PRIMING EFFECTS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING: THE NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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PRIMING EFFECTS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE ON *HUMAN TRAFFICKING*: THE NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The project concentrates on the study of priming effects in modern media discourse on *human trafficking* from the narrative perspective. This research is going to be the elaboration of the previous empirical study (Paliichuk 2007), the primary interest of which has been responses (Miall, Kuiken 1994) to media differences in treatment of *human trafficking*.

The public opinion toward this social situation is predetermined by the contours (Blommaert, Verschueren 1998) that, being filled with verbal means, provide the way and direction of the verbal conceptualization of the event shown in media texts (Rayner et al. 2001). Priming, especially in its broader definition by Fiske and Taylor (Fiske, Taylor 1991), addresses the importance of both the mass media agenda and mass media semantic content in affecting (Rogers 1988) public attitudes.

The concept was introduced by Iyengar and Kinder (Iyengar, Kinder 1987) to explain the power of the media. If the mass media agenda "primes" readers by giving salience to certain events, these events are not merely made more salient to the audience. The mass media prime focuses on specific issues, as for instance *human trafficking*. This selectivity forces these issues, not just the event, to the forefront (Rogers 1988) of mass media coverage.

Thus, priming, defined by Fiske and Taylor as the effects of prior context on the interpretation and retrieval of information (Fiske, Taylor 1991:231), tells us whether something is good or bad, whether it is communicated effectively (Brewer et al. 2003). By offering the audience such background for perception, it enhances the effects (Cappella et al. 2001) of the media.

As a preliminary stage of our research, we have evaluated the emotional power of media texts with the help of the traditional lingua-stylistic analysis and then identified numerous expressive means and stylistic devices such as metaphor, simile, irony, parcellation, allusion, antonomasia, parallelism, etc. (Paliichuk 2007). In the process, we have noticed that such devices are mostly used in media texts which contain the narrative elements. This leads to our hypothesis that an audience can be primed with particular images and semantics represented by the narrative elements of media texts on *human trafficking* situation.

<u>The objective</u>. The previous research showed that the readers were very sensitive to the emotional perception of the media text, saturated with literary devices. However, the results proved to be insignificant in terms of influence on the change of the readers' opinion after one-time reading of the text containing large number of expressive means and stylistic devices.

Supposedly, the shaping of public opinion depends on the priming effects employed in mass media, i.e. the influence of the previous context on the text, which is immediately being read. Consequently, this has given us an impetus to undertake an enquiry, which is explorative in nature, aimed at collecting the empirical evidence to justify or disprove the abovementioned idea. Thus, the objective is to check whether the preliminary reading of the texts on *human trafficking* influences upon the change of the readers' opinion toward the social situation, highlighted in media discourse and, if so, to what extent.

The hypotheses: H0 – the previously read texts do not influence on the change of the readers' attitude; H1 – the previously read texts influence on the change of the readers' attitude to a large extent.

The sample. The participants are 60 humanity students aged between 20-22, divided into two groups.

The case study. For the survey there will be selected four texts of two types: the factual media articles without stylistic means and analytical media articles intermingled with elements of a narrative, abundant in literary devices.

The procedure. The groups are divided according to the sequence of reading of the texts. The participants will read three texts. Group 1 will first read two factual articles and answer the questionnaire, and then an analytical article, answering the same questions. Group 2 will first read two analytical articles and answer the questionnaire, and then a factual article, answering the same questions. So, the scheme is as follows: group 1 ($a – a– b$) and group 2 ($b – b – a$), where a is a factual article and b is an analytical one. After the papers are collected, the responses will be processed by means of SPSS Programme for Windows. The Descriptive Statistics, Anova-test and Pearson Correlation test are used to analyse whether there is dependence between the preliminary reading of the texts and extent of changing the readers' opinion after the last reading of the text.

Conclusion. If the hypothesis 1 proves, it would be quite reasonable to claim about the power of priming effects employed in the media texts. Since the empirical research is a part of the project on the cognitive mechanism underlying the process of shaping public opinion, the results may be very precious for the study of the *human trafficking* in media discourse.

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