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Research article

## Markers of emotionality in Russian news coverage of the 75-th anniversary of WWII Victory

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### Abstract

The article explores how emotionality is manifested in the news texts covering politically sensitive topics, using as the case study coverage of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII Victory in news programmes of the Russian TV “Channel One”, “Russia TV” and RT. Proceeding from the key theoretical assumption of medially linguistics defining media texts as an integral unity of verbal and media components, the author singles out and analyzes markers of emotionality at both – language and media levels, paying special attention to lexis and the way it is supplemented by illustrations and video footing. The analysis of the news flow is based on the information model, which allows to structure the process of news formation according to the following stages – selection of events for news coverage, interpretation of facts, shaping images, forming stereotypes and cultural-ideological context. The goal of the study was to identify markers of emotionality and analyze how emotionality affects the interpretation and the perception of facts, paying special attention to realization of the category of broadcasting style defined as the tone of voice, or tonality news media use when addressing their audience. Conceiving emotionality as both explicitly manifested and implicitly present quality, the study singles out its three types as represented in the analyzed media texts – 1) specific pretentious style, used by newsreaders and commentators to stress the dignity and solemnity of the event; 2) deliberate affectation disguised as emotionality on the part of news anchors while presenting topically sensitive news items; 3) emotionality as spontaneous display of sincere emotions observed in interviews, dispatches of correspondents and commentaries of the participants of the events. The results of the study could serve as a basis for further analysis of emotionality markers in different types of media discourse, including news, commentary and debate on politically sensitive issues in traditional media and social networks.

**Keywords:** *Medially linguistics, emotionality, news discourse, information model, broadcasting style, politically sensitive topics*

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# Маркеры эмоциональности в освещении российскими СМИ празднования 75-летия Победы в Великой отечественной войне

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## Аннотация

В статье исследуются способы выражения эмоциональности в новостных текстах, освещающих политически значимые темы. Материалом послужили тексты российских СМИ, посвященные празднованию 75-летия Победы в Великой отечественной войне, в частности новостных программ телеканалов «Россия 1», «Первый» и RT. Исходя из базового определения медиатекста как органичного единства компонентов вербального и медийного уровней, сформулированного в рамках медиалингвистики, автор идентифицировал и описал маркеры эмоциональности на обоих уровнях – языка и медиа, обратив особое внимание на способы соединения элементов вербального (лексики) и медийного уровней (иллюстрации, видеоряд). Анализ новостных текстов проводился на основе информационной модели, которая позволяет разделить процесс формирования новостного потока на следующие этапы – отбор событий для последующего освещения, интерпретация фактов, создание образов, формирование стереотипов, культурно-идеологический контекст. Цель исследования состояла в том, чтобы, выделив маркеры эмоциональности, изучить как эмоционализация новостных текстов влияет на репрезентацию и интерпретацию событий, обращая при этом особое внимание на особенности реализации категории информационно-вещательного стиля, определяемого как тональность обращения новостного ведущего к аудитории. Учитывая двойственную природу эмоциональности как эксплицитно выраженного и имплицитно присутствующего качества, автор выделяет три типа эмоциональности в исследуемых новостных текстах: 1) особый торжественно-приподнятый стиль, используемый новостными ведущими и комментаторами для того, чтобы подчеркнуть значимость освещаемого события; 2) намеренная аффектация, или искусственная демонстрация эмоций со стороны новостных аналитиков в целях оказания воздействия на аудиторию; 3) эмоциональность как спонтанное проявление искренних эмоций, наблюдаемое в интервью с участниками событий в сообщениях корреспондентов. Результаты исследования могут служить основанием для дальнейшего изучения маркеров эмоциональности в различных типах медиадискурса, включая новости, комментарий и обсуждение политически значимых тем в традиционных СМИ и социальных сетях.

**Ключевые слова:** медиалингвистика, эмоциональность, новостной дискурс, информационная модель, информационно-вещательный стиль, политически-значимые темы

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## 1. Introduction

News have traditionally been regarded as media texts that should demonstrate objectivity and balanced representation of events, this requirement being of particular importance in the coverage of politically sensitive issues (Allan 2006, 2010, Bell 1991, Davis 2008, de Botton 2014). But for the past decade, with the

advancement of fake news and further polarization of perspectives on world events in the Russian and the Western media, international scholars have observed growing emotionalisation of news discourse on the whole (Ahmed 2014, Bleiker & Hutchison 2008, Clément & Sangar 2018, Crawford 2000, Lünenborg & Maier 2018, Chatterje-Doody & Rhys Crilley 2019).

This trend has been reflected by representatives of different research schools and approaches, who have analyzed news texts from several perspectives – theory of journalism, media studies, linguistics, discourse analysis, political communication and media linguistics (Allan 2010, van Dijk 1998, Crystal 2006, Fairclough 1995, Gillespie & Toynbee 2006, Dobrosklonskaya 2000, 2008, 2014, Matheson 2005, Thurlow & Mroczek). Due to multiple controversies in international relations, studies of political aspects of media discourse acquired special importance, giving impetus to the development of new branches of research, such as political linguistics and political media discourse (Fowler 1991, Chudinov 2018, Fu 2018, Ozyumenko 2017, Ponton 2016, Shepherd & Hamilton 2016, Sheygal 2004, van Dijk 2000, 2006). So by now the topical field of the so-called “News Studies” has considerably expanded, including such key areas as news values, agenda-setting, interpretation techniques, evaluative components, discursive characteristics, thematic structure, stylistic devices and getting noticeably important the process of emotionalisation (Doveling 2011, Solganik 2015, van Ginneken 1998, Wirth & Schramm 2005).

The aim of the present paper is to identify markers of emotionality in coverage of politically sensitive topics and find out and how emotionality affects the interpretation and the perception of facts, giving special attention to realization of the category of broadcasting style defined as the tone of voice, or tonality news media use when addressing their audience. The material used is represented by the Russian media news texts about 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Victory in WWII for the period from March till June 2020.

## **2. Theoretical basis**

The study was conducted within the frameworks of media linguistics – a relatively new but quickly developing branch of linguistics, that integrated achievements of several disciplines relevant for the analysis of media discourse, thus building a solid foundation for analyzing language in the media as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Such “holistic” approach is well-established (Bell 1991, Dobrosklonskaya 2000, 2020, Perrin 2015, Duskaeva 2018) and includes three major theoretical assumptions, applicable to the analysis of news texts:

1. definition of media texts as multi-dimensional phenomenon integrating elements of the two levels – verbal and media,
2. applying the information model for the analysis of the news flow.
3. the notion of broadcasting style conceived as the tone of voice, or tonality this or that news media is using when addressing its audience.

Undoubtedly the most important theoretical component of media linguistics is **the concept of media text**, which is mentioned actually in all studies devoted to speech production in mass communication. The meaning of this concept defined in traditional linguistics as “coherent and integral stretch of language either spoken or written” (Carter 1998), can be expanded when applied to mass communication beyond the boundaries of the verbal sign system, to a semiotic interpretation of “text” which refers to a stretch of any type of signs, not only verbal. (Dobrosklonskaya 2000, 2008, Shmelyeva 2012).

Most scholars agree that the level of mass communication adds to the text new aspects and components, determined by rapidly developing information technologies and media characteristics of this or that communication channel. Thus, texts on television function as an integrity of a verbal text, visual and audio components. Radio and newspaper texts are characterized by a certain combination of verbal units and media effects, such as voice qualities and music on radio and colorful illustrations in press. As argued by Bell: “*Definitions of media texts have moved far away from the traditional view of text as words printed in ink on pieces of paper to take on a far broader definition to include speech, music and sound effects, image and so on... Media texts, then, reflect the technology that is available for producing them*” (Bell 1998: 3). So today media texts are perceived as a multi-level poly-dimensional phenomenon representing an integral unity of its verbal and media components, which can be combined in accordance with the following five principles: illustration, supplement, connotation, association, and contrast. Illustration type presupposes that media elements remain neutral and just illustrate the verbal text, in case of supplement verbally expressed content is supplemented with visual graphics, in connotation and association types media components help to evoke certain connotations and associations, a combination type based on contrast presupposes juxtaposition of verbal and media components aimed at producing a particular effect (Dobrosklonskaya 2020).

To illustrate such dual nature of a media text it is enough to compare media coverage of the 75 anniversary of the Victory in WWII by the Russian and the British media, which makes it possible to see how the choice of pictures (media elements) adds certain ideological accents and connotations to the text, when media components are used specifically to underline differences in ideological interpretations expressed by the verbal part. Thus, pictures used in the news coverage of the Victory Parade 2020 by the Russian media (1, 2) predominantly concentrate on emotionally charged images, evoking memories about courageous soldiers and survived veterans as on the photos adduced below.

The pictures accompanying texts in the British newspaper “The Guardian” (3, 4) emphasize the military power of Russia and often contain implicit indication at potential threat coming from it – tanks on Red Square and military planes against the dark hand of the Minin and Pozharskiy monument.



Photo 1. Veterans salute during the Victory Day parade at the Red Square in Moscow, Russia, marking the 74th anniversary of defeating the Nazis in the WWII.  
© Sputnik / Alexey Nikolskiy



Photo 2. President Putin with participants of Immortal Regiment.  
© Sputnik / Alexey Druzhinin



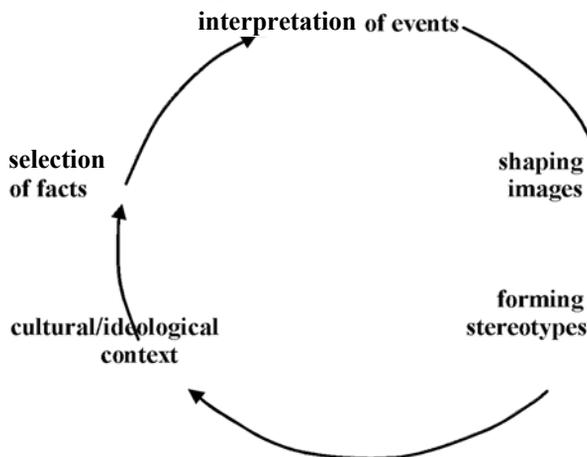
Photo 3. Tanks on Red Square during Victory Day parade.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2016/may/09/victory-day-parades-second-world-war-in-pictures>



Photo 4. Military planes flying over Red Square during Victory Day parade  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2016/may/09/victory-day-parades-second-world-war-in-pictures>

### 3. Methodology and data

For multidimensional analysis of news discourse, including the study of emotionality, mediallynguistics developed specific methodology, the key instrument of which is represented by **Information model**, which allows to structure the unceasing news flow and other media activities into five separate but closely interrelated stages (Dobrosklonskaya 2000).



As it can be seen on the picture, the model represents a closed circle thus emphasizing that all its stages are closely interrelated: 1) selection of facts for further news coverage, 2) interpretation of events, 3) creating images, 4) forming stereotypes, 5) cultural-ideological context. Formation of the news flow begins with selection of facts, which is regulated by several co-existing factors – economic, political, regional and also by traditional news values: timeliness, proximity, prominence, consequence, conflict and negativity, human interest (Galtung & Ruge 1965, Bell 1991).

The next stage, interpretation, is the most important for the study of emotionality markers, as at this very stage facts of reality are transformed by the media into a new substance – media texts, a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon, representing integral unity of the two interrelated levels – verbal and medial, which actually doubles the interpretative potential of a media text, making it possible to reinforce verbal language by media technologies (Talbot 2000). The way in which verbal and media elements are combined can be classified into five following types: illustration, supplement, contrast, connotation and association, which serve as a powerful instrument, used to construct the required meanings and images (Dobrosklonskaya 2020).

The analysis of a news item at the interpretation stage also allows to single out three main types of media representations: reflection, reconstruction and fake. In case of reflection the events are covered without any conspicuous bias, neutrally, when a news text does not contain a noticeable ideological hue. The second type “reconstruction” is perhaps the most widespread, it presupposes that political and ideological preferences of those who produce and transmit the news are clearly represented in the verbal and media texture of the news item. The third type, fake, is based on a wide range of manipulative techniques, aimed at achieving a certain political goal by influencing public opinion.

At the next stage, some interpretations due to numerous repetitions transform into media images, which in their turn serve as a basis for creating stereotypes, defined as fixed, generalized, widespread and simplified representations (Nelson 2009). Stereotyped vision acquires particular importance in foreign news coverage, when journalists reporting the events in this or that country cannot help relying on stereotypes deeply rooted in their cultural background and political persuasions.

A closing stage of the information model, cultural-ideological context, is constituted by a continuum of the news flow which forms a certain media environment, possessing salient characteristics in each country. Cultural-ideological context has a significant impact on the initial stage of the information model – selection of facts, as it actually determines what events are newsworthy, or should be put on the news agenda. This correlation between cultural-ideological context and shaping news agenda becomes especially evident when comparing how political events are covered in mass media of different countries, or in the national media representing different political views.

Methodologically important for the analysis of emotionality in the news discourse is the **category of a broadcasting style**, which in its most general sense can be defined as the tone of voice, or tonality this or that news media is using when addressing its audience (Gubik 2010, Dobrosklonskaya 2005). Every news medium – particularly those implying audio perception – radio, television and internet with numerous podcasts and videos, talks to their audiences in a “special voice”, a unique recognizable tonality which serves as an inalienable marker of its specificity. And though the notion of a broadcasting style is relevant for the analysis of any media product it acquires particular importance when applied for studying news, because it is news that shape the information picture of the world with various political accents, cultural nuances and ideological subtleties.

Such variability of “news voices” or broadcasting styles can be clearly seen when comparing news programs produced by major national broadcasters aimed at international media consumers, such as BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), RT former Russia Today), CNN, Al Jazeera and CCTV (China). Salient characteristics of a certain broadcasting style are also noticeable when comparing TV news programs in countries with different political systems. Thus, in the countries where state-media relationships are constructed in accordance with the totalitarian model (Siebert & Peterson 1956), like for instance TV news of the USSR period, or contemporary North Korea, news readers use a special affective style of presentation, with deliberate affectation aimed at constructing the official image of a powerful state possessing unquestionable authority for its citizens. Key BBC news presenters today often use deliberate “friendly” manner, thus transmitting the sense of low distance between them and the audience. The US Fox News can be easily identified by categorical pushy style of its main anchors.

It should also be noted that speaking modes of mainstream TV anchors, including their voice qualities and salient speech characteristics, are often perceived as a distinctive feature of each individual TV channel, an easily recognizable component of its “brand”, like speaking manners of a well-known CNN presenter Christiane Amanpour or the anchor of the programme “Vesti nedeli” (News of the Week) at Russia One Channel Dmitriy Kiselyev, labelled by Western journalists “Russian propagandist-in-chief”. Sometimes speaking manners of the news readers, who covered historically significant events, become firmly imprinted in collective people’s memory like for example a unique voice of Levitan, a news reader of the Soviet information agency TASS during WWII, whose unmistakably recognizable solemn intonation became closely associated with victories of the Soviet army.

One more crucial point that is methodologically significant for the analysis of markers of emotionality in news texts is the definition of “**emotionalisation**” or “**emotionality**” as applied to news discourse. Though words are seemingly similar, there is a slight difference between them. Emotionalisation in its most general sense means display of emotions in any type of communication, and has been thoroughly described in past decades by representatives of social, media, cultural and communication studies (Ahmed 2014, Bleiker & Hutchison 2008, Clément &

Sangar 2018, Crawford 2000, Harding & Pribram 2009, Lünenborg & Maier 2018, Precious & Rhys 2019). Emotionality embraces a wider spectrum of meanings and is related not only the explicit demonstration of emotions but also to the very fact of their presence in communication, sometimes implicit (in Russian there is a distinction between *emotsionalnost'* ‘emotionality’ and *emotsionalizatsiya* ‘emotionalisation’). In the present paper our attention will be focused on emotionality.

It should also be taken into consideration that when applied to the analysis of news, emotionality acquires additional dimension determined by the complex nature of media texts as a dual phenomenon combining verbal and media elements. So analyzing markers of emotionality in the news presupposes studying them on three following levels:

1) verbal markers of emotionality in the TV news, textual markers on lexical and phonological levels

2) media markers of emotionality, or emotional connotations interwoven in video footing,

3) emotions embedded in the commentary of correspondents and displayed by the participants of the events.

The empirical data specifically collected for the present study include 212 fragments of news texts covering the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WWII Victory with markers of emotionality from news programmes of the two central Russian TV channels – “Channel One” (Perviy Kanal) and “Russia One” (Rossiya Odin), and the English-language version of RT (Russia Today). All textual examples adduced in this article are given in the language of the original version, text fragments in Russian are provided with English translation made by the author.

#### **4. Analysis of the material**

As it has been mentioned earlier one of the factors that influence emotionality in the news is the sensitivity of the covered topic – a politically sensitive topic is a topic the perception and interpretation of which evoke controversy on the part of the general public, politicians and mass media. For instance, shooting down Malaysian plane, Scripal case, the alleged poisoning of the Russian opposition blogger Navalny, US presidential elections 2020 could undoubtedly be referred to as politically sensitive topics because the news coverage of these events by domestic and international media represent a wide spectrum of political views and ideological bias, as it is often the case with the news about Russia (Larina, Ozyumenko & Ponton 2020? Ozyumenko & Larina 2021, this issue).

In this context victory in WWII is no exception since WWII as a complex historical phenomenon with passing years is getting increasingly controversial and is certainly perceived as a politically sensitive issue, especially in Russia, the country the contribution of which to the defeat of Nazi Germany could hardly be overestimated. No wonder its media coverage gets in to the focus of scholarly attention (Solopova & Chudinov 2018).

In spring 2020 from March till July due to 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Victory (the term used by the Russian authorities and media) the theme of WWII (Great Patriotic War in Russia) became the topic of intensive media coverage, or buzz-topic (Dobrosklonskaya 2000) when practically all mainstream news programmes included items on different aspects of WWII, highlighting its most significant battles and adding documentary details to long-established official versions of wartime events.

To single out and describe markers of emotionality we structured the material around three subtopics, which proved to be most controversial, causing heated discussion and agitated commentary. These topics are:

1. Historical reassessment of the results of WWII and of the role of the Soviet Army
2. Military parade on June 24<sup>th</sup> exactly 75 years after Victory Parade in Moscow Red Square
3. Immortal Regiment

#### **4.1. Historical reassessment of the results of WWII and of the role of the Soviet Army in defeating Nazi Germany**

Due to historical reasons, the scale of material damage and human losses on the territory of the USSR 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in WWII is undoubtedly regarded as a politically sensitive topic for all swathes of the Russian society – officials, public and mass media. And for the past decade it was getting increasingly sensitive because of noticeable changes in historical interpretations of the role of the Soviet Union in defeating fascism. The Western mainstream media and the liberal Russian media in the analyzed period regularly published materials and broadcast news items diminishing the role of the Soviet Union in victory over Nazism, which consequently caused serious concern on the part of the Russian officials and historians.

*(1) Contribution of the USSR in the defeat of fascism is evaporating from public consciousness. Many Swedish citizens are not aware about millions of losses among soldiers and civil population in the USSR. In other European countries the ratio of people who think that victory in WWII belongs to the United States is also growing (<https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/9eb68577>).*

No wonder such historical reassessments served as a grounds for negative reaction of the Russian officials, and correspondingly condemning commentary in the mainstream Russian media, including central TV channels – Channel One and Russia One:

*(2) On May 8, 1945, America and Great Britain had victory over the Nazis! America's spirit will always win. In the end, that's what happens" –that's what press-service of the White House wrote. The Russian Embassy in Washington has already appealed to the US to refuse from rewriting history of World War II. On their Facebook page the diplomats draw attention to the fact that in 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Victory The US State Department*

*“takes one more cynical attempt to rewrite history”* (<https://iz.ru/1009215/2020-05-08/belyi-dom-nazval-ssha-i-britaniiu-pobediteli-ami-nacizma>)

The analysis of the news texts covering historical reassessment of the results of WWII and the role of the Soviet Army in defeating Nazi Germany allows to conclude that one of the key emotions expressed either implicitly or explicitly could be described as “righteous indignation” and can be traced on all levels of constructing media messages: choice of lexis with negative connotations “*refuse from “rewriting history”, cynical attempt at rewriting history*” is supported on the level of prosody by specific “condemning” hues in voices of the news presenters and commentators, especially those representing central TV channels – Dmitriy Kiselyev and Vladimir Kleymenov.

#### **4.2. Victory Parade**

The second politically sensitive subtopic, Victory Parade, arose no less controversy and emotional response in the Russian media, focusing on two major issues – a) whether the Parade should be held at all, and b) when exactly the Parade should be held because of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to decision of the Russian government the Victory parade was put off and took place not on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May as it had traditionally been, but on June 24<sup>th</sup>, exactly 75 years after the date of the great Victory parade on Red Square in 1945, which made the event even more symbolic.

Negative reaction of the Russian public to the wave of Western criticism for holding military parade and thus overdoing Victory celebrations was illustrated by several opinion polls, one of which was described in detail in the article “*As 75th anniversary of first Victory Day parade looms, Russians believe WWII defeat of Nazis was country's finest hour*” published on RT website and showing that most Russians are comfortable with the importance attached to the event.

(3) *Ahead of Wednesday's rescheduled Victory Day parade in Moscow, and a number of other major cities, pollsters WCIOM have found that Russians believe the defeat of Hitler, and his allies, trumps all other historical incidents in the more than thousand-year life of the Russian nation. “The vast majority of Russians (95 percent) agree with the assertion that victory in the Great Patriotic War [World War II] is the main event of the 20th century for Russia,” the polling agency’s statement said. “For 69 percent of Russians, the victory in 1945 is the most important event in the entirety of Russian history.” The study showed that the majority of respondents in every single category were of the same belief, other than the group aged between 18-24. For those aged 60 and above, the vast majority agreed (81 percent). In the category for those aged 24 and younger, only 44 percent of the respondents agreed that WWII was the most significant event ever, but all who took part in the study were massively in agreement (93 percent) about its place as the most critical event in 20th century history* (RT *As 75th anniversary of first Victory Day parade looms, Russians believe WWII defeat of Nazis was country's finest hour – poll 23 Jun, 2020*).

The adduced fragment (3) is a news item, reporting the results of an opinion poll and does not contain any emotionally coloured or ideologically charged connotations, thus emphasizing the neutrality of RT news, a Russian broadcaster aimed at world audience and often blamed by Western media for biased coverage of politically sensitive topics, such as for instance the alleged poisoning of Scripals.

A different picture could be observed in the programme “Vesti Nedeli”, analytical news summary of the week on Russia One presented by Dmitriy Kiselyev, a well-known media person, combining journalistic work with a position of the director general of Sputnik – an international information agency established with support of Russian government in December 2014. In compliance with the requirements of the analytical format “Vesti Nedeli” presupposes commentary and a certain political view on the events, so the anchor demonstrates a full range of verbal and media persuasive techniques, criticizing the “liberal opposition” and advancing the official interpretations in the debate about the necessity of the Victory Parade nowadays. In doing so he uses a special emotionally coloured style, which however could be described as pretentious, because of the deliberate character of the dominating emotion permeating the commentary – condemnation of those who are against Victory parade and pride for veterans and military power of Russia.

(4) *The requirements to cancel military parade on Victory Day have become commonplace among our implacable and I would say totalitarian liberals. But what does this parade mean for Russia? What is it for? Our military parade is an honorary tribute to those who died for our freedom, for the freedom of Europe and the whole world. It is an honorable way to pay tribute to 27 million people who sacrificed their lives to defeat fascism. That defines the wry stylistics of our parade, preceded by the minute of silence. Our parade is a grateful memory of those who survived in horrible battles but have already passed away. Our parade is a consolation for those few veterans, who are still with us, according to estimates only 76 thousand. Ask them, ask anyone whether it is necessary to hold the parade on May the 9<sup>th</sup> and everyone replies – yes* (Vesti Nedeli s Dmitriem Kiselyevym [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyQAm69H\\_Us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyQAm69H_Us)).

The effect of emotional narrative constructed by anchor on verbal level with the help of such collocations as *honorary tribute to those who died for our freedom, 27 million people who sacrificed their lives to defeat fascism, grateful memory of those who survived in horrible battles, consolation for few veterans*, is logically supplemented by matching video footing aimed at eliciting an emotional response from the audience.

It should be noted that such specific pretentious manner of presentation has always been and still is typical for state endorsed TV (to prove this point it is enough to watch TV news of the Soviet period), and live broadcasts of “Russia One” and “Channel One” of the Victory Parade 2020 from Red Square are no exception. To underline the solemnity and national significance of the event the media, using a wide range of verbal and audio-visual components, constructed a thoroughly

designed image aimed at making a powerful emotional impact on the audience. The excerpt from “Channel One” live broadcast of Victory parade 2020 adduced below clearly demonstrate the presence of emotionality markers on the lexical level.

(5) *And now the event we have been waiting for so long. Red Square is in a festive decoration. Guests are gathering on the stands – state officials, politicians, religious leaders from different faiths, the military. Seconds before the beginning of the parade, at last **Kremlin chimes brake silence and solemn sounds of “The Saint War” could be heard. Hearts of participants of the parade and the spectators are hardly beating.** The whole country has been waiting for this moment since Victory Day in on May the 9<sup>th</sup> 1945. Legendary Victory Banner, that had been raised above Reichstag in 1945, is carried on Red Square. In accordance with the tradition the Defense Minister appears on Red Square under the sounds of march, which accompanied historical Victory Parade exactly 75 years ago* (Text is adduced in the author’s translation, the original version could be found at [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2020-06-24/388268na\\_glavnyy\\_parad\\_v\\_chest\\_75\\_letiya\\_pobedy](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2020-06-24/388268na_glavnyy_parad_v_chest_75_letiya_pobedy)).

### 4.3. Immortal Regiment

If it were possible to measure emotionality on an imaginary scale, the media coverage of **the Immortal regiment**, a third singled out subtopic, would have been on top of the list. Launched in 2012 in Tomsk as non-governmental non-commercial civic initiative Immortal regiment has transformed into a massive public movement, aimed at keeping personal memories of those relatives who lost their lives in WWII. By 2019 the project spread worldwide and thousands of people marched with pictures of their grandfathers, grandmothers and other ancestors –participants of WWII not only in Russia, but in the US, Canada, Israel and other countries. It may be assumed that due to its appeal to every family’s memory, the event possesses an inherent emotionality and is perceived as “a celebration with tears in the eyes”.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 the Immortal Regiment was arranged online and thousands of people could place pictures of their relatives –participants of WWII on a special website <https://www.polkrf.ru/>, which gradually developed into a full-scale online project aimed at historical reconstruction of WWII with the help of personal memories and family documents. According to the decision of the Russian president the offline march should take place on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2021. Commenting his decision in the interview for Channel One Putin stressed that sanitary measures and social distancing caused by pandemic are contrary to the very nature and public character of the Immortal Regiment.

(6) *How can we speak of social distance in case of Immortal Regiment? The very essence of such events is demonstrating the unity of the Russian people in commemorating their fathers, grandfathers and other ancestors. And it means that people march together, shoulder to shoulder. That’s why following the recommendations of doctors we have to reschedule the event for the next year. And we shall organize it on a great scale, with dignity and power, as we have done previously* ([https://www.1tv.ru/news/2020-05-09/385564\\_vypusk\\_programmy\\_vremya\\_v\\_21\\_00\\_ot\\_09\\_05\\_2020](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2020-05-09/385564_vypusk_programmy_vremya_v_21_00_ot_09_05_2020)).

The use of a rhetorical question *How can we speak of social distance in case of Immortal Regiment?* alongside with sincere intonation of the Russian president serves as a clear marker of emotionality, thus emphasizing the significance of the event. It is also important to note that in the adduced excerpt the interviewee demonstrates the third type of emotionality – spontaneous display of empathy for his compatriots commemorating their fathers, grandfathers and other ancestors, who defending their motherland from fascism.

#### **4.4. Markers of emotionality and media styles**

Markers of emotionality could also be found in a keynote article published in American foreign policy journal *The National Interest* and Russian government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, in which Putin explained his view on the origins and legacy of the Second World War.

(7) *Almost 27 million Soviet citizens lost their lives on the fronts, in German prisons, starved to death and were bombed, died in ghettos and the furnaces of the Nazi death camps. The USSR lost one in seven of its citizens, the UK lost one in 127, and the USA lost one in 320.* (<https://www.rt.com/russia/492297-putin-wwii-global-crisis-coalition/>)

In the fragment of the article describing the forthcoming summit of Russia, China, France, the United States and the UK emotionality markers are linked to thematically bound collocations characteristic for political speeches reflecting positive perspective on the future of international relations.

(8) *In our opinion, it would be useful to discuss steps to develop collective principles in world affairs, to speak frankly about the issues of preserving peace, strengthening global and regional security, strategic arms control, as well as joint efforts in countering terrorism, extremism and other major challenges and threats. There can be no doubt that the summit of Russia, China, France, the United States, and the UK can play an important role in finding common answers to modern challenges and threats. Such an event would demonstrate a common commitment to the spirit of alliance, to those high humanist ideals and values for which our fathers and grandfathers were fighting shoulder to shoulder.* (<https://www.rt.com/russia/492297-putin-wwii-global-crisis-coalition/>).

The analysis of emotionality markers in the media texts covering politically sensitive issues makes it possible to assume that the quality of emotionality expressed varies depending on different genres or formats. Consequently, the following three types of emotionally charged media styles could be singled out:

1) Specific pretentious style, used by newsreaders and commentators to emphasize the solemnity of the event, as in the case of Victory parade coverage, including the style of live broadcasts from the site. However, this specific pretentious style used to transmit state authority and importance can be described as “pseudo-emotional” because of the artificial nature of emotionality demonstrated by news readers.

2) Deliberate affectation disguised as emotionality on the part of news anchors while discussing politically sensitive topics in analytical TV programmes, like for instance, “Vesti Nedeli”, in which the presenter Dmitriy Kiselyev criticizes liberal opposition for their negative views of Victory parade with due indignation, thus demonstrating an inbuilt propagandist hue.

3) Emotionality as spontaneous display of genuine emotions which is usually observed in the speech of individuals: dispatches of correspondents, commentary of the participants of the events and interviews, like for instance in Putin’s remark on the necessity to reschedule the Immortal Regiment due to pandemic – *How can we speak of social distance in case of Immortal Regiment?*

## 5. Conclusions

The article has explored a highly timely topic – the phenomenon of emotionality in news coverage of politically sensitive topics. The research was conducted within the frameworks of mediallynguistics – a rapidly developing branch of linguistics focusing on all aspects of language functioning in the media. The analysis of emotionality markers in the coverage of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in WWII by the Russian media was based on the key theoretical pillars of mediallynguistics, such as : definition of media texts as an integral unity of verbal and media components; the information model, which allows to structure the process of news formation into succeeding stages and the category of a broadcasting style conceived as the tone of voice, or tonality this or that news media is using when addressing its audience.

The analysis of the material has shown that broadcasting styles could vary depending on political and historical factors. The news presenters on the central Russian TV channels while covering major events of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in WWII, such as Victory Parade, used deliberately solemn broadcasting style to attribute official pathos to the event and underline its significance for mass audiences.

The choice of news coverage of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in WWII was determined by the controversial character of the topic which can undoubtedly be described as “politically sensitive”, and which from March till July 2020 became the topic of intensive media coverage, or buzz-topic, when practically all Russian media included items on different aspects of WWII, highlighting its most significant battles and adding documentary details to long-established official versions of wartime events. To optimize its thematic structure, the material was subdivided into three subtopics, that caused much controversy and debate: historical reassessment of the results of WWII and of the role of the Soviet Army; the necessity to hold a military parade on June 24<sup>th</sup> exactly 75 years after Victory Parade in Red Square and the debate on the ideological essence and format of the Immortal Regiment action.

Multimodal markers of emotionality have been analyzed on the two following levels: verbal markers of emotionality, including textual markers on the lexical

level, and media markers of emotionality, or emotional connotations interwoven in photo illustrations and video footing.

Conceiving emotionality as both explicitly manifested and implicitly present characteristic, three types of emotionality as represented in the analyzed media have been singled out:

1) Specific pretentious style, used by newsreaders and commentators to emphasize the solemnity of the event, as in the case of Victory parade coverage. However, it is important to stress the artificial nature of the emotionality displayed by news readers whose major aim was to transmit state authority and importance.

2) Deliberate affectation disguised as emotionality on the part of news anchors while discussing politically sensitive topics in analytical TV programmes, like “Vesti Nedeli”, in which the presenter Dmitriy Kiselyev criticizes liberal opposition for their negative views of Victory parade with due indignation, thus demonstrating an inbuilt propagandist hue.

3) Emotionality as spontaneous display of genuine emotions which is usually observed in the speech of individuals: dispatches of correspondents, commentary of the participants of the events and interviews.

The results of the conducted analysis could serve as a foundation for further studies of emotionality markers in different types of media discourse, including news, commentary and debate on politically sensitive issues in traditional media and social networks. The paper was written as a contribution to the special issue of RJI on emotionality.

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