The formation of the image of Russia in the British political mass media discourse

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ABSTRACT. Politics of force today is inseparably connected with politics of images. This paper focuses on the representation of the image of Russia in the British political mass media discourse of 2013-2017. Taking into account K. Boulding's definition of the image of state as a special concept, the paper claims that this concept includes the notion or nuclear, verbalized with the lexeme 'Russia' and its substitutes, and different associations, connected with this notion and thus forming: metaphorical, evaluative and ethnocultural associative layers of the concept. Drawing on the scientific works on problems of mass media discourse, image-formation, associations, structure and verbalization of concepts and using the methods of contextual, critical discourse, seme and conceptual metaphor analysis, the paper reveals the range of means for surfacing the nucleus and layers of the concept 'Russia, used by British journalists. These means demonstrate ideological values of the discourse in question and stereotypes, which it forms in the minds of British people. The paper suggests that the scheme of analysis of the image of state in the political mass media discourse, offered in it, can be applied to the investigation of images of other states as well as to comparative studies.

Keywords: image of state; concept; association; linguistic surfacing.

A formação da imagem da Rússia no discurso político dos meios de comunicação britânicos

RESUMO. A política da força hoje está inseparavelmente ligada à política das imagens. Este artigo centra-se na representação da imagem da Rússia no discurso político dos meios de comunicação britânicos de 2013-2017. Tendo em conta a definição de K. Bouldng da imagem do estado como um conceito especial, o artigo afirma que esse conceito inclui a noção ou núcleo, verbalizado com o lexema 'Rússia' e seus substitutos, e associações diferentes, relacionadas a essa noção e assim formando: camadas associativas metafóricas, avaliativas e etnoculturais do conceito. Com base nos trabalhos científicos sobre os problemas do discurso dos meios de comunicação, formação de imagens, associações, estrutura e verbalização de conceitos e usando os métodos do discurso contextual crítico, sema, e análise conceptual de metáforas, o artigo revela a gama de meios para revestir o núcleo e as camadas do conceito 'Rússia', usado por jornalistas britânicos. Esses meios demonstram valores ideológicos do discurso em questão e os estereótipos que ele forma nas mentes dos britânicos. O artigo sugere que o esquema de análise da imagem do estado no discurso político dos meios de comunicação, oferecido nele, pode ser aplicado à investigação de imagens de outros estados, bem como a estudos comparativos.

Palavras-chave: imagem de estado; conceito; associação; revestimento linguístico.

Introduction

Politics is inseparably connected with images and especially images of states, which are created and undergo changes under the influence of mass media. This idea was put forward by K. Bouldin (1956), who suggests a view of politics as a process of image-formation under the stimulus of images transmitted by networks of communication. Nowadays it is even possible to speak about the special politics of images that complements the politics of force (Tehranian, 1999).

Images of states are in the focus of attention of political and cognitive linguistics as well as a new scientific discipline imagology (from the Latin word imago – image), which studies the laws of creation and representation of images of states in different discourses and especially in the political mass media discourse with its powerful persuasive capacity. In this paper, we rely on theoretical principles, formulated by Van Dijk (1985), and consider a mass media discourse as a result of cognitive and social activities of journalists aimed at the production of texts and their meanings with the following

interpretation by readers. Political mass media discourse, which serves the tasks of verbal constructing and reconstructing political reality, including images of states, is one of the most important types of mass media discourse.

The basis of imagology is the binary opposition 'our state – others'. This fact is emphasized by K. Boulding, who states that '[…] nations are divided into 'good' and 'bad' – the enemy is all bad, one's own nation is a spotless virtue' (Boulding, 1959, p. 120-121). It means that journalists create images of other states, having some ideological aims, which can be disclosed through the analysis of mechanisms of such creation.

British mass media wrote much about Russia in 90-s of the 20th century after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was positively assessed by British journalists. They welcomed the death of the superpower and the formation of the new state free from communist ideology. For instance, The Times of that period reads:

A superpower dies and 'a great dream (Russia) is born' with treaty (The Times, 1991, december 23).

British mass media did their best to destroy associations of Russia with the red color of communism and to form new ones with the green color of rebirth and spring:

The Russian empire is 'taking its red Soviet dress off' (The Observer, 1991, january 13).

On the map, Russia ended up 'green' (Times, 1991, december 30).

British mass media of that period created the positive image of Russia, characterizing it as a country rich in resources and brains, strengthening, more powerful and more civilized and even a friendly country.

Today, 27 years later, the situation has changed dramatically. Russia is again the focus of attention of British mass due to the reunification of Crimea with Russia, the conflict in the South-East of Ukraine, Russian military help to Syria and doping scandals. Bur quite a different image of Russia is created in British mass media. Russia is represented as Tsar Putin's new imperial Russia, a hostile, aggressive unpredictable and the most dangerous state, hell-bent on grabbing land. It's quite clear that the British mass media discourse will persist in maintaining this image or even will try to degrade it further to support the standpoint of British today's Prime Minister Theresa May, who speaking ahead of the Eastern Partnership summit in Brussels said:

'We must be opened-eyed about the actions of 'hostile states like Russia' who threaten the potential growth of the Eastern Neighborhood and who try to

tear our collective strength apart' (Sky News, 2017, november 24).

This paper focuses on the formation of such image of Russia in the British political mass media discourse of 2013–2017 through the analysis of the linguistic ways of verbalizing the nuclear of the corresponding concept and its three basic layers: metaphorical, evaluative and etnocultural associative ones. It gives a key to understanding how images of states are created by journalists in a definite social and political context and how these images influence human minds.

Literary review

It is difficult to overvalue the role of mass media discourse in creating and changing individual worldview. Works by Van Dijk have clearly showed that a discourse in general treated as "[…] a form of interaction, viz., as a communicative event … embedded in more compassing societal, political or cultural structures" (Van Dijk, 1990, p. 42) is never context-free, and hence never innocent (Van Dijk, 1990). And a political mass media discourse is even more context-dependent and even less innocent than other types of discourses, because "[…] there can be little doubt that of all forms of printed texts, those of mass media are the most persuasive, if not most influential, when judged by the power criteria of recipient scope" (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 24). Journalists belong to 'symbolic elites', which "[…] play the essential role in the ideological supporting framework for the exercise or maintenance of power in our modem, information and communication societies" (Van Dijk, 1989, p. 23). Fulfilling some social order, they create certain positive or negative images of states, which generate corresponding effect.

It was K. Boulding (1956), who first introduced the concept 'image of state', trying to explain the causes of confrontation between states. He came to the conclusion, that "[…] citizens have particular images (or conceptions) of their own nation in relation to other nations, and those images reflect specific values and emotions" (Boulding, 1956, p. 15). In this paper, we adopt K. Boulding definition of the image as "'[…] the total 'cognitive', 'affective' and 'evaluative' structure of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and the universe'" (Boulding, 1959, p. 120-121). This definition is very important for us because we claim that British journalists don't only name the facts connected with Russia but interpret and evaluate them from their point of view forming different stereotypes as general ideas of Russia in mass consciousness.

Our main theoretical references are works by scientists, representing the scientific schools of cognitive and cultural linguistics (Jackendoff, 1989; Langacker, 1991; Askoldov, 1997; Karasik, 2002; Alefirenko, 2003; Evans, 2007). We assume that each concept is organized around a definite notion, which serves its nuclear. The lexeme, verbalizing this notion, is the name of the corresponding concept and at the same time the stimulus word, evoking different associations. Association is treated in psychology as a mental connection between concepts, events, or mental states that usually stems from specific experiences (Klein, 2012). The associations in question are mainly formed in speech, where the name of the concept is regularly used with other lexemes. Thus, a notion and all associations connected with it constitute the concept (Aliferenko, 2003).

It means that the concept includes different layers formed by different types of associations. One of them can be characterized as a 'metaphorical' layer or a layer of sensational (visual, audial, tactical etc.) and empirical associations, represented in cognitive metaphors and metaphorical epithets. According to Lakoff and Johnsen (1980-2003, p. 5), "[…] the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another". It is difficult to overvalue the role of metaphors in political mass media discourse, "[…] where the choice of metaphoric construals is determined by various factors, from purely decorative rhetoric to ideological stance" (Tsirkunova, 2016, p. 407).

Another important layer of the concept is the layer of 'axiological associations' or an 'axiological (evaluative) layer', showing positive or negative evaluations of the corresponding referent in a definite society. This level is represented in proverbs and more or less direct evaluative utterances (Karasik, 2002), characterizing a referent as good or bad.

Pavilenis (1983) believes that it is also possible to speak about 'ethnocultural associative' layer of the concept, which includes contiguous associations (in a broad sense) of a given concept with other concepts typical of a definite society. In other words, in this case we deal with syntagmatic associations, the range of which can be revealed through the contexts in which the name of one concept is regularly used with names of some other concepts (Boeva-Omelechko, & Posternyak, 2015). The semantics of these associations also helps to form either positive or negative attitude to the concept in question.

In our opinion, sensational (metaphorical) and ethnocultural associative layers can be treated in terms of metaphorical and associative images of the state, while the evaluative layer can be interpreted as the container of connotations connected with the state. Taken together, these two images and connotations give the opportunity for constructing the image of a state as a whole as it is represented in the language national worldview and in political mass media discourse in particular.

The aim of this paper is to identify the essential characteristics of the modern image of Russia, created in the British political media discourse.

Data and methodology

The objective of this study is to reveal the language means, linguistically surfacing the nuclear and three layers of the concept 'Russia' and thus forming the image of this state in the British political mass media discourse.

First, a small-scale corpus of about 300 micro contexts, comprising the lexeme 'Russia' and its substitutes, was constructed. These micro contexts were extracted from the websites of the British newspapers The Times, The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Independent, the journal Economist and websites BBC, opendemocracy, newstatesman.com, independent.co.uk, theconversation.com and www.bne.eu.

It is worth mentioning, that the left-liberal newspaper The Guardian plays the leading role in creating the image of Russia in Britain. In the column The Observer the newspaper gives journalists with different political views and well-known British people the opportunity to express their opinion about topical political problems and especially those concerning Russia and its foreign policy. Moreover, this newspaper is not so expensive as other newspapers and journals, which helps to attract numerous readers.

We also can come across a number of evaluative contexts with the lexeme 'Russia' and its substitutes in the column Opinions of the newspaper The Financial Times and the journal Economist, but unfortunately, most of them express negative opinion about Russia.

The internet-journal opendemocracy and the site BBC were of great use for our research.

The methods of contextual, critical discourse and seme analysis, described in works by Firth (1957), Harris (1952), Van Dijk (1993; 1995), Nida (1951), gave the opportunity to reveal in British mass media substitutes of the lexeme 'Russia, typical evaluative collocations with this lexeme as well as the range of lexemes, purposefully regularly used in the same micro contexts with the lexeme 'Russia' and

containing definite semes in structures of their meanings. The semes, treated as minimal components of meaning (Nida, 1951, p. 5), were singled out with the help of definitions in explanatory dictionaries. For instance, the word 'aggressive' is defined as […] characterized by 'aggression' (Finnegan, 1989) and the word 'aggression' as […] the first 'attack' or act of 'hostility'; the first act leading to a 'war' or controversy' (Finnegan, 1989). In its turn, the word 'hostile' is defined as […] pertaining to an 'enemy' or actions characteristic to an 'enemy', 'unfriendly'" (Finnegan, 1989). On the basis of these definitions we can single out semes 'enemy', 'war', 'attack' and 'unfriendliness' in semantic structures of these words. Being regularly used in the micro contexts with the lexeme 'Russia', they help to form negative associations of this country with the corresponding notions. So the above-mentioned methods enabled us to describe the language means of surfacing the nuclear, evaluative and associative layers of the concept lexeme 'Russia' in the British political media discourse.

The means of surfacing the metaphorical layer were identified with the help of Conceptual Metaphor Analysis (CMA) (Lakoff & Johnsen, 1980-2003), presupposing the comparison of the contextual meaning of the word or word group in the text with the basic meaning in the system of the language. In the case of their contrast the lexical meaning is marked as figurative or metaphorical (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). By using this method we revealed different types of metaphors, participating in the formation of the image of Russia. For example, words and word groups, connected with circus and theatre (arena, puppet master, play a role etc.,) in analyzed contexts serve as theatrical metaphors, describing and disapproving the foreign policy of Russia and its interference in home affairs of other states.

The texts on the topic under study were extracted from the websites and classified in accordance with the approach described above, i.e. as means, surfacing the nucleus and three layers of the concept 'Russia'. Then they were interpreted with the help of the above-mentioned methods for identifying the ideological background of the formation of the image of Russia in the Brtish political mass media discourse.

Results

Political mass media discourse contributes a lot to the creation of public images, which are '[…] the basic bond of any society, culture, subculture, or organization […]' (Boulding, 1956, p. 64). Images of states are in top priorities for this discourse as they form a certain attitude towards other countries and thus justify the foreign policy of their own country. The process of image-formation involves the choice of lexemes, substituting the name of the state, as well as different linguistic means, surfacing evaluative, metaphorical and ethnocultural layers of the corresponding concept. The analysis of such means, participating in the formation of the image of Russia, is necessary for revealing ideological values of this discourse and stereotypes, which it forms in the minds of British people.

As for the 'nuclear' of the concept (i.e. the notion 'Russia'), it is verbalized in the British political mass media discourse by means of the lexeme 'Russia' and the word-group 'Russian Federation'. Metonymic and other substitutes are also used, such as 'Moscow', 'the Kremlin', 'Russians', 'Putin', 'the former communist country'. The word-group 'New Russia', opposing post Soviet Russia to the Soviet Union, is also typical of the British mass media, alongside with the word-groups 'Putin's Russia' or even 'Tzar Putin's Russia', which emphasize the opinion about the policy of Russia as a strongly personified one, i.e. dependent on the president's personality. Here are some examples, illustrating the above-mentioned nominations:

1. 'New Russia' acts in deliberate, intransigent opposition to US (The Guardian, 2014, november 19).

2. 'Putin's Russia', therefore, would represent not a mortal threat to the international world order (The Conversation, 2017, april 6).

The 'metaphorical layer' of the concept 'Russia' is represented in the British mass media by the following metaphors.

'Anthropomorphic metaphors', representing Russia as a human being. These metaphors characterize Russia as the enemy, who threatens the world and does everything in its power to demonstrate its strength. For example:

3. Russia is our 'most dangerous neighbour' (The Financial Times, 2014, september 16).

Russia's participation in the Syrian conflict is characterized as 'putting its military muscle on display' (The Dailymail, 2015, October 22). British journalists believe that taking part in the operation in Syria 'Russia 'may have bitten off more than it can chew' (The Guardian, 2015, october 1).

Russia is not directly called but is represented as an invader in the British mass media. The latter believe that 'Osetia and Abhasia are under 'Moscow's thumb' (BBC, 2014, june 25) as well as

'Horvatia and Slovenia are 'under its influence' (New Statesman, 2014, june 27).

Russia 'devours' other states and no […] economic pain can lessen 'Moscow's appetite' (Independent, 2015, january 27).

Some anthropomorphic metaphors are connected with comparisons and precedent phenomena. Thus in one article Russia is compared with the Mafia, who sends a horse head as a message to its enemy:

4. Sometimes they're a way to send a message, a bit like the Mafia putting a horse's head in your bed (The Guardian, 2014, april 23).

So, the association of Russia with criminal world is formed.

Some metaphors form ironical and contemptuous associations of Russia, comparing it with a […] slightly 'unhinged' stepbrother (Calvert Journal, 2013, november 18).

'Morbial metaphors', i.e. metaphors connected with diseases and wounds, are used by British journalists to show the present economic situation in Russia as a disastrous one due to sanctions against this country:

5. Sanctions caused 'pain'. Russia 'matters' (The Observer, 2014, december 7).

The reporter from The Financial Times is sure, that it is necessary to make Russia suffer to stop its expansionist policy:

6. Moscow is hell-bent on grabbing lands, a hunger from which it can be distracted only through the 'infliction of pain' (The Financial Times, 2014, september 14).

His point of view is shared by other reporters, who convince British people that it's absolutely necessary to cause damage to Russia's economy and culture:

7. Tumbling oil price hits where it 'hurts' (The Times, 2014, october 15).

8. Let's 'hit' Putin where it 'hurts' – all artists must boycott Russia (The Guardian, 2014, april 9).

Sometimes morbial metaphors are used to show that Russia feels humiliated because of sanctions:

9. And what 'wounded Russians' began to say some years ago – make Russia great again – is now echoed by confused Americans (The Guardian, 2017, march 21).

British mass media stress that Russia is alien to principles of American democracy:

10. Russians appear 'to be 'particularly' allergic to the democracy' of the 'American kind' (New Statesman, 2016, january 22).

'Theatrical metaphors' are used while speaking about the territory of the former countries of the Warsaw treaty which is called 'post-Soviet arena',

where Russia '[…] 'plays a leading role' (its 'role' as a dominant force)' (The Conversation, 2014, september 10).

The theatrical metaphor is used to show Putin's autocracy:

11. On the Russian side only 'one actor' matters: Putin (New Statesman, 2016, february 10).

Russia is also represented as an actor:

12. Perhaps, demonstrating that his country is 'an independent actor' on the world stage that has to be taken seriously (The Economist, 2016, march 19).

A lot of theatrical metaphors are connected with the events in Kiev and the civil war in the south-east of Ukraine. According to British journalists, the participants of the putsch in Kiev '[…] ran Russia's 'criminal puppets' out of Kiev' (The Economist, 2014, august 30).

Russia is compared with a puppet master and an orchestra conductor:

13. Russia is acting as 'puppet-master' (The Economist, 2014, august 23).

14. Russia's 'orchestration' (The Economist, 2014, august 23).

Vladimir Putin is seen as […] 'puppet master' of the pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine' (The Times, 2015, february 15).

According to British mass media, the aim of Russia in Ukraine is "[…] to carve out a 'puppet parastate' in Eastern Ukraine" (The Guardian, 2015, february 6).

Thus British journalists try to prove that Russia supports the war in Ukraine. People of south-eastern Ukraine are called 'separatists armed by Moscow' (Independent, 2015, february 5), 'separatists with Russian troops and equipment' (The Guardian, 2015, may 12), 'pro-Moscow separatists' (The Guardian, 2015, february 8) and 'pro-Russian fighters' (The Guardian, 2015, february 12).

'Sports metaphors' are used in the articles, devoted to the economy and foreign policy of Russia. British journalists use the sports term 'loser' to show the weakness of Russia's economy, its dependence on oil as well as inefficiency of Russia's foreign policy. For example:

15. Russia is heavily dependent on oil revenue, is 'loser' (The Guardian, 2015, january 13).

16. Who is bully? The US has treated Russia like a 'loser' (BBC, 2014, march 14).

17. As with many of history's autocracies, today it the Russian people who are 'the losers' (The Telegraph, 2017, january 18).

Sometimes the synonym of the word 'loser' is used – 'also-run', borrowed from the horse sport:

18. Russia slides from technological superpower to 'also-ran' (The Financial Times, 2016, march 21).

British journalists also use the sports metaphor to characterize Putin's style in politics:

19. Mr. Putin's particular skills in judo was his ability to dodge first to the right and then to the left is 'an apt metaphor' for his style as a political tactician (BBC, 2014, june 25).

'Game metaphors' are widely spread in British mass media in the articles about Russia. For instance, the joining of Crimea to Russia is characterized as Putin's taking part in the game again:

20. Russian forces occupied Crimea. Putin was back in 'game' (BBC, 2014, june 25).

Russia's president is compared with a successful card player:

21. So he played what he thought was his 'trump card' (The Financial Times, 2015, february 3).

Game metaphors as well as anthropomorphic ones stress the danger of Russia in the world:

22. Putin's military exercises are more than 'game'…Russia conducted military exercises or played war 'games' (The Guardian, 2014, april 23).

The reporter of The Times' admits that only Russia benefited from the Iran-Saud conflict:

23. There was only one 'winner' in the 'computer game' of Iran- Saud conflict, and that was Russia (The Guardian, 2014, december 7).

The war in Ukraine is called 'Putin's game in Ukraine' (BBC, 2014, june 25). This metaphor goes back to the Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014, which were also called 'Putin's games' to emphasize that their aim was to create the image of a powerful leader of Russia, who expects his view point to be taken into account.

Game metaphors are used in the articles connected with the conflict in Syria which is also called 'Putin's game' (BBC, 2015, september 23), 'Russian game in Syria' (News Statement, 2015, october 15), 'Russia's Syria gambit' (The Guardian, 2015, october 10).

The journalists are afraid that Russia 'can win the Great Game of European politics' (New Statesman, 2014, june 27).

Russia is also called a 'player' in connection with its participation in the war in Syria:

24. President Putin also saw, as he rode a wave of post-Crimea public support, an opportunity through intervening for Russia to become 'a more significant foreign player' in Syria vis-à-vis the US (The Telegraph, 2016, august 9).

'Zoomorphic metaphors' are rather rare. For instance, the metaphor 'dogfight' is used by British journalists to show the conflicts inside Russia:

25. There's also a 'dogfight' underway in the Kremlin between rival pro-Putin camps, the state corporates against the private businessman (The Times, 2014, october 15).

Zoomorphic metaphor, representing Russia as a bear, strong and dangerous, is still popular.

26. 'The symbol of the Russian bear' is universally understood 'to be the symbol of Russia', so it is an immediate attention-grabber that readers will grasp quickly (Medium, 2016, july 10).

This bear is very dangerous:

27. But you probably want to emphasize 'either the claws or teeth of the Russian bear', right? (Medium, 2016, july 10).

28. Bloomberg BusinessWeek went with what has 'to be the scariest, most menacing Russia bear' that is ever appeared on the cover of a magazine (Medium, 2016, july 10).

It is quite clear that all underlined adjectives in the last example have negative connotations. Some journalists, however, think that Russian has no other choice but to defend itself like a bear:

29. […] leaving him no choice but 'to lash out (The Guardian, 2014, september 4).

Creating the unattractive image of the hostile state, British journalists remembered the old caricature of 1877, i.e. the period of the Russian-Turkish war, and depict Russia as a dangerous grey octopus, stretching tentacles to other states

30. […] the image of the Russian bear is probably preferable to the image of 'the Russian octopus (Medium, 2016, july 10).

'Artifact metaphor'. In 2017 a new metaphor, representing Russia as a house built by V. Putin, appeared. On the one hand, it emphasizes Putin's achievements, but on the other, it again implies autocracy in Russia, which is going to last forever:

31. Russia is 'the house' that Vladimir Putin built – and he will never abandon it (The Guardian, 2017, march 27).

The 'evaluative layer' of the concept 'Russia' is verbalized with the help of utterances, containing different lexemes with positive or much more often negative connotations. Sometimes the contrast of adjectives is used as in the following example where the large size of Russia is opposed to its weak, from the journalist's viewpoint, economy:

32. That is despite the fact that Russia is a 'massive' land mass with a relatively 'small' economy (The Observer, 2014, december 7).

The Guardian shares this opinion, convincing its readers that Russia is economically weak, badly needs foreign investors and is dependent on oil and gas:

33. Russia is economically 'weak', deprived of foreign investment, dependent on energy exports (The Guardian, 2014, november 19).

The 'Russia' is often used with such epithets as 'weak', 'too backward', 'too poor', 'exposed'.

Nevertheless some articles stress that Russia has become richer and stronger:

34. Russia is 'a much richer' and more assertive power than in the Yeltsin years (The Guardian, 2017, june 2).

But as a result "Russia had become a proud, 'resentful', 'apprehensive' and 'ambitious power'" (BBC, 2014, january 7).

British journalists characterize Russia as 'an authoritarian, centralized' country (The Guardian, 2017, november 17), which can become '[…] a European superstate into perspective' (New Statesman, 2014, june 27) dangerous for other European countries. In this respect such adjectives as 'dangerous', 'aggressive', 'hostile', 'brainwashed' and even 'crazy' are used:

35. Russia is not only the former communist country in Eastern Europe to flunk the transition to democracy, but it is the biggest and the 'most dangerous' (The Financial Times, 2015, september 4).

36. Many in the west see Russia as 'aggressive' and 'brainwashed' (The Financial Times, 2015, april 10).

37. Russia is not only the former communist country… but the biggest and the most 'dangerous' (The Guardian, 2014, september 4).

All this is because of '[…] preference for 'paranoid militarism' over economic development' (The Guardian, 2014, september 4).

Alongside with these extremely negative evaluations we come across some ironical ones, representing Russia as 'inscrutable and inebriated', 'land of dashcams and dancing bears' (Calvet Journal, 2013, november 18), and 'world dripping in lashing of luxury, opulence, exclusive events and private jets' (The Telegraph, 2013, september 25), that is as a very odd and incomprehensible country.

In accord with it Russia is also characterized as the country of 'brash big-spenders' (The Telegraph, 2013, september 25), which was clearly seen during the Olympic Games in Sochi. British journalists believe that

38. […] as hosts […] Russia and President Putin…looks immensely 'risky', wildly 'ambitious' and probably 'unwise' (The Times, 2014, february 6).

'Ethnocultural associative layer' is represented by the micro contexts in which the lexeme 'Russia' is

used together with such words as 'menace', 'threat', 'aggression' and 'provocation'. For example:

39. But the US and NATO lack the will or manpower to do much in response to the Ukraine crises other than impose economic sanctions and conduct joint military exercises of their own, which do not hold the same sense of 'menace' as Putin's (The Guardian, 2014, april 23).

40. The Caspian Sea naval war games expand the crisis beyond the border of Ukraine, throwing up a new 'threat', the potential to create trouble in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, or at the very least, there is the potential disruption of oil supplies (The Guardian, 2014, april 23).

41. Russia that is being turned into 'the existential threat' to the civilized world (Spiked, 2016, october 26).

42. Russia has long been the dominant declared 'threat' to America, Europe, disarmament and peace on Earth) (The Guardian, 2017, march 3).

There are even contexts, which supply the readers with associations between Russia and fascist Germany: and compare Putin's forcing policy to the insidious expansion of 'Hitler's third Reich' in the 1930's (The Conversation, 2014, september 10).

The lexeme 'Russia' is included in micro contexts with words, connected with war. Making British people believe, that Russia takes part in the war in Ukraine, journalists use such word groups as 'military involvement' (BBC, 2014, june 25), 'mobilization for invasion' (Chatham House, 2016, may 20). The military operation in Syria is described with such word-groups as 'Russian air-strikes' (Independent, 2015, october 12), 'Russian bombing' (Independent, 2015, october 12), 'Moscow bombing campaign' (The Guardian, 2015, november 17), 'Russian intervention' (The Guardian, 2015, october 1).

However, there are contexts, which give the opportunity to associate Russia with great cultural traditions kept intact even during the war:

43. Russia is a country that even in the depths of the second world war turned to 'classical music' for solace (The Guardian, 2014, april 9).

British journalists believe, that 'Russia is returning to its traditional position in global culture' (Calvert Journal, 2013, november 18). It is '[…] a land that loves visual art' and '[…] feels the deep love of collecting' (The Guardian, 2014, april 9).

Unlike negative associations, the positive ones are very few and do not contribute much to creating the image of Russia.

Final considerations

The British political mass media discourse contributes a lot to the creation of the mainly negative image of Russia as a hostile, aggressive, unpredictable and dangerous state, alien to principles of democracy.

In doing so British journalists choose corresponding linguistic means, forming in minds of British people negative associations with the stimulus lexeme 'Russia' or, in other words, surfacing the nuclear of the corresponding concept and its metaphorical, evaluative and ethnocultural associative layers.

Among substitutes of the lexeme 'Russia', verbalizing the 'nuclear' of the corresponding concept, such ones deserve mentioning as 'New Russia', 'former communist country', 'Putin's Russia', 'Tzar Putin's Russia', which, on the one hand, oppose Russia to the communist Soviet Union and, on the other, disapprove autocracy of president Putin.

The 'metaphoric layer' is surfaced by means of different types of metaphors. 'Anthropomorphic' metaphors, representing Russia as a human being, help to create the image of the enemy, doing everything to demonstrate its strength. At the same time they form ironical and contemptuous associations of Russia with madness, comparing it with a slightly unhinged stepbrother. British journalists also use 'morbial' metaphors justifying sanctions against Russia. In their opinion, only economic pain can make this country stop its expansionist policy. These metaphors also show that Russia is not going to follow the principles of American democracy, being allergic to them.

'Theatrical' and 'game' metaphors imply the danger of Russia and its president. They are used to convince British people, that Russia manipulates other countries, making them fulfill its will like a puppet master does with puppies or a conductor with an orchestra. The metaphor 'game' in collocations 'Putin's game in Ukraine' or 'Russian game in Syria' is aimed to show that a war with all its losses and sufferings is only a kind of amusement for Russia.

However, some metaphors, especially 'sports' ones, fulfill a psychotherapeutic function, imposing the idea about economic weakness of Russia and inefficiency of its foreign policy. They convince British people that in fact the dangerous enemy is a loser or an also-run, who unsuccessfully tries to realize its geopolitical ambitions.

Through 'zoomorphic' metaphors in British political media discourse Russia is perceived as a dangerous strong animal a bear or as a disgusting grey octopus, stretching its tentacles to other countries. These metaphors again form associations of Russia with danger and aggression.

The 'evaluative layer' is surfaced with the help of utterances, comprising lexemes with predominantly negative connotations. They give direct characteristics to Russia as economically weak and poor but at the same time as dangerous, aggressive, hostile and brainwashed country with the preference for paranoid militarism. This country is also represented as unwise, wasteful, odd and incomprehensible. Such country can hardly be respected.

'Ethnocultural associative layer' is represented by the micro contexts, in which the lexeme 'Russia' is used together with such words as 'menace', 'threat', 'aggression', 'provocation', 'war' and even 'Hitler'. Such micro contexts form negative associations of Russia with these notions in the minds of British people. Only some micro contexts give the opportunity to associate Russia with great cultural traditions.

Due to all means analyzed above, that is metaphors, evaluative lexemes with negative or ironical connotations, micro-contexts in which the lexeme 'Russia' is used with words with mostly negative connotations, the image of Russia is represented in the British political mass media discourse as the image of a very dangerous and aggressive country, which threatens or suppresses other countries trying to become a superpower. This country does not deserve respect, because it is economically weak and is perceived as a loser. It is odd, incomprehensible, wasteful and unwise, though it has great cultural heritage.

The scheme of analysis offered in this article can be applied to the investigation of images of other states as well as to comparative studies. It can be used in the courses for linguists, journalists and politicians.

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