

The Problem of Using New Terms in Russian Media Studies

Over three post-Soviet decades, the terminological framework of Russian media studies has considerably expanded. Some concepts were borrowed from foreign languages, mostly English, others entered the Russian language by themselves. One of the major trends was the emergence of new words derived from the lexical item (root) "media". It is evident that this lexical item proved to be extremely productive in the modern Russian language. The exact number of existing derivatives is unknown at the moment but any attempt to compile a glossary shows that their number is already measured in scores.

The terms derived from the lexical item "media" could be classified into several provisional clusters: the general-purpose one ("media system", "media structure", "media sphere", etc.), the technological one ("media channel", "media platform", "media vehicle", etc.), the linguistic one ("media text", "media discourse", "media term", etc.), the economic one ("media business", "media company", "media capital", etc.), the sociological one ("media consumption", "media effect", "media community", etc.), the industrial one ("media format", "media product", "media profession", etc.), the legal one ("media law", "media regulator", "media ombudsman", etc.) and many others. All these arrays of terms grow spontaneously and are potentially endless.

The enlargement of scientific vocabulary is not a problem and represents a natural process. The main complication is that many terms derived from the lexical item "media" have not acquired generally accepted definitions so far. This is easy to explain. Some researchers introduce into scientific use new concepts, often without providing clear-cut definitions; others use the emerging lexical innovations but do not specify their meanings. The authors sometimes believe that the meaning of a particular term is understandable to everyone from the context but practice shows that the interpretations may be not quite similar or may even give rise to disagreements from colleagues. As a result, it is not unlikely that people speaking the same language and specializing within the same area of research fail to fully understand one another in written and oral communication.

This intra-community problem can be solved by conducting a number of terminological seminars aimed at searching and recording conventional definitions of the words derived from the lexical item "media" that are currently used by scholars. This task is not an easy one because the process of derivation and interpretation cannot be regulated normatively. However, the compilation of an experimental dictionary of "media terms" currently used in Russia will partly help overcome the existing variability of meanings and improve the quality of scholarly communication.

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