

Toward Contrastive Functional Stylistics: The Language of Russian and Anglo-American News Media

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The metalanguage of the contrastive analysis proposed here includes a set of functional parameters (informativeness, novelty, expressiveness, persuasiveness, etc.) stylistic features (evaluative-emotive character, standardization, brevity, etc.) and their linguistic markers (cf. Кожина 1983, 82-83). The analysis is based on a contrastive study of English- and Russian- language news media styles. Two functions (information and persuasion) play the dominant role in the language of the news media, and the relationship between them may serve as a meaningful diagnostic feature in a contrastive analysis.

The language of mass media reflects such aspects of mass communication as appeal to the „average” mass reader, lack of direct feedback, the limited size of a text, and the need to fill it with the maximum amount of information. Orientation toward the mass receptor is characterized, on the one hand, by the despecialization (universalization) of language and, on the other, by its specialization (universalization). These two conflicting trends, associated with the informative function are manifested, on the one hand, in the despecialization of terms, professionalisms, and jargonisms and in the popularization of loans and neologisms, and, on the other, in the specialization of media language, the differentiation of its functional varieties and the selection of linguistic resources depending on orientation towards a particular audience, its background knowledge and the topic of the text.

Despecialization frequently assumes the form of the metaphorization of terms. In some cases the same terms are subjected to metaphorization both in Russian and

Anglo-American media (cf., for instance the English *chain reaction* and the Russian *цепная реакция* which, in addition, to their terminological sense in nuclear physics, acquired in the language of the press a figurative one ('any series of events where each is the consequence of the preceding one and the cause of the following one').

In addition to parallel development, there are certain differences brought about by extralinguistic factors. Metaphorization frequently affects those areas which have long been in the focus of public attention. Thus the metaphoric use of computer terminology is more characteristic of the contemporary Anglo-American press. Cf., for instance:

And it will provide only 50 per cent of the costs of „hardware” - that is, new correctional centers, crime laboratories and police academies („The New York Times”, Feb., 12, 1967,7).

Generally speaking, standardization means persuading the several services to buy identical „software” – that is the thousand and one everyday housekeeping items ranging from paint brushes to belt buckles that aren't directly related to combat efficiency („The Wall Street Journal”, Aug. 22, 1965).

The term *hardware* is used here in a despecialized meaning (an physical plant) and the term *software* in the sense 'anything not pertaining to the main function'. In the Russian media computer terms have not been subjected to equally intensive despecialization.

There are areas where despecialized terms are practically non-existent in one of the two languages. For instance, such terms of nuclear strategy as, for instance, *overkill* 'something that causes harm by exceeding the required or safe limits', a despecialized sense of the *nuclear strategy* term 'the ability to annihilate the enemy several times over', have not been used metaphorically in the Russian language press.

On the other hand, a metaphoric use of conventional military terms has been a typical feature of the Soviet press since the days of „War Communism”. Many of them, used in a figurative sense (e. g. *предпраздничная вахта, на переднем крае идеологической борьбы*, etc.) have now fallen into disuse. Others still linger on. Differences in the range of the metaphoric use of military terminology find their expression in translation. The following is a passage from a Russian media text, rendered more or less verbatim by a Russian translator and corrected by an American style editor, aware of the inappropriateness of a military idiom in a „civilian” context:

На район этой крупнейшей впадины а мире приходится три четверти всей нефти и газа, добываемых в СССР. Сейчас наступление ведется от края впадины к центру.

The translator's version: The area of this biggest depression in the world accounts for three quarters of the oil and gas extracted in the USSR. Now the offensive has been carried over from the edge to the center.

The editor's version:... Operations have now moved from the edge to the center of the depression.

The mass media also contribute to the popularization of the so-called „buzz-words”, professionalisms or quasi-terms, arising in a certain social milieu, gaining currency and acquiring prestige. Cf. the use of such phrases as *confidence factor*, *thunderstorm activity* and *conflict situation* instead of words *confidence*, *thunderstorm*, and *conflict*.

By and large, both English- and Russian- language media seem to favor expressive non-terminological equivalents of official terminology (e. g. *moon crawler* instead of *lunar roving vehicle*, *smart bomb* instead of *guided bomb*, *теневая экономика* instead of *незаконная предпринимательская деятельность*).

Another channel of the despecialization of specialized vocabulary in the mass media is the popularization by the press of special slang (argot, jargon, etc.) and its transfer to general slang. Characteristically, it affects primarily the language of subcultures which for some reason or other are in the focus of public attention. Cf., for instance, the wide use by the U.S. and British press of military slang, some of which dating back to World War II and the Vietnam War, during the Gulf War (*grunt*, 'infantryman', *snafu* 'situation normal, all fouled up', cf. also such analogous formations as *Baghdad Betty*, 'a Baghdad English- language newscaster' by analogy with *Tokyo Rose* in World War II).

The Soviet press used to be impervious to the penetration of slang. During the recent period there has been a marked shift toward a much wider use of informal language including special slang. Interest in the current crime wave has given rise to a more hospitable attitude to underworld slang (cf., for instance, *шестерка* 'small fry', *беспредел* 'lack of any constraints', *разборка* 'any fight or violent confrontation between rival gangs').

Mass media have always played an active role in the popularization of borrowings. While in the Anglo-American press this process has developed at its normal rate with the emphasis on foreign realia (*Berufsverbot*, *perestroika*, *Camorra* 'Neapolitan Mafia') and local color, the veritable flood of borrowings in the

Russian-language press has been largely motivated by a desire to fill semantic lacunas (имидж, рейтинг, маркетинг) and, partly, by attraction to more prestigious - albeit semantically redundant - Anglo-American equivalents (e.g. триллер thriller instead of боевик).

The specialization of news media language is expressed, among other things, in its differentiation from other functional styles.

By and large, this trend is more pronounced in the English-language news media. According to V.G. Kostomarov, the Russian newspaper style is a melting pot of diverse lexical strata (Костомаров 1971). Stylistically heterogeneous elements are likewise typical of the Anglo-American press. Yet it would hardly be possible to find in English-language news media anything comparable to the following passage from a Russian newspaper with its marked orientation toward belles-lettres style:

И с каждым годом, словно страшная черная оспа, множатся эти обгорелые проплешины на чистом снегу закавказской зимы. Их все больше и больше - горьких примет человеческой беды (Советская культура, 16 марта 1991).

More blurred than in the Anglo-American press are the boundaries between some Russian newspaper stories and scientific essays. Thus in a single newspaper article (Известия, June 13, 1991) we found the following terms and professionalisms: инсоляция, КПД, отдача фотоэлементов, пассажировместимость, детальная проработка).

Finally, the specialization of news media language may find its expression in a special lexicon, typical of the press (the so-called 'journalese'), as, for instance, the English „spotlight”, „pundit”, „editorialize” and the Russian быть в центре внимания, вызывать широкий отклик, стоять на повестке дня.

Orientation toward the receptor's knowledge is another salient feature of the language of the press. It stands out in bold relief in the use of various allusions, based on shared background knowledge, i.e. a set of presuppositions, common to the participants of a communicative event. The trends characterizing the use of allusions are, on the whole, similar in Russian and Anglo-American news media. They differ largely in their sources, specific to respective cultures. It is no coincidence that newspaper stories abound in allusions to literary personages, popular films and TV programs, local events, etc. For instance, the following allusion cannot be decoded without a certain amount of knowledge about a film, popular in the '60s, about an insane nuclear strategist: The anti-nuclear lobby

would have us believe that the nuclear industry is run by an army of Dr. Strange-loves... (The Scientist, Aug. 29, 1974).

The Russian reader will easily identify part of the following example as a quotation from Mayakovsky's poem „Vladimir Ilyich Lenin”:

Видимо, для многих Ленин и теперь живет всех живых (Коммерсант, 18-25 июня 1990). A wide use of allusions in Russian newspaper headlines is a relatively novel phenomenon, marking a break with the traditional formality of this element of a news story. Such headlines frequently carry an ironical connotation:

И Родина щедро поила меня березовым соком... (Коммерсант, 18-25 июня 1990). This allusion, a quotation from a popular song, is based on a pun where березовый сок is a humorous reference to the wares of the now defunct Beryozka hard-currency stores.

As is well known, news media transmit up-to-the-minute news intended for instantaneous reception. This fact is reflected in the concentration of neologisms in the news media text. The news media play an active role not only in the popularization of neologisms but also in their creation. This includes the active process of the production of nonce words.

A list of productive thematic groups of neologisms is an indication of the areas of vital concern to the public. Cf., for instance, the group of neologisms reflecting public concern about environmental protection. It includes phrase where the word „green” acquires new meanings: (1) aimed at the solution of ecological problems (e.g. green policy), (2) ecologically pure (green product), (3) ecologically safe (green technology). Another series of neologisms comprising this thematic group is made up of the clipped form eco-(ecological) blended with another stem (e.g. ecodoom ‘ecological disaster’, ecodevelopment ‘development based on a balanced study of ecological and economic factors’, ecofreak ‘a zealous advocate of environmental protection’, etc.).

Mass media neologisms reflect, in the first place, the events in the political spotlight during a certain period (for instance, some words and phrases associated with the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s such as „to plug leaks” ‘to prevent the leakage of information’, „the plumbers”, a task force set up by Nixon to prevent such leakage’, „stonewalling” ‘obstruction of the inquiry into the scandal’).

And, finally, there is a conspicuous group of neologisms reflecting scientific, technological and cultural innovations such as gene therapy, laser fusion, hang-glider, conceptual art, etc. Neologisms denoting perestroika and post-perestroika realities figure prominently among the new coinages propagated by the Russian

media (товарно-сырьевая биржа, приватизация, ваучер, брокер), negative aspects of the ongoing social upheavals (рэкетир, мафия, бомж 'a vagrant'), etc.

And, finally, there is a sizeable group of neologisms produced by the media themselves. They include numerous blends, mostly nonce words, such as Ruthanasia (Ruth, the name of the New Zealand minister of finance, + euthanasia 'mercy killing'). Such coinages frequently set a pattern for a series of analogous forms. Thus „workaholic” 'a person with an uncontrollable urge to work' gave rise to „bookaholic” 'a passionate lover of books', „spendaholic” 'an impulsive spender', „sweetaholic” 'a passionate lover of sweets', etc. Watergate triggered a similar series where -gate performs the function of a quasi-affix (cf. Koreagate 'shady machinations of the South Korea lobby', oilgate 'scandalous revelations of illegal oil traffic from Britain to South Africa', Irangate 'the Iran-Contra deal').

Similar analogous coinages also include a series of phrases with the same head word such as „missile gap”, „generation gap”, „credibility gap”, etc.

In the Russian press such patterns are less productive and are found mainly in some traditional phrases as, for instance, in the series with the head word дело - дело чести, дело борьбы, дело мира, дело свободы. The confrontation of two opposite trends - expressiveness and standardization - seems to be a salient feature of the language of mass media. The high speed of text production calls for a wide use of clichés and other verbal stereotypes including words, phrases and set expressions. The following is a parody of a typical cliché-ridden news story:

They go to the Middle East because it is a tinderbox filled with fertile soil (in spite of its being oil-rich) in which an uneasy truce may grow. Later, if an uneasy truce has held up, the same reporters will probably be present when the parties to it sit down to negotiate. The process could be interrupted by setbacks during which negotiations grind to a halt and each side spells out its minimum demands and insists that all it wants is a viable settlement and that the ball is in the other side's court (Newman 1975, 39-40).

The above text contains a standard set of clichés used in a standard situational frame (an international conflict): tinderbox, fertile soil, oil-rich, negotiations grind to a halt, to spell out demands, viable settlement, the ball is in the other side's court.

The structure of a cliché is often characterized by a nearly total predictability of the attribute used with a given noun (e.g. uneasy truce, a swank hotel, a seasoned observer, a sprawling center, etc.). In terms of Melchuk's „meaning - text” model, the attribute often expresses the semantic parameter Magn (a high degree of something) (Жолковский, Мельчук 1969): galloping inflation, landslide victory, soaring prices. Many of the news media clichés owe their origin to metaphoric

political jargon (e.g. to barnstorm the country), general slang (e.g. think tank, metaphoric despecialization of terms (balance of terror), and non- metaphoric „buzzwords” (e.g. time frame).

When comparing the standardization elements of the Anglo- American and Russian press, it is necessary to distinguish between the Russian cliches of the pre-perestroika period and the contemporary ones. Many of the ideological cliches of the cold-war period (провокатору нейдет, мажорный реакционер, накал классовых битв) have become a thing of the past. At the same time, many of the new cliches still use the old patterns. For instance, cliches with the head word „forces” include such relatively recent coinages as силы торможения, антиперестроечные силы, деструктивные силы. Typical of the Russian press is also the specialization of some cliches depending on the variety of news media style (e.g. such cliches of the sports column as мастер кожного мяча, запечатать ворота).

Among the Russian newspaper cliches, there is a relatively large group of non-metaphoric phrases borrowed from officialese: состоялась встреча, вынести на обсуждение, констатировать результаты. The distinctive features of Russian journalese also include a large number of despecialized military terms.

Space is another factor shaping the specific features of the language of news media. The need to concentrate the maximum amount of information within the limited space of a newspaper column is one of the major challenges of news media journalism.

Hence the need for brevity as a normative feature of a newspaper text and for compression as a way of its realization. The techniques of compression in the English-language media often arise from the specific features of English syntax such as the use of Noun + Noun strings (television channel award < X awards a television channel to Y), phrase attributes („get rich quick” market economics), sentence attributes (Mrs. Thatcher gave him an off- with-his-head look), compounds having no structural equivalents in Russian (government-reimbursed, radical-theory-intoxicated, inflation-proof, etc.).

Although text compression seems to be a universal feature of news media language, there are some reasons to believe that it is more typical of English-language news media texts. This is proved by the compression of Russian phrases and sentences in translation from Russian into English and the expansion of English sentences translated into Russian:

The President's own „blue ribbon” defense panel heavily stacked with representatives of the military – industrial complex found it necessary to recommend

some bureaucratic reforms to deal with mind-boggling evidence of official mismanagement.

Даже комиссия при президенте по реорганизации министерства обороны, укомплектованная тщательно подобранными представителями военно-промышленного комплекса, сочла необходимым рекомендовать некоторые бюрократические реформы для борьбы с уму непостижимой бесхозяйственностью должностных лиц.

Characteristically, the expansion of the original text in this passage involves not only syntactically motivated transformations but also the explication of implicit pragmatic information without which the text is incomplete (defense panel комиссия по реорганизации министерства обороны).

Sometimes compression involves the transformation of *Nomina Actionis* into *Nomina Agentis*:

ЮАР принадлежит первое место в мире по производству золота и алмазов

South Africa is the world's No. 1 producer of gold and diamonds. Translation frequently involves the transformation of verbal nouns, typical of officialese and widely used in the Russian media language, into more compact constructions with finite verbs:

Кроме того, компания оказывает содействие в налаживании производственной техники, осуществляет техническую реконструкцию предприятий.

Furthermore, it helps adjust industrial hardware and retool factories.

Ellipsis is also frequently used to achieve compression. For instance, in the following text the place name (Chernobyl) denotes the events associated with this name (the nuclear accident, radioactive contamination, their repercussions in the world):

Да, события вокруг аварии в Чернобыле еще раз подтвердили: существуют две политические морали...

Yes, Chernobyl once more clearly showed that there are two political moralities. A contrastive analysis of emotive-evaluative devices in the Russian- and English-language press shows that the Russian media have always been characterized by a much higher proportion of evaluative vocabulary and a much more pronounced evaluative (particularly derogatory) connotation (cf., for example, such traditional derogatory evaluatives as гидра, монстр, воронье).

The last few years have seen some radical changes in the use of evaluatives in the Russian press. Many of the positive evaluatives used in an elevated register

(e.g. вдохновляющий, веление, колыбель) and negative evaluatives, based on a stylistic use of archaic vocabulary (e.g. трубадур, глашатай, etc.) have fallen into disuse. Others have changed their connotation. Thus the traditionally derogatory term (бизнес) has lost its evaluative connotation.

This does not mean, however, that evaluation as a distinctive stylistic feature of the language of the press has totally disappeared. What has changed is the set of linguistic devices used to express this feature. For instance, there has been a marked increase in the role of rational (rather than emotive) evaluation. Cf. the use of such evaluatives in the following example:

Грузинское общество, расставшись с одним типом авторитаризма, вползает в другой. Его признаки — обостренный национализм, ограничение оппонентов, контролируемая режимом пресса, поиски „врагов народа”, возвеличивание руководителя, переходящее в культ (Известия, 9 сент. 1911).

Evaluation is based here on lexical items (авторитаризм, национализм, возвеличивание, культ) denoting phenomena generally considered negative.

During the recent period, however, there have been some zigzags in the realization of this trend. For instance, in the spring of 1991, during the counter-attack of the Communist forces, there was a marked revival of traditional evaluative vocabulary and phraseology in the Communist press:

Здесь под мощным натиском шустрх и сообразительных так называемых демократов, под хор разномастных и благостных речей об убогости и богатстве русской земли, под едейные звуки пропобедей о духовном и кьльтурном возрождении Руси ... создано „Радио России” (Советская Россия, 26 апр. 1991).

Evaluative-emotive elements show considerable variation in different types of newspaper texts. Formerly they were most conspicuous in the front-page editorials of the Soviet press. Later on this text type actually disappeared. In the British and American press evaluative vocabulary is practically absent in news items and appears only occasionally in some signed dispatches of newspaper correspondents:

The Social-Democrats, who chose Mr. Lafontaine for his brahs style and populist touch, fell into public disarray Monday...(International Herald Tribune, May 29, 1990, 1).

In a similar variety of the Russian newspaper style, there are sometimes explicit evaluatives of the type found only in editorials and commentators' columns in the English-language press:

Не претендуя на солидный комментарий этого заявления, скажу лишь, что оно лишний раз доказывает, что эмоций в сегодняшней грузинской политике больше, чем трезвого расчета (Известия, 12 сент. 1991).

Evaluation is particularly muted in brief unsigned Russian news items. Yet even in this type of a newspaper text, we may find such explicitly evaluative elements as the attribute *реакционный* in the following passage:

31 августа в Центральном доме литераторов состоялся чрезвычайный пленум СП СССР, на котором правление реакционного СП РСФСР огласило заявление о выходе из Союза (Российская газета, 3 сент. 1991).

Both the Russian and the Anglo-American media make wide use of euphemisms to present the denotata of some linguistic signs in a more favorable light (e.g. *товары повышенного спроса* instead of *дефицитные товары*, *воин-интернационалист* instead of *участник войны в Афганистане*, *ограниченный контингент* instead of *советские войска в Афганистане*;

„protective reaction” instead of *„aerial bombardment”* (in Vietnam), *„pacification mission”* instead of *„punitive expedition”* [in Vietnam], etc.).

By and large, the recent changes in the Russian news media testify to convergence of evaluative aspects of Russian and Anglo-American news media as evidenced by the declining role of the emotive-evaluative elements and the growing role of rational evaluation in the Russian press.

As regards imagery-based vividness as a stylistic feature of the press, the language of the Anglo-American news media is characterized by a wide use of expressive metaphoric verbs within some particular situational frames. Cf., for instance, two series of such verbs forming synonymic sets: (1) to soar, to skyrocket, to shoot up, to jump and (2) to nose-dive, to plummet, to slip (about prices, shares, etc.). Sometimes a situational frame generates a series of metaphors linked by a similar relationship to the situation described. Thus American electoral campaigns have been traditionally likened to horse races producing the following series of metaphors: *„dark horse”* ‘a person unexpectedly nominated’, *„running mate”* ‘a candidate for a less important office as for vice-presidency’, *„presidential race”* ‘presidential election campaign’, *„out of the running”* ‘no longer participating in the campaign’.

Another specific feature of the English-language media is the metonymic use of verbs denoting sounds or some other accompanying features in place of verbs of motion: The vanguard of the Iraqi Army smashed across the border of Kuwait (Newsweek, Jan 28, 1991). Supply Route Dodge is also a main thoroughfare for helicopters which clatter past telegraph poles (The European, Jan 25-27, 1991).

English and Russian news media metaphors and similes differ also in that the former are less elevated and more often based on everyday realities:

The Patriot will be top of the military shopping list for many governments (The European, Jan. 25-27, 1991).

Nevertheless, a smorgasbord of issues still stands in the way of EC membership (Newsweek, Nov. 19, 1999).

On the other hand, Russian metaphors are frequently much „loftier” and are often based on literary-bookish vocabulary characterized by an elevated register:

Вопрос только в том, есть ли у общества, в страхе оцепеневшего между Сциллой возвращения к тоталитаризму и Харибдой решительного продвижения к рыночной экономике, хоть какой либо шанс продвижения вперед, не будучи взнузданным новым Сталиным или кавеньяком Пиночетом (Новое время, 1991, s. 15).

On the whole, the tenor of Russian newspaper texts is still higher. Its more elevated register is based on the use of stylistically marked vocabulary with a bookish connotation (скробное эхо войны, возвысить голос протеста, карающий меч), frequently archaic and rhetorical.

The difference in the tenor of Russian- and English-languae texts may be illustrated by the stylistic modifications in translation when specificall bookish Russian items are replaced by stylistically neutral and sometimes colloquial ones:

Однако недавно житель Белоруссии Георгий Штыков обнаружил этот предмет – фигуру человека, вырезанную из кости.

Recently, however, Georgi Shtykov of Byelorussia hit upon this piece - the carved ivory effigy of a man.

The present trend toward the democratization of news media language leads to the leveling of some differences, particularly to the abandonment of pompousness, formerly typical of our journalese. Nevertheless, some differences still remain, though they are now becoming less and less pronounced.

The structures and strategies of news media texts differ in that the English-language texts are more markedly structured and more explicitly specialized in their vocabulary and syntax. There is no parallel in Russian to the English „headline vocabulary” (headline) including short polysemantic words of high frequency (hit, quit, bid, rap, man, chief).

The texts of English-language news items follow more or less closely two basic strategies. One of them is based on the CIF (crucial information first) principle whereby the key information comes first and is followed by the details (Enkvist 1988). The most essential information is concentrated in the headline summing up

the gist of the news story. A one-paragraph resume of the story is contained in the lead while the remainder of the text gives the background information and other details. The lead is usually based on the following sequence: Message (Event, Place, Time), Source of Information. The other principle of text strategy is „from the general to the specific”. As compared to the English news-media texts, the Russian texts are more loosely organized. They frequently begin with secondary information and in some cases do not reveal a clear-cut structural pattern.

By and large, the last few years saw considerable convergence between the two functional-stylistic systems being compared. This was due to the evolution of the language of the Russian press - the abandonment of elevated rhetoric pomposity and ideological clichés as well as marked democratization of its language. Meanwhile, certain dissimilarities, in most cases quantitative rather than qualitative, make themselves felt. They reveal some traces of formerly striking differences between these stylistic systems.

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O porównawczej stylistyce funkcjonalnej: język rosyjskich i anglo-amerykańskich mass mediów

Proponowana analiza porównawcza języka rosyjskich i anglo-amerykańskich mass mediów obejmuje komplet parametrów funkcjonalnych (informacyjność, ekspresywność, perswazyjność itp.) i cech stylowych (standaryzacja, krótkość, emotywno-ewolucyjny charakter itp.), a także ich wyznaczniki w planie językowym. Dwie funkcje (informacyjna i perswazyjna) odgrywają tu dominującą rolę.

Sprzeczne tendencje prasy (specjalizacja i despecializacja), powodują, że w planie językowym dochodzi z jednej strony do przejmowania terminologii specjalistycznej (zwłaszcza wojskowej) i metaforyzowania jej lub tworzenia na jej bazie nowych

terminów i quasiterminów, z drugiej zaś do tworzenia neologizmów, funkcjonujących jedynie na gruncie mass mediów i związanych z popularnym w danym okresie tematem lub odzwierciedlających naukowo-techniczne i kulturowe innowacje. Wynikiem tego jest powstanie żargonu prasowego, a także wykształcenie się subkultury prasowej.

Z opozycją ekspresywność - standaryzacja łączy się występowanie klisz, których struktura jest z reguły określona przez łączliwość leksykalną. W tym przypadku należy w języku rosyjskim wydzielić klisze utworzone przed i po pieriestrojce, wielu bowiem klisz z okresu przed pieriestrojką dziś się nie używa, nowe zaś jedynie kopiują stare schematy. Wśród nich występuje pokaźna grupa klisz niemetaforycznych, zapożyczonych z języka oficjalnego.

Technika kompresji jest ważnym wyznacznikiem prasy angloamerykańskiej, co wynika z charakteru składni tego języka. Miernikiem tego może być choćby przekład tekstów rosyjskich na język angielski i odwrotnie. Przejawia się to także w metonimicznym użyciu czasowników denotujących dźwięk oraz w samej strukturze tekstu (reguła CIF, której wynikiem jest stały układ treści).