*An*na Sámelová – Mária Stanková
So*me* Ideas on Facts **an**d no Facts within Media Language

Abstract:
The paper deals with the relationship between the media we consume and the language we use in everyday situations. There are some differences between our communication online and offline. The former tends to be more emotional, touchy, and personally or politically incorrect, whilst the latter is supposed to have a propensity for rationality. Nevertheless, contemporary media binds both these kinds of expression together. Today, emojis and emoticons express not only human emotions, but also their ideas.

Key words:
Media language – online communication – offline communication – fact – emotion.

Media Language

Media language represents a special kind of communication. Journalists (and all other "media authors") use it with the main focus on their purpose, the aim of their articles. Journalistic texts do not only inform their recipients, they also explain and evaluate the facts, try to help recipients to find an opinion and try to persuade them[1]. They use and also misuse media language in the way that is best for them (and their news, television, radio, websites, etc.). This is one of the reasons why media language is defined by the functions of journalism. Another point is that authors should use language instruments that are explicit, correct, understandable, appropriate and also catchy.[2] Media language also depends on genres, situation, objectivity (or subjectivity), type of media, political and social context, etc. Another important fact about media language and its communication is

the "missing recipient"[3] meaning that journalists don't get any feedback[4] in its classic meaning. So, the recipient in the communication with media language is unknown and we can consider them as a mass of recipients. These facts strongly affect the structure and the language of journalistic texts, too. From this short introduction is clear that these days linguists (should) think about media language also with the help of pragmatics[5], because orientation on the relationship between sign and sign user[6], on recipient, leads research of media language to new topics within thinking about linguistics, media and communication.

If we are talking about the relationship between media and language, we can say that media language in every country has two main functions firstly it informs "people about things they need to know about"[7], but also informs people about their literary language. The second function refers to the "educational" aspect of media language. Because media newspapers, radio, television, websites, etc. use literary language and we can consider them as a tool for spreading literary language between recipients. This "spreading" has both good and bad

effects on people. On the one hand, media language represents a very dynamic kind of language and people can learn a lot of new words and new language principles from it, but on the other hand, a low standard of literary language used in media can also cause a low standard of literary language in the masses. This question educational function of media language was at the centre of Slovak linguistic attention mainly after World War II. This was caused by the political and social context of our country, especially due to the close relationship with the Czech language that ended in language purism.

The research connected with media language was often published on the pages of the magazine *Otázky žurnalistiky*.[8] In spite of the fact that in the second half of the 20th century Slovak linguists were mainly focused on the culture of media language and its relationship with literary language[9], these days there are a lot of other important issues that need to be solved. We are not saying that dealing with the state of culture of media language is less important, but we want to point out actual topics within thinking about media, journalism

and linguistics. Media language, for example, has a strong influence on the vocabulary of national languages, it causes changes in the lexical meaning of verbs and also movement from one stylistic (or lexical) group of words to another[10] or word formation. Media language is also strongly bound with idioms. This is the reason, why this part of the article will be focused on media language from the linguistic point of view. We will try to point out how media language works with the main parts of linguistics phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicology and stylistics. All of these linguistic disciplines can (and should) be very important for media language. This study will try to point out some interesting and current issues of media language from the linguistics point of view. Therefore, this part of the article would like to show where future research of media language can lead, but, for sure, it does not want to be a comprehensive study about relationships between media language and all subdisciplines of linguistics.

The relationship between phonetics, phonology and media stresses out the issue of pronunciation. Especially in Slovak speech there are a lot of pronunciation problems. Firstly, there is a little discrepancy in the pronunciation of soft consonants [ď], [ť], [ň], [ľ] in position after vowels [i], [e] and diphthongs [ia], [ie], [iu]. Another pronunciation problem is soft l [ľ][11], because people tend to pronounce it as hard l [l]. There are also issues connected with interrogative or exclamatory sentences. These topics can be considered as a part of the "educational" aspect of media language because they can cause a lower

1   We can also consider media language as the tool of agitation and propaganda. In SERAFÍNOVÁ, D.: K jazyku prostriedkov masovej komunikácie [About the mass communication language]. In *Sešity novináře*, 1989, Vol. 23, No. 2, p. 35.

2   The objective of the message sender in mass comunication is to find appropriate language tools, which form the ideas and messages succinctly and accurately, bearing the situational context in mind. In KRÁĽ, A.: Ústnosť a písomnosť rečových prejavov v masovej komunikácii a jazyková kultúra. [Oral and written form of speeches in mass communication and culture of language]. In Kultúra slova, 1982, Vol. 16, No 9, p. 294.

3   More about recipient in mass media communication: KRÁĽ, A.: Ústnosť a písomnosť rečových prejavov v masovej komunikácii a jazyková kultúra. [Oral and written form of speeches in mass communication and culture of language]. In *Kultúra slova*, 1982, Vol. 16, No 9, p. 293.

4   More about missing feedback: MISTRÍK, J.: Jazyk nie je len skloňovanie. [Language is not just a declination]. In *Kultúra slova*, 1982, Vol. 16, No. 8, p. 262.

5   In the meaning of "A subdiscipline of linguistics developed from different linguistic, philosophical and sociological traditions that studies the relationship between natural language expressions and their uses in specific situations." In BUSSMANN, H.: *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. New York : Routledge, 1996, p. 926.

6   Ibid., p. 926.

7   TURNER, T.: Ted Turner Quotes. In *Brainy Quote*. [online]. [2018-09-29]. Available at <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/ted_turner_586459>.

8   Many authors have already concerned themselves with the topic of media language, as is apparent in the journal "Otázky žurnalistiky". Advanced keyword search shows that language research is within the top three most publicised topics. In HACEK, J.: Štatistika textov publikovaných v periodiku Otázky žurnalistiky (2007-2017). [The Statistics of Texts Published in the Journal Questions of Journalism (2007-2017). In Otázky žurnalistiky, 2017, Vol. 60, No. 3-4, p. 150-151.

9   Language culture: "The development of the language, i.e. the measure of conformity of the language on the basis of the needs of its user base. Additionally, it is the level of language practice, i.e. the level of written and spoken language use. Furthermore, it is also the effort of improving the language, i.e. the conceited effort of systematic improvment in speaking the language and the anchoring of the language context into the minds of its user base." In RUŽIČKA, J.: Problémy jazykovej kultúry. [Culture of language problems]. In Kultúra spisovnej slovenčiny. Ed. J. Ružička. Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo SAV, 1967, p. 9-22.

10   We can see it mainly on process of determinologization or on the other hand on the process of terminologization.

11   More on Slovak consonant [ľ]: KAČALA, J.: Slovenská mäkká spoluhláska ľ. [Slovak soft consonant ľ]. In *Kultúra slova*, 1997, Vol. 31, No. 2, p. 65-72.

»

120

Art

Anna Sámelová – Mária Stanková

Some Ideas on Facts and no Facts within Media Language

121

European Journal of Media, Art & Photography

standard of pronunciation.

When we think about morphology and media language, it is possible to think about word formation. This is related to lexicology, but from the morphological point of view, there are changes of morphemes that can make a new form of words. In Slovak, there are a lot of prefixes and suffixes that can help to create new words or new meanings. There are also a lot of other issues, for example verbal aspect and its use in media language, creating new forms of verbs against the logic and grammar rules of aspect. In the past few decades, there was a tendency to look at media language with the help of statistics. That led to information about the amount of concrete parts of speech in genres or styles.

Media language both written and spoken texts has also special syntax. Linguists can, for example, focus on these specialities (word order, position of clauses, length of sentences, usage of compound sentences, etc.), or on defective constructions.

The effect of media language on lexicology and vice versa represents one of the most dynamic relationships when we are thinking about journalism and linguistics. Firstly, there are the issues of word meaning. In this area, media language is one of the biggest sources of new words in literary languages. Media language uses words from (almost) every part of vocabulary and that causes changes and movement inside these parts (for example terminologization and determinologization). Media language has its own part of vocabulary we called *"publicizmy"*. Idioms also present another area of linguistic research of media language.

Together with lexicology, stylistics has a great impact on media language. In our cultural context there is a special style as one of the six basic styles from Mistrík's Štylistika publicistický štýl.[12]

Research of this style is still open, dynamic and very active. Linguists are dealing with the genres, types of media and its effect on the language, main aspects of style etc.

We should realize and accept what Jozef Mistrík said in 1982. If in our close past our language was influenced by brilliant poets and writers, today this function is taken by media language.[13] That was unquestionably true. But in 2018, we are living in the world where our language is influenced primarily by online media language.

Expressing offline versus ventilating online

As is evident from the previous linguistic part of this study, there are a variety of paradigms in approach to the functions of media language. Nevertheless, neither professional journalists which use this language to inform or entertain their audience nor mass media laity which (seemingly) only consume it, perceive these academic nuances of media language, even though they are of great importance. For, mass media are usually considered as an area, where words matter.

All legislative norms and codes of ethics regarding mass media as well as the rules of professional conduct of journalists has been set as societal requirements for editorial responsibility. This is primarily based on the imperative to be objective. Yet, objectivity is a "peculiar demand"[14] within mass media. It is not an invariant of quality of published contents. Objectivity entered the media discourse especially after World War I in the form of a

requirement of the strict separation of facts and values. *"Facts, in this view, are assertions about the world open to independent validation. They stand beyond the distorting influences of any individual's personal preferences."*[15] Values, on the other hand, are *"an individual's conscious and unconscious preferences for what the world should be; they are seen as ultimately subjective".*[16] Since the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the whole media attention has been focused on facts. And the societal pressure for media objectivity has been increasing and accelerating. Facts mean facts, whilst values mean values.

American professor of journalism Michael Schudson asks the questions, why it is taken for granted that mass media should be "objective", and why that question is so familiar. Forasmuch as, media objectivity has never before been an issue. It became a problem exactly at the moment of defining the sharp difference between fact and value as well as establishing a commitment to their segregation.[17] Slovak philosopher František Novosád highlights that in the sphere of human and societal life, facts mean almost nothing if they are devoid of values: *"Everyday consciousness professes the* cult *of facts'. It is convinced that* facts *make decisions about everything' that* facts *speak for themselves'. In reality, however, facts are* mute*', they do not say anything, they only opaquely babble. Above all, there are a lot of facts. In fact, infinitely many facts. We have to choose which one we will consider important, which one not. When choosing a fact, we even find that there is no fact itself. Fact is fact only on a certain theoretical background, it is an answer to a particular question."*[18]

Nevertheless, mass media professionals are obliged to be objective, to separate facts and values, to play a never-ending game with words (not to "play on words") in order to publish their messages socially and politically correctly. They have been doing this for over a century. Today, many well-known experts in the fields of mass media and society (Z. Bauman, A. Giddens, M. Schudson, R. McChesney, etc.) agree that this societal obsession with "objectivity" stood (among other things) at the starting line of the tremendous popularity of self-publishing that has finally resulted in post-truth reality.

Of crucial importance here is the fact, that everything that has been stated so far in connection with the media's societal responsibility and objectivity is valid only for the so-called traditional mass media originally offline media. These are newspapers or magazines, radio, and television with their institutional staff responsible for media obedience to legal and ethical norms. Hence, their media language (does not matter whether it is textual, audial or visual) is based on rational-critical argumentation. It is a logical-conceptual media language.

On the other hand, however, there is the online media world. The diffused network instead of the hierarchized institution. With almost no normative regulation (so far), with no professional editorial staff thus, with no societal editorial responsibility. The online media is based on emotional-uncritical gossip. Hence, its media language is primarily figurative-expressive. The figurative-expressive language itself is not a problem. Slovak media linguist Danuša Serafínová recently made a research of media language in the Slovak press during the period 1918 – 1938. She has concluded, that many outputs even of

rational journalism included a number of emotional expressions phrasemes.[19] Thus, this phenomenon is nothing new or surprising in media language. So, what is the issue in the world of online media language?

At the beginning of the Internet (Web 1.0), it was "just a word" to the marginal discussion at the blog or vlog. When social media (Web 2.0) entered into human lives, this "just a word" has been changed to "just talk". Finally nowadays, in the era of semantic media (Web 3.0), the "just talk" has been changed to general public communication. Online media language, however, is peculiar. It is extraordinary by its banality. It can be rude and vulgar at the same time as it is cute and genteel. People ventilate their personal secrets (e.g. honeymoon, childbirth, infidelity, family quarrels, etc.) in their own "private public" (or in their own "public privacy") on the online media. And when words are not enough, there are plenty of smiley faces, weeping lambs, shouting kitties or puppies, monkeys covering their eyes, mouths or ears, flying angels, broken hearts, etc. Every human mood, emotion, condition of body or state of mind can be expressed by emoji or emoticon. Emoji and emoticons have taken over the way we communicate online. Grannan Cydney has called them "two new-age hieroglyphic languages" and brought a simple definition of the difference between them: *"if you come across a smiley face that contains a character you can find on your computer keyboard, it's an emoticon. If it's a little cartoon figure that is free from the binds of punctuation, numbers, and letters, it's an emoji."*[20]

Seemingly, there is nothing harmful in the "emoji / emoticons communication". It is a quick, cheap, and easily understandable communication, it is fun. After all, these visualized shortcuts were originally created because text-based online communication does not allow people to follow signals of non-verbal communication. Emoji and emoticons should be some kind of compensation. Social media content, however, proves that sometimes emoji as well as emoticons can even totally compensate for verbal communication and often replace it. Nevertheless, the language we use creates the way we think. We could say, it forms our minds. Simple language simple mind. No thoughts no arguments. Media language is not only a language we consume, it is also the language we live through. Media consumption has reached such a dimension that people are not aware of the merger of their daily language and media language. And the language we use every day being online is becoming simpler, shorter, concise, more versatile, literally figurative and actually compressed.[21]

Expressive figuration and language compression are the significant contradictions of the online media world. In the space, where it is technologically possible to ignore all the dimensional limits that have always limited traditional mass media and their contents (both time and space limitations), there are published texts, sounds as well as images which summarize a whole event, atmosphere or mood, and all pieces of information, sentiments or emotions in a few words, in a pictograph (emoji), in the pictorial icons (emoticons). As a result,

Bratislava : SPN, 1985.

13   On a related note - While in the past, the language of poets carried language development forward, nowadays the role has mostly been taken over by the press. In MISTRÍK, J.: Jazyk nie je len skloňovanie. [Language is not just a declination]. In Kultúra slova, 1982, Vol. 16, No. 8, p. 264-265.

14   SCHUDSON, M.: *Discovering the News : a Social History of American Newspapers. [New York] : Basic Books, 1978, p. 3.*

15   Ibid., p. 5.

16   Ibid., p. 5.

17   SCHUDSON, M.: *Discovering the News : a Social History of American Newspapers. Op. cit.*

18   NOVOSÁD, F.: Čo? Ako? Prečo? : Sociálne teórie v otázkach a odpovediach. [What? How? Why? : The Social Theories in Questions and Answers]. Bratislava : Hronka, 2014, p. 97.

19   SERAFÍNOVÁ. D.: Frazémy v slovenskej periodickej tlači z obdobia 1. ČSR (1918-1938). [Phrasemes in the Slovak Periodical Press from the Period of the 1st CSR (1918-1938)]. In *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 2018, Vol. 61, No. 1-2, p. 12-28.

20   GRANNAN, C.: What's the Difference Between Emoji and Emoticons? In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online]. [2018-09-29]. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/story/whats-the-difference-between-emoji-and-emoticons>.

21   Inspirational reading on new trends in the online media (including the media language) offers a collective monograph: AITCHISON, J., LEWIS, D. M. (eds.): *New Media Language. London, New York : Routledge, 2003.*

12   MISTRÍK, J.: Štylistika. [Stylistics].

»

122

Art

Anna Sámelová – Mária Stanková

Some Ideas on Facts and no Facts within Media Language

123

European Journal of Media, Art & Photography

people are less prepared to receive, contemplate, and decide streams of information in their complexity. They communicate in their simply and funny way. Hence, they expect solutions to complex problems in the same simple and funny way. They have even stopped searching for more complicated solutions. Living in the information bubble of simplicity and joy seems to be much easier and much more attractive.

Traditional media face strict normative regulations due to their reputed manipulative potential. We believe that media objectivity might protect people from propaganda and indoctrination. It is still valid that traditional mass media might be dangerous because of their language (textual, audial as well as visual), we might maintain that "the manipulation of public opinion by means of global mass media is apparent".[22] Nevertheless, the crucial issue lies in how to protect people from themselves from auto-propaganda and from self-indoctrination by their own simplified thinking in the bubble of simplicity and joy from emoji and emoticons.

Instead of a Conclusion

Media language has always attracted the attention of linguists, mass media analysts, sociologists, psychologists, etc., and it is taken for granted, that it will attract this kind of research forever. There are (at minimum) four good reasons. New Zealand sociolinguistic researcher Allan Bell sees them as "practical and principled"[23] : (1st) the

media provide an easily accessible source of language data for research and teaching purposes; (2nd) the media are important linguistic institutions, media usage reflects and shapes both language use and attitudes in a speech community; (3rd) the ways in which the media use language are interesting linguistically in their own right; (4th) the media are crucial presenters of culture, politics, and social life, shaping as well as reflecting how these are formed and expressed. Media 'discourse' is important both for what it reveals about a society and for what it contributes to the character of society.[24]

Media language is common for the traditional (originally offline) as well as the online media. There are, however, some differences between our communication offline and online. The former is supposed to have a propensity for rationality, whilst the latter tends to be more emotional, touchy, and personally or politically incorrect. In addition, it is simplified, compressed, and literally figurative through emoji and emoticons. Expressing attitudes and opinions on complicated topics of private or public life through the various static or moving images of faces or beings (real or imaginary, cute or abominable, ordinary or bizarre) represent a distinct phenomenon of the dual perception of the mass media and of the contents they publish. The traditional media seem to be imprisoned by society in the world of logic, arguments and socio-political correctness of "objective" truth (even though "manipulative"), while the online media seem to be considered a private world of emotions, unjustified opinions, socio-political misleading "alternative truth", in short, the unregulated world of simplicity and fun.

Human critical thinking the pride

and the ideal of the Enlightenment slowly becomes a forgotten term in textbooks and the crucial issue lies in how to protect people from themselves from self-indoctrination by their own simplified thinking in the bubble of online simplicity and joy.

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Authors

PhDr. Anna Sámelová, PhD.
Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, Štúrova 9, 814 99 Bratislava, Slovak Republic
anna.samelova@uniba.sk

Mgr. Mária Stanková, PhD.
Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava, Štúrova 9, 814 99 Bratislava, Slovak Republic
maria.stankova@uniba.sk

Profile of the Authors

Anna Sámelová is an Assistant Professor with more than 20 years of experience in the field of journalism. She was the Director of the News Centers of the Radio and Television of Slovakia as well as the Editor-in-Chief of Radio Twist. For her participation in the founding of the radio daily news Žurnál Rádia Twist, she received the Annual Award of the Literary Fund of Slovakia for Best Creative Journalism in 1996. She acted for three years as a jury member for the Journalism Award organised by Open Society Fund Prague (Czech Republic).

Mária Stanková is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism. She focuses on language, semiotics, non-verbal communication, genres and stylistics. Stanková is also interested in literary problems, together with Miroslav Válek's poetry she focuses her research on relationships between journalism and literature. She was Editor-in-Chief in the publishing house NOXI, s.r.o. and redactor in the magazine for young literature and arts, Dotyky. Mária Stanková is literary critic, translator from English and also a writer.

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23   BELL, A.: Language and the Media. In *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. Cambridge University Press, 1995, Vol. 15, p. 23-41. Published online: 2008. [online]. [2018-09-27]. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/annual-review-of-applied-linguistics/article/language-and-the-media/2F007EF583457211C4B4DD4B903D6275>.*

24   Ibid.