

СЕКЦІЯ 7. РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ КОМУНІКАТИВНИХ СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНИХ ПРОЦЕСІВ ЧЕРЕЗ PUBLIC RELATIONS

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SWEARING SPEECH IN UKRAINIAN PUBLIC MEDIA: MEANS OF TABOOING AND JUSTIFICATION

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The existential challenges Ukraine has been facing since 2022 have changed the field of public communication significantly. The role of civil journalism, often underappreciated, has become as important as the traditional channels broadcasting. The war in Ukraine, one of the most diligent recorded and witnessed in human history, has made the information flow, especially for those who live under the conditions of the war daily, crucially intensive. This underscores the vital and impactful role of civil journalists in shaping public discourse.

The Ukrainian social space has undergone significant reconstruction due to the increased news flow. This has led to the formation of new emotional communities, a clear indication of the societal changes brought about by the war. The notion of «emotional community» was first used by the American historian Barbara Rosenwein in her work “Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages” [2]. It defines coherent, sustainable groups of people united on the basis of similar worldviews, priorities, feelings, and even obsessions. The dynamic of their actions, expectations, and choices is predictable, and they continue in the same emotional mode. It also requires efforts to be made to maintain regular and reliable relations among the group members. In general, it could be called “emotional work”. So, considering the statements of the anthropology of emotions approach, we can conclude that emotional mode, emotional work, and emotional community are the three components that determine the character of the emotional reality – reality people intersubjectively perceive and feel.

After the full-scale war started in Ukraine, all the dimensions of emotional reality changed there. The war has significantly shaped the emotional reality, leading to the formation of new communities such as military personnel, civilians, and frontline volunteers. These groups have become the most influential social groups, providing society with new behavioral models and roles. The factors of being constantly threatened, taking risks, and witnessing violence determine the formation of the precise subcultural identity among their members and, as a sequence, the creation of special signs for mutual recognition.

The motto that sent the Russian warship “far away” symbolized the Ukrainian readiness for resistance. It echoed everywhere, and everyone, and then it went viral in public communication. Moreover, the motto broke through the norms of polite speaking. Using that exact obscene word, and later other ones, became a sign of braveness, cohesion, and army support. At the same time, that precedent pushed the start of the community’s emotional mode dynamic.

As Karyn Stapleton, Kristy Beers Fägersten, Richard Stephens, Catherine Loveday mentioned in their research “The power of swearing: What we know and what we don’t” (2022), swearing completes numerous functions, such as expressing affectation, creation of identifiers of a group belonging, or even connecting words in a sentence. Thus, obscene words could be divided into two categories, considering their illocutive functions and what processes they provoke in the human brain. The authors describe the results of the neuropsychic investigation that was provided with the MRI equipment. Swearing words evoke processes in different parts of the brain, not only those that are responsible for cognitive activity but also the deeper limbic system, which is connected to emotions and memory. «In effect, then, swear words might be seen to trigger an evolutionary-based ‘fight or flight’ response in the individual, which would partly explain why, in laboratory settings, swear words increase attention and recall, generate heightened autonomic or physiological responses, and produce both pain-relief and heightened stamina/strength» [1]. Moreover, swearing helps not only reduce mental tension but also decreases physical suffering as well. For instance, the person could keep a hand in freezing water longer if they were swearing. Hence, obscenities push up a pain threshold.

In contrast to emotive swearing, rational one doesn’t activate the limbic complex profoundly. It’s more about processes in the brain’s frontal part responsible for speech and behavioral control. The rational type of swearing often provides creative forms of self-expression that require rich vocabulary, inventive imagination, and compassionate empathy to assess the context interlocutors share in common. Emotional obscenities are self-worth; they can be proclaimed when a speaker is alone because, in that case, the main

goal is to express emotions. Rational swearing is intended to impress others; it is produced for them. There is no sense in creating euphemisms or combining semi-sounded words without those who can understand the game of words and imagination.

Returning to Ukrainian reality, it's worth noticing that emotional swearing, first tolerated and widely spread between different emotional communities, has become an indispensable expressive tool for precise emotional communities that frequently overcome risks and pain. Simultaneously, public communication tends to use rational swearing that benefits cohesion, lexical enrichment, and forming of the Ukrainian national sense of humor, helping to resist existential threats and identify those who belong to the community and share the same thoughts.

References

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