

Narrative Techniques as A Way to Represent the Reality In Crisis Media Texts

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Abstract

This article discussed the using of narrative techniques in crisis situations. The authors emphasized that due to the narrative structure of human thinking, narrative can become a way to represent a crisis situation. The authors mentioned narrative techniques in the works of narrative researchers and ways how these techniques may affect emotions. The aim of the article was to identify techniques which the media use in coverage of crisis situation and determined the purpose of using these techniques. For this aims the authors used the descriptive method and the method of content analysis, narrative analysis. More than 150 materials from "The Guardian", "The Washington Post", "Expert", "Izvestia" were analyzed in this article. An analysis of the materials shown that narrative techniques are often used by journalists. In American and English press journalists included narrative in their materials to evoke emotions. In Russian press narrative techniques were used to present a picturesque scene of what is happening and immerse the reader in the situation. Authors have found out that narrative techniques in covering crisis situations is used to express the author's assessment, to evoke emotions and as an attempt to give own interpretation to the crisis. Contribution: The contribution of the research is in the contemporary role of the political agenda. Different media interpret the events of the crisis in different ways and researching the methods they use helps to determine the degree of their objectivity and the goals they want to achieve..

Keywords: *Discourse; Narrative; Narrative Techniques; Narrative Journalism; Crisis Media Texts; Conflict Narrative; Crisis Agenda; Political Agenda.*

Introduction

A large amount of empirical data that the consumer of information encounters has a narrative form: news, advertising, literary works, songs, etc. The function that the narrative performs is to inform the addressee about events. Texts with plots carry a huge flow of information that is of value to both the audience and researchers. The importance for them is not factual data about events, but pragmatic. Accordingly, it can be said that the way the author of texts comprehends and presents information to his interlocutor is important for sociological and philological research.

This study examines the use of narrative techniques in the coverage of crisis situations in the media. Today this study is relevant, because of connection with the narrative structure of human thinking, the narrative becomes an effective way of presenting a crisis situation in the media, especially taking into account the international political agenda. Narrative journalism allows the author to express his opinion and demonstrate the points of view of the parties to the conflict.

The study of narrative began in the West, although it can be said that the basis for the formation and study of narratology as a science are the works of such Russian researchers as R.O. Yakobson, B.V. Tomashevsky, V.Ya. Propp, V.B. Shklovsky, M.M. Bakhtin, B.A. Uspensky, Y.M. Lotman. In our research, we rely on the

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work of such media and narrative researchers as G.G. Pocheptsov, O.A. Danilenko, O.V. Mampurkina, O.A. Boriskov, B. Wielechowski, T. Wolf, G.V. Belaya, K.I. Simonov, etc.

Initially, narratives were considered as an actual resource, then as a text of a certain form, today the study of the narrative goes beyond the limits of a separate narrative and it is considered as a polymorphic phenomenon (Hyvärinen, 2008).

Narrative strategies are now actively used in news media texts, where a clear structural composition, a dramatic component, a consistently developing action, a well-planned scenario and a system of characters opposing each other ("friend" and "stranger") are identified (McQuail, 2010).

Thus, the purpose of our research is to study the use of narrative and narrative techniques in modern media texts.

Objectives of this study

1. To analyze the narrative techniques described in the works of Russian and foreign narrative theorists and identify the most used in modern journalistic materials aimed at covering crisis situations.
2. Using narrative analysis to identify narrative techniques used in media texts covering crisis situations.

The materials of the publications "The Guardian", "The Washington Post", "Expert" and "Izvestia" acted as an empirical basis for the study. In total, more than 150 articles were analyzed.

Research Methods

The comparative method of analysis of empirical material, the descriptive method and the method of content analysis, the method of communicative-discursive analysis, narrative analysis are used for the purpose of a holistic analysis of the problem in the study.

The study of the texts of periodicals is conducted taking into account the methods of analysis of lexical and pragmatic units and text. The principle of dialectical connection of linguistic units, the method of frontal analysis, the method of continuous sampling, synthesis, generalization, interpretation, descriptive and analytical method are used.

Results

In modern media discourse, the main goal of the media is to convey the information to the audience. However, in a crisis situation, when information attacks the audience from various sources, it is difficult to navigate in the news discourse. On the one hand, the media provide information about conflicts and the opinions of the warring parties to the audience, on the other hand, they themselves can become participants in the conflict, because of the global media resources in the conflict" (Kinash, 2017, p.2).

According to the researcher of mass communication technologies G.G. Pocheptsov (2000), the media can be "indirect participants" of the crisis, doing their part of providing society with information of the crisis situation, and "direct participants", affecting the course the conflict. The media can satisfy the audience's need for information, provide information about the subjects and objects of the conflict, about the goals of the parties and their views, contributing to the formation of public opinion about the crisis situation. But they can also give the audience a false impression of the conflict by reflecting selective facts or false facts or focusing the audience's attention on a particular side of the issue.

To achieve their goals, the media use different methods. One of them is narrative techniques. A significant characteristic of the narrative in journalism is factuality presented in the form of a narrative using the techniques of fiction. The main function of a journalistic narrative is to inform about an event that has

taken place. Narrative can depict and explain events and all of them are ordered in a certain time sequence (Evstigneeva, Oberemko, 2007).

According to the Doctor of Sociology O.A. Danilenko, conflict discourse narratives reflect different ideas about the crisis situation, behind which there are various options for the interpretation of the situation. At the same time, not only what is said is important, but also how it is said. (Danilenko, 2006).

Generally, the term "narrative" came to journalism from literary criticism. For example, the researcher of narratives O. V. Mamurkina understands narratives as narrative works of any genre and functionality. "The narrative is a form of comprehending the world" (Mamurkina, 2011, p. 227). Narrative is a text, which includes a "story" representing a sequence of events (Bozrikova, Tataru, 2008).

The narrative structure of human thinking is also contributed the effectiveness of narrative techniques in covering a crisis situation in the media: we perceive information much easier when it is presented not as facts, but in the form of a story that has casual connection, a sequence of events and stylistic devices and expressive means (Shomova, 2016). A narrative always has a "vector", it addressed to a specific audience, thanks to which a certain event is separated from the chronological enumeration and actualized (Eldarion, 2017).

Researcher of journalistic narratives S.A. Bozrikova highlights the following features of a journalistic narrative that are essential for its creation (Bozrikova, 2012):

Relevance (timeliness of the topic and its significance for society);

Immersion (as a way of obtaining information: a long stay of the author among his characters in order to comprehensively study the situation);

Factuality (important for a journalistic narrative is the presentation of precisely accurate reliable information, because narrative journalism takes its content from journalism and only its form from literature. It is a necessary part of the journalistic narrative. It makes the work more affecting, and the form (literary form) makes it more appealing.);

Dramatic structure (the use of a structural scheme of a work of art, including: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement. in contradistinction to traditional journalist's texts which created based on the inverted pyramid structure in this way facts are presented in descending order of importance.);

Specific way of presentation with expressive means;

the voice (usually the author of conventional journalistic material gives the information in an unbiased manner, while narrative journalist has the opportunity to present events personally, to express personal opinion. It appeared even in the way the author chooses stylistic devices and expressive means.) (Bozrikova, 2012).

Another researcher of narrative journalism B. Wielechowski in his book "Introduction to Narrative Journalism" dwells on five essential elements for narrative writing (Wielechowski, 2021):

Theme (it is the meaning of the story, a message which the author wants to convey the society);

Character (the most significant element in writing, we read stories because we can see ourselves in characters. He also gives some types of characters; we can see them in the narrative writing: protagonist (the main character) and antagonist (he creates struggle for the protagonist);

Setting (place where the action is happening and the time);

Plot (a sequence of events which contain all the elements of a literary plot on contrast to the inverted pyramid);

Point of view (events are shown from point of view of different characters; this way of representation of events brings us close to the author).

An important aspect of the journalistic narrative is the effect of presence, which the reader experiences when immersed in the narrative due to the expressive means of the language and various methods of speech influence. Because of such techniques, the author of a journalistic narrative focuses the attention of the audience on the facts and details necessary to form a picture of reality and evoke emotions. Let's look at such narrative techniques.

Four important techniques are mentioned by one of the theorists of narrative journalism, T. Wolf (2008):

The presentation of the information “scene by scene” (the story moves from one episode to another, without digressions);

Using realistic dialogues that were reproduced from what the reporter saw personally;

“third-person point of view” (representing episodes from the point of view of the characters);

Using details of the situation.

A special role in the construction of a journalistic narrative is played by its structural features. There are four main structural components of a journalistic narrative: a heading, an introduction and a conclusion, the task of which is to attract the reader's attention, as well as the main part, where the author express the key issue.

S. A. Bozrikova draws attention to the following features of the composition of a journalistic narrative: **the sequence of events**: from the beginning to the end, in chronological order (in contradistinction to traditional journalists' texts which created based on the inverted pyramid structure in this way facts are presented in descending order of importance) and **conveying information with scenes and dialogues** (Bozrikova, 2012).

In addition, expressive means are important for journalistic narrative, because, the more fascinating the story is, the more understandable and attractive it is for the reader. The expressive means used in the narrative allow the reader to be involved in the events, as well as to express the author's attitude to what is happening. For example, G. V. Belaya and K. I. Simonov (2009) distinguish the following linguistic features of the narrative:

Clauses;

Narration in the past tense;

The presence of the following structural components: descriptions of the place and time, characters; conflict; author's assessment; resolution.

S.A. Bozrikova draws attention to such a linguistic feature of the journalistic narrative as the use of imagery in the presentation of the material in order to create the effect of presence for the reader. A special role in achieving visibility is played by the description of bright details; the use of lexical, morphological and punctuation techniques to create the emotional color of the material; avoidance of patterns; using of short and understandable sentences (Bozrikova, 2012).

N. S. Avdotina and I. A. Fokina are noted in their article “Principles and Diversity of Genres of Literary Journalism” (2017) that a synonym for literary journalism in Russia is “documentary literature”. The authors

identify several characteristics of documentary literature: "montage and detailed comparison ... factual, stylistic and psychological analysis of documents and their staging" (Avdonina, Fokina, 2017, p. 534). "Staging" refers to the presenting of speech with dialogues. Also, researchers identify the following principles that are important for documentary literature: "artistic research, selection, study and critical evaluation of documentary evidence about any incidents" (Avdonina, Fokina, 2017, p. 534).

The figure of the author-narrator is also significant for journalistic narrative, because his system of views, experience and emotions influence the construction of the storyline of the material and the interpretation of events. As N. I. Klushina notes, in modern media discourse the author has tremendous power over the audience within the Internet communication, because the Internet audience is not looking for official information, but wants to get emotions and a unique author's thoughts (Klushina, 2021).

Based on the types of narrative techniques of different researchers, we will analyze the articles that cover the current crisis agenda to apply these techniques of journalistic narrative. Materials selected for analysis were published in Britain, American and Russian newspapers and covers the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The headline of the first article is "A Christmas far from home: Ukrainian families' hopes and fears amid their new lives across Europe" (The Guardian, 2022) it was published December 24, 2022 in The Guardian. The authors of the article are Sam Jones, Beatriz Ramalho da Silva, Megan Clement. This article is devoted to the problems of the life of Ukrainian refugees in Europe and how they spend Christmas in Spain, Portugal and France.

In this material, the authors describe the life of their heroes, their feelings and emotions, conveys the details. They present realistic dialogues and comments, giving the reader the opportunity to feel sympathy for the characters. Because of the bright picture created by the authors, when reading, the reader can feel the effect of presence and events evoke emotions.

The material has a dramatic structure, firstly the author gives a short introduction, explaining why and how his characters ended up far from home, then he talks about their plans, and only then gives his characters an opportunity to speak by themselves.

The material provides not only a detailed description of the life of the main characters themselves, but also accompanying characters, for example, Eduardo from Madrid, who helped the first family when they first arrived in Spain.

To convey the life of heroes, complex sentences: "The house belonged to a Spanish man called Eduardo who had been moved to take in the family because his mother and her siblings had lived as refugees in Morocco for two years after fleeing Madrid during the Spanish civil war" (The Guardian, 2022). The authors also use many means of expression: epithets ("deeply grateful", "particularly hard"), metaphors ("Christmas vibes").

Drawing the reader's attention to especially touching moments, the authors give them a more detailed description, for example, as they describe the expectation of their father's return: "In the days before his arrival, Kateryna wanted to keep it a surprise from Seva, fearing he would get his hopes up and Yehor wouldn't be able to board the flight. Once she broke the news, they waited at the arrivals gate, and Seva kept asking, "When is Dad coming?" When Yehor walked through, Seva was so "happy and excited" to be with his father again" (The Guardian, 2022).

The last part of the material from France is interesting, the author begins the description in the present tense, which contributes to the immersion of the reader: "Liudmyla Abdo sits in the window of a cafe in the 14th arrondissement wearing a matching purple beret and scarf and looking every bit the parisienne" (The Guardian, 2022).

And also the author gives very detailed, literary descriptions of the situation: “There she has more space and a piano to play - she used to be a teacher” (The Guardian, 2022).

Interesting contrasts used by the authors: first they describe the Christmas decorations of European cities and the expectations of the holiday, and then there is a sharp transition to the events in Kyiv. Thus, sad events look even more contrasting.

The headline of another article is “I helped one man in this picture escape the horrors of Kharkiv. The other man? I may never know” (The Guardian, 2022). This article was published December 19, 2022 in The Guardian. This is a report by a Ukrainian journalist Nataliya Gumenyuk, where she expresses her own emotions and impressions of current events.

The material has a dramatic structure: it starts with an introduction; the author gives a detailed exposition consisting of short sentences that describe the setting. The material is written in the past tense and in artistic language (“When we saw an elderly man standing near one of the doorways”). The author shows bright characters in his story, for example, military people.

The author uses expressive means, for example, epithets (“horrible rhythm”, “term of endearment”), metaphors (“the war had lasted a lifetime”), hyperbole (“Together, with his squad, we laughed - we laughed louder than the sound of the shelling”). In addition, there are many morphological means of expression in the text, for example, superlative (“the toughest battles”) and comparative (“The more things are hit, the stronger we feel about them”).

It is interesting how the author endows his characters with more and more human traits, shows that they had a bright past, which contrasts with their difficult present (“According to my notes his name was Roman, in normal times a professional sportsman. While others talked about their families all the time, he remained silent” (The Guardian, 2022).

Another article “In Ukraine’s capital, Putin’s attacks don’t dim the resolve to fight Russia” (The Washington Post, 2022) was published December 1, 2022. This article talks about the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Kyiv during the shelling.

In the material, the author gives a description of the situation, with a description of the details, and then, as a confirmation of his words, he allows his heroes to speak out (“War and winter have brought new misery to Kyiv after a long summer lull”). The description is used in the past tense (“There was a different kind of vibe the following evening in the depths of the Kyiv subway system, which becomes a bomb shelter for thousands of people when there are missile strikes”).

The author describes in detail what the heroes are doing (“said as she sipped coffee with a friend in central Kyiv”). However, the author of the material focuses on certain remarks and moments, for example, at first, he says how a 4-year-old boy “was trembling and crying at the beginning of the war, and now he has taken to shouting, “Kill Putin in his bunker” (The Washington Post, 2022). This striking contrast makes the last sentence very powerful for the reader.

It is interesting how the author presents the stories of all the characters under using the same pattern. Firstly, he writes about their hardships and suffering, and then about how they do not want to give up. (“How could we possibly negotiate with them when they destroyed our native city?” Angelina, one of the twins, said, referring to the badly bombed and now Russian-occupied city of Mariupol, where they were born” (The Washington Post, 2022).

The author strives to give his characters as much as possible human traits, to make them close to the reader, for example, he talks about the fact that the cultural life of the city continues (“The weekends are crammed with cultural events - poetry readings, classical concerts, gigs, comedy shows and raves - within the constraints of the city’s 11 p.m. curfew” (The Washington Post, 2022).

For the greatest emotional impact, the author uses artistic means of expression: epithets (“he pitch dark”, “fairy lights”, “comforting escape”) and metaphors (“in a deep black hole”, “to keep the fear inside”, “beats reverberating in competition with the roar of the regularly scheduled subway trains”).

Another report “Endless minutes of shelling: how are the battles in Donbass progressing” by Sergey Prudnikov (Izvestia, 2022) talks about the moment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine attack on Nikolaevka. The material was published February 27, 2022. Firstly, the author gives a short introduction, where he mentions to the course of events, explains the situation, then the story begins.

S. Prudnikov takes the reader along with him through the settlements, he describes in detail what he passed, conveys his emotions (“there is no special feeling of the proximity of war until the point of arrival”), smells (“the pungent smell of burning hits the nose”) draws attention to features, such as the color of power lines. All this forms an effect of presence, a clear picture of what is happening appears in reader’s mind. Moreover, the montage of scenes, when the reader’s attention sequentially moves from one detail to another, creates a more stable immersion.

Then characters appear in the material: the author characterizes them with dialogues, which he reproduces very realistic. The description of one character in the first scene characterizes the state of all civilians in the quarter: “Olesya is still shaking with a small tremor” (Izvestia, 2022). The material tells the stories of two soldiers, the author notes that everyone’s are nerves. But the author achieves maximum emotional tension when he describes civilians who took refuge in the basement during the shelling (“a woman comforting a crying daughter in the dark”).

Because of the chronological sequence of events in the material, the shelling for the reader begins just as unexpectedly as it happened for the participants in the actions: “It whistling over the head during these words of his” (Izvestia, 2022). To convey the emotional state, the author uses expressive means: epithets (“an endless minute”), repetitions (“there are dozens and dozens of people around”), metaphors (“the whole basement is howling”) and words with emotional connotation (“I’m rushing”, “nowhere to huddle”, “we are on a dime”). To convey the panic after the shelling, short phrases are used that, while reading, contribute to the heating of the situation (“Hurry up to the shelter, while the respite!”).

The material contains vivid images of civilians who find themselves in a hopeless situation, the author creates emotional tension, through the features of the characters, through his own feelings.

The material from Donbass by Marina Akhmedova “Zhelesnie nezhelesnie” (Expert, 2022) was published March 11, 2022. In this article M. Akhmedova focuses on the emotions and thoughts of the residents of the DPR, on their opinion about the military operation in Ukraine.

The report begins with the narration: “Dmitry Mironenko rushes down the corridor of the maternity hospital. The commanding voice of the head of the medical unit Zhelesnoy is heard from the birth hall ...” (Expert, 2022). This contributes to the reader’s immersion, the author describes in detail the path through the bunker rooms to the underground delivery room, all this allows the reader to feel the complexity and tension of what is happening and independently assess the situation. The author practically does not say anything, only asks questions, the characters themselves speak about their life. Facts are revealed through dialogue: somewhere through the stories of the characters to the journalist, somewhere from the dialogues between the characters.

The author in the report acts as a participant in the events, he talks with the characters, describes the situations that take place between the residents of the DPR, talks about the situation in the Donbass through dialogues with the interviewees. The voice of the author is clear in the material: the position of M. Akhmedova is reflected in the questions she asks the characters.

The montage of the sequence of fragments of the report adds drama to the narrative: the author begins with the maternity hospital and doctors who cover premature babies with themselves during shelling. The

material traces a circular composition: M. Akhmedova begins and ends the report with a description of the maternity hospital, showing the reader, where the horror of the war is felt most acutely.

To enhance the effect of presence and make it more emotional, the material is written in the present tense, and the author uses expressive means: metaphors (“the cold interior of tiled walls”) and epithets (“brittle layer”). Imagery plays a special role in the material, the author creates bright characters, describes their appearance, movements that convey their inner state: shaking hands, fearless eyes. The heading of the material is sapid: “Zhelesnaya” is the surname of one of the heroes of the report, Akhmedova tells her story at the very beginning, and this woman corresponds to her surname (in Russian language her surname sounds similar to the Russian word which means “ferreous”): she shows strength and resilience, the rest of the heroes of the material behave in the same way.

In this report, the main emphasis is on the history of the characters, the author allows his characters to speak out on their own, talk about their sorrows and difficulties, this adds factuality to the material, the reader understands that everything that is described actually happened. The artistic style of the narration, the author's descriptions of the characters with an emphasis on behavioral features, some of which were the result of the war: shaking hands, constant tension in anticipation of shelling – add drama to the narrative and evoke an emotional response from the reader.

Conclusion

An analysis of the materials of The Guardian, The Washington Post, Izvestia and Expert, covering crisis situations, shows that narrative techniques are often used by journalists. The use of narrative techniques helps to make the material more expressive, to fill it with expressional means that can evoke an emotional response. Irony, references, epithets, metaphors, similes remain in the reader's memory, making the material attractive. Through narrative techniques, the author is able to express his position not only by selecting facts, but also by selecting suitable words, expressions, idioms that immerse the reader in the described situation and show what is happening through the eyes of a participant of the events. Moreover, in a journalistic narrative, the author has the opportunity to determine the most significant details and details and focus the audience's attention on them.

In the Russian press, the most popular among the narrative genres is a report, where the author shows the chronological sequence of events, their development, and this creates an effect of presence. This genre allows journalist to express not only the position of the author of the material, but also enable the audience to see events from the point of view of the characters, because of the reproduction of dialogues and behavioral features.

In American and English press narrative techniques are used in many genres. The authors often include stories of characters in their materials, filling them with expressive means that evoke sympathy. But at the same time, they demonize the enemy, by all means they try to show firstly the weakness of their heroes and their suffering, and then their level of hatred for the enemy.

According to the analysis, we can reveal some trends in the use of narrative techniques in publications: journalistic narrative in covering crisis situations is used to express the author's assessment, to evoke emotions, as an attempt to analyze the crisis situation and give their own interpretation.

In conclusion we would like to say that the use of narrative techniques is an effective way to represent reality in crisis media texts. It makes it possible to present the points of view of the opposing sides through the opinions of the heroes of the narrative. It is the result of selecting real facts, details and has a form of narration that is more familiar to the reader and better perceived by him.

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