aspects of social life (medicine, economics, politics, education etc.) No less important is how Covid-19 affects the modern image of Ukraine. Thus, the obvious positive consequence of the pandemic and the quarantine restrictions caused by it was the rapid development of domestic tourism. During the quarantine, Ukrainians began to travel more to their homeland. Media launched the projects "Travel to Ukraine", "Tourist Magnets of Ukraine" etc., which led to improvement of the national image in Ukrainian media. Publications about the benefits of traveling to Ukraine are increasingly appearing in modern media: *"Domestic tourism in Ukraine is on the rise because of COVID-19", "To promote travel to Ukraine, COVID-19 has done more than all Ukrainian governments combined. Ukrainians have finally started travelling the country, and that's great. Of course, most of these trips are organized by people themselves. The tourist infrastructure, which could earn on the surge of domestic tourism, has almost no benefit from this. But in such trips we should see a positive side"* [Radio Svoboda, 15.07.2020], *"The tourism industry suffered the most during the global pandemic. Due to this difficult period, domestic tourism revived. Ukrainians finally realized that Ukraine has a place to go and something to see. In the Lviv region there is something to be proud of and something to brag about: from castles to Yavoriv toys. We just forget about these beauties when we fly to foreign resorts"* [Gal-Info. Lviv News, September 28, 2020], *"Since Ukrainians have not had many options for holidays abroad since the spring, many have mastered domestic tourism. And rightly so, Ukraine is an amazing country that has something to offer vacationers," "Autumn and jazz are the same classic combination as red and black or whiskey and cola. And if we add to this the unusual atmosphere of September Lviv we get an event that is a must visit"* [Novoye vremya, 22.09.2020], *"The corona crisis gave a head start to domestic tourism"* [espreso.tv, 06.07.2020], *"How the crisis helped the development of domestic tourism in Ukraine", "The country's tourism sector may become one of the few Ukrainian industries that can benefit from the COVID-19 crisis",* [Novoye vremya, 17.07.2020], *"According to the head of the State Agency for Tourism and Resorts Mariana Oleskiv, domestic tourism is now viewed differently. Previously, only Lviv and Odessa were the two cities where Ukrainians usually went to weekend. Now other corners of Ukraine are also discovered"* [tvoemisto.tv] etc. At the linguistic level, these image texts are characterized by high emotionality, expressiveness, the use of metaphorical vocabulary, epithet forms of the word, such as: *domestic tourism has revived, tourism on the rise, an amazing country* etc. Obviously, the appeal to such image-forming markers also contains a component of positive author's assessment, which contributes to the linguistic construction of the state image in a direction beneficial to a media linguist.

In addition, Covid-19 has led to significant changes in the field of education, especially in distance learning technologies. Lessons in Google Classroom, lectures and seminars in Zoom, Skype or Google Meet – all this has become a reality of our time. Of course, there are different views on the effectiveness of online education compared to the traditional offline format, but in a pandemic, in our opinion, distance learning is the most acceptable way out. And in this context

we observe modeling a new image of education in Ukraine, which is formed in the conditions of distance learning. It should be noted that despite numerous problems in this area, the image of education in the Ukrainian media is generally constructed in a positive way.

Thus, in particular, media emphasize the importance of continuing education in this difficult period, noting that effective teacher-student interaction is the main condition for successful work in this area: *"School for kids is not just a lesson or a storage room where parents take them for a day. It's another planet where there is a measured, secure life without TV news and disturbing adult conversations. The familiarity of the situation and the steadfastness of the rules give the impression that everything remains the same", "And I understand how difficult it is for children. They hear the conversations of adults and the cries of TV in the kitchen, see how everything has changed. It turns out that school for them is an island of stability, if there is a school, then life goes on as usual, it's not scary"," For me, as for many of my fellow teachers, the issue is resolved: if the school is opened, we work. Yes, it's scary, but at school everything is forgotten. Because it is seen differently what is the main and what is secondary. As long as the children need me, I will be with them. Let them not only learn, but also know – everything is fine, they have support, and it's not only parents"* [Dzerkalo tyzhnya, 24.10.2020], *"This autumn, universities were much better prepared for new challenges, as the experience of the spring semester and the urgent need to restructure distance learning processes made universities stronger," "all speakers note the positive impetus with a forced transition to blended learning – from the creation of a large number of new online courses to increase of the digital culture of participants in the educational process"* [Dzerkalo tyzhnya, 09.10.2020] etc.

We note that the main linguistic markers that shape the image of Ukrainian education in such media publications are: **metaphorical constructions with emotional and evaluative meaning**: *"school is another planet", "island of stability"* etc.; **epithet language formulas with meliorative connotation**: school is a place where there is a *"measured, secure life without TV news and disturbing adult conversations", "universities were much better prepared", "stronger"* etc.

Considering such an axiological principle as health, we analyze a number of image texts on Covid-19 that are related to the image of a medical worker and Ukrainian medicine in general. In this scientific context, we emphasize the important role of a media linguist, who often manipulates information about coronavirus infection in a favorable direction, thus distorting not only the image of Ukrainian medicine, but also the state image. It is clear that image texts of this type are pejorative and the image of Ukraine modeled in them is negative: *"If we ignore the rules of anti-epidemic safety, the situation will quickly get out of control," the minister said. As if it is now under control. Maksym Stepanov cannot control even the department entrusted to him. A few days ago, the coronavirus infection was confirmed by more than 30 employees of the ministry. Since the beginning of the epidemic, the Ministry of Health has not been able to provide personal protection to even its own employees. What to say about the whole country. What is it? Criminal negligence? Or is the government reducing the burden on the Pension Fund in such a cynical way? After all, the largest number of deaths is among Ukrainians aged 60+"* [Dzerkalo

tyzhnya, 11.10.2020], *"We are somehow **very unlucky with the health ministers**. Especially in the last year. Since last fall, three of them have changed, and each new one has become a source of **increasingly epic failures**. We can 100% agree with only one statement of Maksym Stepanov: "There are many dreamers in the country". **I will add: and the main one is the current Minister of Health"**, "Perhaps Maksym Stepanov learned mathematics badly at school? Otherwise, it is difficult to explain where the minister got the figure of 50,000 doctors who will be fired due to poor medical reform almost immediately after his appointment", "Well, **the apogee of ministerial profanity** is the reflection that we need to rebuild the Semashko system. The minister is either completely lost or (even worse) really does not understand that only a country with a completely different state system and level of resources could pull this off. It seems that **the Minister-Dreamer considers us idiots"** [Dzerkalo tyzhnya, 24.09.2020], **"The risks that the epidemic will finally get out of control are very high**. Against this background, the children went to school. We will soon see how this will affect the epidemic. We can already say for sure that children and young people will get sick more often, and **we will be living under a constant stressful situation of growing morbidity** until April-May of next year. Classic laws of epidemiology say that until 70% of the population becomes ill or vaccinated, the epidemic will not stop"* [Dzerkalo tyzhnya, 07.09.2020] etc.

It should be noted that there have been a lot of pejorative image texts of this type in the Ukrainian media lately. In fact, today they are filling the Ukrainian media space, not only creating a real threat to the mental health of the nation during this difficult pandemic period for humanity, but also creating a low level of media literacy and critical thinking of recipients. From the point of view of linguistics, image-forming markers with a minus sign in the analyzed media texts are different ways to identify the author's modality, in particular: **reinforcing modal particles that have a clearly negative contextual semantics:** *"can not control even the department*

entrusted to him", "Ministry of Health… failed to provide personal protective equipment, even its own employees"* etc. It should be noted that the negative image effect of such constructions increases due to their accumulation in the media text; **evaluative epithet constructions with pejorative meaning:** *"criminal negligence", "cynical way", "epic failure"* etc**.; paraphrases with a clear author's assessment:** *"minister-dreamer"* (Maksym Stepanov) etc.; **use of the future tense read by the recipient as an unalterable situation:** *"the epidemiological process will finally get out of control", "children and young people will get sick more often", "we will live in a constant stressful situation of increasing morbidity"* etc.

At the syntactic level, a negative state image is formed due to use of the linguistic potential of **rhetorical questions** *("What is this? Criminal negligence? Does the government reduce the burden on the Pension Fund in such a cynical way?", "Perhaps Maksym Stepanov learned math poorly in school?"),* **parceled language formulas** *("We are somehow very unlucky with the ministers of health. Especially in the last year", "We have a lot of dreamers in the country"There are versions that the virus mutates and becomes weaker. But so far they have no practical confirmation")* etc.

Conclusions. The conclusion can be made that today's media image of Ukraine is quite contradictory. Not the least role in this issue is played by the infamous Covid-19, which has different effects on various aspects of Ukrainian social life. And if in some areas we are trying to find a way out of the problem situation, reformatting the educational process in the direction of digitalization and developing domestic tourism, in other areas we face many challenges. Obviously, in these conditions, the priority of a media linguist should be timely, truthful and impartial informing the recipient about current events, focus on axiological and ethical principles, information hygiene and respect for recipients. Hence, professional analysis of the meanings laid down by media specialists is one of many topical issues for researchers in the sphere of linguistic imageology.

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