

УДК 82.09

The Problem of the Russian Language Preservation in the “Scenarios” of the Patriot Critics’ Texts

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Received 11.12.2014, received in revised form 29.01.2015, accepted 18.02.2015

This article investigates attitudes and rituals, including the problem of preserving the language in scenarios typical for the patriots: battles with enemies, rescue, feat, betrayal. It also focuses on rules of treating this phenomenon in the framework of binary logic and related cognitive structures.

Keywords: discourse, discourse analysis, ideology, ideological discourse, interpretation, literary criticism, Patriotic criticism, ritual, language.

DOI: 10.17516/1997-1370-2015-8-7-1344-1350

Research area: philology.

Introduction

Literary-critical discourse can be considered within a larger ideological discourse. Proximity of ideological and literary-critical activities seems obvious (the history of Russian criticism, in which publicism and tendentiousness were always stronger and successfully competed with “aesthetic” criticism attitudes, proves it). Criticism is habitually recognized as a socio-cultural institute related to politics, ideology, art, and science. It is implied, for example, in Terry Eagleton’s judgment that the history of criticism is a part of the history of certain ideological formations, each being internally articulated through a set of preferred critical practices (Eagleton, 1976, 20-21). In this case every object of literary-critical reflection will be meaningfully and pragmatically included in

the general ideological line of critical judgment presentation. It can be proved by the example of ideological “appropriation” of the language problem in modern patriotic criticism.

Methods

The following propositions / assumptions serve theoretical and methodological foundations for this study:

1. There are such attitudes / frames / extra-linguistic factors which are involved in text production regardless of the author’s will. (N.D. Arutiunova defines discourse as “a coherent text in the aggregate with extra-linguistic, pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological and other factors; the text in its eventive aspect; the speech considered as a purposeful social action, a component involved in people’s interaction and

mechanisms of their consciousness (cognitive processes)” (Arutiunova, 1998, 136-137). In its more extreme version this idea is expressed by J. Derrida: any piece of writing organizes itself irrespective of the author’s will via ritualized and, consequently, uncritically reproduced practices (Derrida, 2000). The ritualization moment is important to us in this work as a patriotic discourse shows not only repeated use of certain techniques but also a kind of their “sanctification”. Observing a ritual becomes another (in addition to ideological agreement of opinion) sign of belonging to “one’s own people”.

2. M. Foucault’s idea seems also significant. He defined the speech as a tool of familiarization with reality which not only facilitates learning / speaking about the world but leads to the formation of the rules of such speaking and relevant cognitive structures (Foucault, 1996a). In the working definition of discourse it is worth while emphasizing the following aspect: discourse implies existing methods, rules, and logic of discussing something that is represented in text. Hence, ideology can be regarded as a means of description, type of interpretation.

3. In our work we base on the method of critical discourse analysis developed by the “CRITICS” group (Centers for Research Into Texts, Information and Communication in Society) (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2011; Reisigl et al., 2001; Jorgensen et al., 2008; Dijk, 2013).

4. Ideology is viewed, following its understanding by R. Barthes, as a form of knowledge which implies thematization of “own” values (Barthes, 1975). It is a relatively ordered, dynamically developing set of collective ideas and beliefs expressed in semiotics, ritual art or behavioral forms (Musikhin, 2013, 223). The trend of convergence of the concepts of discourse and ideology can be traced in the works by T.A. van Dijk’s who represents the discourse in the form of the structure: subject of the discussion

+ social situation + ideology. According to the linguist, discourse is always ideologically colored, and as for ideologies, they “are mainly expressed and acquired through discourse, i.e. oral or written communicative interaction” (Dijk, 2006, 121). A similar idea was expressed by L. Althusser: “There is no practice except by and in an ideology” (Althusser, 2008, 44).

The Russian language and patriotic scripts

Political scientists explain the burst of the national-patriotic ideology’s activity by the crisis of national identity, “the loss of feelings of historical perspective and understanding of the level of the nation’s self-acceptance” (Kara-Murza, 1995, 6). In these circumstances the patriots, including the patriot critics, announce true instances to replace the ones that are considered dangerous, false (see Govorukhina, 2013 about the patriotic discourse as the discourse of power). “False consciousness” is replaced with the “true” one either repressively or indirectly (Kozhemiakin, 2007, 40); literary criticism is the second way of translating patterns of thinking and speaking / writing as well as of control and correction of the recipient’s activities, shaping people’s attitude to the conditions of their real existence (Althusser, 1970, 15).

For the patriots (along with patriotism, Christianity (Govorukhina, 2012)) the true instance is the Russian language in its pure form. Language as an object is very productive for patriotic ideological discourse. It is directly related to the concept of “Russianness”; the desire to preserve the language in its pure form emphasizes conservatism and traditionalism of a patriot “guard”. Penetration of foreign words in the Russian language is a reason to use the analogy with a destroying western influence and to activate the concept of the enemy.

The Russian language in the patriots’ texts is an exceptional language in comparison with

the others; it has “super” qualities: it is the most expressive, harmonious, rich, and the only savior in situations of any threat to spiritual collapse. Thus, A. Vorontsov in his article “The Russian language in the Ukraine is native!” refers to “some Jewish author’s” book, in which the power of different languages in the translation of Torah was compared: “I do remember the conclusion – <...> it is the Russian language that is the most “powerful” since it is capacious of conveying the most subtle semantics of the Hebrew Bible, whereas neither English nor French, nor German even are capable of this <...> It can claim for the “world” status instead of “weaker” English” (Vorontsov, 2012, 224). V. Potanin in the article “The language is our teacher!” quotes Prosper Merimee: “It is the most beautiful of all European languages, including Greek” (Potanin, 2003).

In their desire to convince the reader in the Russian language uniqueness and European languages inferiority the authors move to the field of false etymology, amateur linguistics: “In German the formula of possession is *Ich habe*, in English it is *I have got*. This is to remind you that in Russian this root is traced in the word *khapat’* (to grab, to seize). The root represents the concept of conquering, pressure, desire to profit at any cost. That is why it renders a contemptuous meaning. In Russian the formula of possession *U menia est’* (I have got) is existential. Thus, Russian grammar is also based on the concept of being but not possession” (Mironova, 2014, 158). According to the author, European languages form the ideas of capturing the other and deception of a neighbour, they disfigure soul and mind: ““Right now” is an English gentleman’s meaning of existence” (Ibid.). T. Mironova firmly believes that three forms of the present is a reflection of the worldview of a European who lives in the present and values comfort which is momentary in its significance. Russian traditionalism, according to

the author’s logic, corresponds to the archetype of the past. The fact of existence of multiple forms of the past tense in English and German is apparently ignored.

Any influence of foreign culture on Russian, any examples of creating forms in literature are regarded by the patriots as sharply negative, as a phenomenon which is dangerous in its destruction of a whole nation. “However, the most important – dangerous! – is the possibility of weakening the peoples via language, when a person is imposed beliefs and customs, a way of thinking and world understanding which are different from those in his / her mother tongue” (Ibid., 143); “the original meanings of proto-language words exist as the ancestors’ genetically innate heritage that is securely (although involuntarily) stored in the depths of a human’s subconscious” (Ibid., 144). In the patriots’ articles modern language situation is associated with a disease, catastrophe: “I think to be absolutely ignorant is as terrific as to be a drug addict or an alcoholic. That’s why it is vital to treat them all. The treatment will be definitely difficult, as the disease has gotten serious” (Potanin, 2003); “The “elite” is not interested in our culture <...>. According to their firm position, Russia should and need to be turned into a convenient reservation of the drunken, hardly speaking morons, digging up of Russia’s wealthy interior the resources that the world elite needs. For this purpose it was necessary (as it turned out, according to Dulles’s (!) programme) to replace the live Russian language with a different one and the Russian literature with a different one as well” (Mikhailov, 2002).

The problem of preserving the language for a patriot is, first and foremost, the problem of preserving its purity, opposing to a destructive influence of the West. Mironova notices: “Nowadays the Russian map of the world is actively implemented with western European patterns of learning, communication, power,

faith and love” (Mironova, 2014, 158). In the context of the articles under review the West and America are dangerous enemies. “They try to stir up its (those of the Russian language – Yu.G.) present-day pure origins, to turn them away from those who could drink their life-giving water. The language is furiously attacked from the outside. The forces of darkness are aware of its first-born origin and creativity <...> It is the action of the demon and the prince of darkness against the meaning of human life” (Ganichev, 2012, 206); “All these awkward borrowings – “picked up vocabulary” – will most naturally precipitate and be forever forgotten since our language is an alive and self-cleaning organism. And yet <...> the evil does come. It is always more active than the good, and it always has thousands of faces and expressions” (Potanin, 2003). It is worth while noting here that the enemy is portrayed as sophisticated and complex in its destructive strategy: “They climb persistently, day and night, on all screens. Their activity is amazing, organization is unique; they confused and fooled so many people, dishabituated them to know, distorted their taste” (Artemov, 1993, 180); “The world forces performed targeted, network, elaborate, laborious, deep-explosive work aimed at the emaciation of Russia, undermining its everlasting moral and cultural principles” (Ganichev, 2012, 197); V. Ganichev writes about the heroism of V. Chumakov who informed the society that laboratories of various universities and agencies of the United States prepared the materials to undermine the Russian language in order “to deprive the Russian people of their alphabet, their ABC, their Cyrillic” (Ganichev, 2012, 197). Ideologically alien here is akin to a folklore image of the evil forces that are temporarily inactive and hidden and doomed to fail nowadays.

The enemy’s danger is illustrated with the catastrophic humanitarian consequences:

upbringing of a generation of “cold-blooded and witty sadists” (Ovanesian, 1992), decay of the artistic process from the inside (Fed’, 1993), confusion, social and moral bankruptcy (Stockman, 1992, 185); filling the emptiness of a meaningless existence with drug dependence (Koksheneva, 2002, 272); “what totalitarianism did not risk to encroach on is done” (Tkachenko, 1995, 213). Another way to emphasize the danger is emphasizing its Satan’s origin: ““Humanism” of a cannibalistic “liberal idea” with its spiritual entropy, Satanism of the implemented “new world order” are all full of eschatological anticipations” (Lobanov, 1994, 243).

An aggressive strategy of “the others” is described with the lexical means verbalizing battles, fights, and weapons. Thus, N. Fed’ calls “Children of the Arbat” “a strong weapon <...> of “the architects of new thinking” together with the “chain dogs” and active and influential supporters of perestroika ideas in their race for power controlling the government nowadays...” (Fed’, 1993b, 232). The patriots take up (call to take up) this struggle: “It is vital to create bastions to study and protect Russian; otherwise we will move into the category of the population” (Ganichev, 2012, 206).

The patriots’ ideological discourse detects the traces of active and evident struggle for the reader who is undecided yet as well as the strategies of speaking on behalf of the like-minded people to their readers and, more rarely, to other readers in order to convince them. An undecided, occasional reader, whom a patriot starts an ideological struggle for, is neither his own reader nor a stranger. He / she seems a part of the deceived, misled and manipulated people. In his article “Tvortsy raspada” (“Agents of decay”) E. Ovanesian creates the image of the reader-victim: “It is at the dawn of perestroika, a period of unforgettable “acceleration” and “big socialism” forgotten by now, the stream of

permissiveness of all kinds and directions, which languished in literary catacombs and couloirs, poured on a peaceful reader, trustingly turning to the first sprouts of democracy and glasnost” (Ovanesian, 1992, 249). In the absence of a state ideology “the vast majority of the nation are in their spiritual perturbation, they do not know what to lean on” (Gusev, 1996, 159). The reader / people, who is guided (but who has not made a conscious choice in favor of alien ideals!), is presented as trusting and even naive. A child is easily misled and tempted; he is weak without an experienced adult’s help. It is patriotic criticism and patriotic literature in general that becomes such an assisting savior. Identification of the self with a savior, a guide is a discursive role and another discourse attitude which will determine the communicative structure of the patriotic texts.

Language purity becomes an important criterion for evaluating the literary phenomenon in the patriotic criticism. Thus, V. Astafiev’s excellent Russian is a sign of the writer’s true national character; Olga Fokina’s poetry is saving since her poetic language was formed by

“the folk art from the heart, from memory, from the surrounding world but not from palaces of culture and “Berezka” ensembles”. Modern prose is not of the Russian language nature (Potanin, 2003). Neither is the poetry by A. Voznesenskii, “alienated from his people”, who “preferred to lend an ear to the Australian aborigines singing for it was fashionable in Europe” (Bondarenko, 2000, 265).

Conclusion

Thus, understanding and representation of the problem of language preservation in criticism of the patriots is due to the patriotic discourse ideological nature. There are attitudes, rituals (under and beyond comprehension) which include a new object (language, “other” literature, emigration phenomenon) in typical scenarios with battles, enemies and saviors, deeds and betrayals. The rules of reasoning the phenomenon function in the framework of binary logic and related cognitive structures. The problem of language preservation thematizes the patriots’ “own” values.

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Проблема сохранения русского языка в «сценариях» критиков-патриотов

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В статье исследуются установки, ритуалы, которые включают проблему сохранения языка в типичные для патриотов сценарии – битвы с врагами, спасения, подвига, предательства; правила обговаривания явления в рамках бинарной логики и соответствующих мыслительных конструкций.

Ключевые слова: дискурс, дискурс-анализ, идеология, идеологический дискурс, интерпретация, литературная критика, патриотическая критика, ритуал, язык.

Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филологические науки.
