Representation of british social and political life in audiovisual content

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Abstract. The article examines the problem of reflecting the socio-political life of Great Britain in an audiovisual product. The example for the analysis was the television programme produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation "BBC" "Not the Nine O'Clock News", which covers the time period of the 70s and 80s of the XX century. The results of the study have established that the main means of achieving the communicative goal between the authors of the TV programme and the viewer in reproducing the problems of life of ordinary Britons in a specific socio-political situation is to analyse the social and political processes in British society through the ironic and sarcastic reflection of the British political beau monde. In addition, it has been determined that the main object of ridicule was such aspects of life as taxation and the inconsistency of political parties' election programmes with the expectations of the electorate.

Keywords: social and political life, Great Britain, audiovisual content, television programme, television, humour
A person cognises this world by transforming objects into cultural phenomena and turning them into signs. Such a process combines the development and appropriation of reality, makes it possible to consider objects as things and signs as social facts of human communication. To present a model of the reflection of the life world in the verbal language, it is proposed to use the concept of life activity, which is defined as a dynamic process of self-realisation. The latter includes three types of products of self-deployment of the universe in which a person lives: a physical body (natural world), a semantic construct (spiritual world), and a system of attributes determined by social relations (social world) (Bex, 2000).

The world can be divided into the following types: physical, which includes housing, food, clothing, etc., spiritual, which includes the category of culture, and social, represented by communication and social activities (Романюк, 2019: 763). Culture and language are inextricably linked, which is reflected in the specifics of the reflection of the socio-political life of countries.

Socio-political vocabulary emerges in the process of communication with the aim of spreading certain ideas and influencing public opinion. Therefore, it can be said that socio-political vocabulary is a reflection of political reality, and political reality makes its own adjustments to terminology, influencing its creation and change. The use of such vocabulary helps to spread certain political ideas and influence public opinion. Realities play an important role in the process of intercultural communication. Social and political reality is part of the nationally labelled vocabulary. It contains factual information, evokes certain associations in the recipient and includes linguistic, cultural and national information about the social, political and cultural life of the country, the state system and the history of its people. Thus, socio-political vocabulary is a reflection of political reality, which, in turn, influences the creation and changes in socio-political vocabulary.

The purpose of the study is to find out the specifics of the reflection of the socio-political life of the UK in an audiovisual product and its impact on the audience.
The objectives of the study are as follows: to define the concept of "multimodality" as a postulate of audiovisual production, and the means of implementing this phenomenon in the context of reflecting the peculiarities of the socio-political life of the United Kingdom.

The research material was taken from the video materials of the relevant TV programme from the YouTube website. The analysis was carried out between January and February 2024. As part of the analysis of the material and the implementation of the above goals and objectives, general scientific and special research methods were used, including analysis and synthesis, comparative for the development of theoretical positions and the formation of a clear position; comparative-historical and hermeneutical-interpretive for the analysis of the audiovisual product.

The socio-political vocabulary in the modern world is rapidly developing and enriched with new words and expressions. Among them are author's words that emerged spontaneously and quickly gain a foothold in socio-political, journalistic, and colloquial discourses. The socio-political vocabulary is a complex and dynamic system that is rapidly developing and enriching itself.

Let us consider the phenomenon of multimodality. Multimodality is interpreted as "the use of several semiotic modes in the construction of a semiotic product or event" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001: 20).

The study of multimodality as a scientific field is aimed at developing theories, analytical tools and descriptions aimed at studying the ways in which multimodal constructions are represented in a communicative act. In fact, the linguistic construct is multimodal, but in the modern world, archetypal multimodal texts such as films, television programmes and websites have significantly expanded the scope of research in multimodality theory.

Within the framework of "multimodal studies" (O'Halloran & Smith, 2011), the phenomenon of multimodality is considered from different theoretical perspectives (Jewitt, 2009; O'Halloran, 2011), all of which are based on four key assumptions (Jewitt, Bezemer & O'Halloran, 2016): a) all communication is multimodal; b) analyses that focus exclusively or primarily on language cannot adequately...
explain meaning; c) each mode of communication has specific capacities that stem from its material and social history; d) each mode of communication has specific capacities stemming from its material and social history that shape its resources to meet specific communicative needs; e) modes of communication overlap and each plays a specific role in the creation of meaning; hence, the relationship between modes of communication is key to understanding each communicative event.

Thus, the main postulate underlying multimodality concepts is the theory that a multimodal complex is more than the sum of its parts.

As media technologies change (manuscript, print, varying paper and binding quality, web texts and hyperlinks), so do translation theories (Littau, 2011). It is quite logical that the rich multimodality of many contemporary texts requires a rethinking of critical and analytical tools and new approaches to translation. R. Iedema argues that multimodality "provides a means to describe practice or representation in all its semiotic complexity and diversity" (Iedema, 2003: 39).

In general, video content is considered to be that which has signs of a coherent text, a combination of visual and verbal signs, diagrams, film footage, scenes from a play, etc. Under such conditions, it is possible to simultaneously perceive both correct and incorrect signs, which depends on video verbal texts at high speed, in which a recorded word processor is used in a static video sequence (Град, 2014: 51).

Depending on the nature of the medium, texts can be classified as static (poster, magazine advertisement, poster, etc.) or dynamic (television commercial, film, etc.), two-word (video text in a book, film, etc.) or three-word (video text in a theatre play) with a rider. It can be mostly voice (which includes live speech and the recording of this speech by special technical means), written (spoken and written), and oral-written (spoken and written, for example, an order that "lives" in an advertising text), and may also contain quotations from one or more of the following languages (Austin, 1962: 9-10).

Multimodality as a field of study considers the representation of reality and communication as relying on a...
multiplicity of modes, each of which has been socially developed as a resource for creating meaning. Modalities such as gesture, sound, image, colour or infographics are seen as a set of organised resources created by society; each is used by different social groups to create meaning and significance, and social groups serve as creators of meaning, expression and the shaping of values, ideologies and power relations (Van Leeuwen, 2008). In combination with spoken and/or written language, multimodal constructs are not simply accompaniments or supports of verbal language, as each of them coincides with a specific functional load on the meaning of the text, i.e. modes are considered as a para-/extralinguistic phenomenon (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

Central to multimodality as a field of visuality is that visual images appeal to the audience and therefore facilitate the recall of details through visual information. This function of visuals, which allows a person to recall details presented in images, is the mnemonic function of multimodality (Domke, Perlmutter & Spratt, 2002, p. 133). Scholars emphasise the importance of multimodal resources when they argue that visual images used in conjunction with news can teach the audience how to perceive news properly.

As Filardo-Llamas (2015) argues, the combination of multimodal tools with linguistic text analysis can be quite useful in revealing the ways in which ideology is shaped in political discourse. If we take into account not only textual parts of the discourse, but also visual ones, new possibilities for interpreting socio-political texts open up.

In the case of audiovisual texts, words are almost always translated, but the choice of the method of perception is determined by the individual's knowledge, the context of the situation, cultural factors, etc. In addition, it is necessary to study the interaction between word, image and sound, because the interaction between verbal, visual, acoustic, kinetic and other semiotic modes is what is the object of an audiovisual product.

The creators of audiovisual texts, in addition to language, are looking for other ways of interpretation, which in some cases convey meaning more directly than words, or at least can be considered as a whole.
Perego (2009) considers the following types of codification of visual and linguistic signals: 1) from paralanguage (which includes non-verbal and vocal signals) to verbal language; 2) from sounds to verbal language; 3) from images to verbal language. In her research, the scholar focuses on the way non-verbal means are transformed into translated text.

The issue of the relationship between words and images is difficult to separate from the broader issue of paratext. Paratexts are components of a published work other than the main text, such as covers, titles, title page, endnotes, footnotes, etc., added at the publication stage (Genette, 1980).

Paratext is divided into two categories: 1) peritext and 2) epitext, based on the spatial proximity of the paratextual elements to the text (Genette 1997: 4-5). Peritext refers to those elements in a book that guide the reader in reading and interpretation. They include, for example, titles, bookplates, and indexes. Epitext also exists beyond the cover: elements such as advertisements, author interviews, and library catalogues contextualise the work in the textual environment before the reader even encounters the text. In the end, both peritext and epitext have the same function: to present a literary work, which Genette calls simply a text (Genette, 1997).

We should perceive images as elements of the text that are translatable, i.e. not only does the interaction between text and image change during translation (Kaindl, 2004), but the images themselves are subject to change, editing and even deletion (Zanettin, 2011).

A striking example of multimodality in audiovisual text is the British television programme Not the Nine O’Clock News, which parodies the News at Ten news programme. The British political establishment (political parties, influential politicians, etc.) has become the formative core of satirising the social and political life of this country. Let's illustrate the processes of ridiculing topical political topics of the socio-political life of Great Britain in the 70s and 80s of the XX century on the example of this programme.

Thus, in the first fragment, the active gestures of the
British Prime Minister are depicted by a photograph of Mrs Thatcher, who demonstrates the gesture of "embracing". The voiceover text contains a humorous overtone: "At the press conference today Mrs. Thatcher demonstrated her new method of holding the attention of male colleagues" (SuperCutHero, 2022a), which enhances the comic nature of the episode and mocks the image of the "Iron Lady Margaret Thatcher".

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1**

_Margaret Thatcher in the programme "Not the Nine O'Clock News"

The creators of the programme did not limit themselves to the image of Mrs Thatcher. The second fragment demonstrates the image of Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain, giving it a negative connotation by comparing the monarch's figure to the Volkswagen II car (SuperCutHero, 2022b). The authors of the programme used fragments of newsreels of Queen Elizabeth's visit to a horse race, adding the text "HM Queen Volkswagen II By Appointment", which may indicate the scriptwriters'
desire to ridicule the monarch's age and reflect the conservatism and excessive traditionalism of the UK's social and political life. The Queen-horse racing-Volkswagen II associative series serves as a kind of metaphorical paradox, supported by audiovisual demonstration of the general stereotypical idea of constitutional monarchy and the sympathy of British citizens for the monarch.

Figure 2
Queen Elizabeth II in the programme "Not the Nine O'Clock News"

In the third fragment, the Social Democratic Party UK is satirised. The actor R. Atkinson, imitating the style of reading lullabies to children, recites an excerpt from a fairy tale about the leader of the Conservative Party, M. Thatcher (SuperCutHero, 2022c): "The wicked witch died, and everybody was released from her spell. There was laughter and singing in the streets, and there was no more sickness, and there were no more poor people. And nobody had to pay taxes, and
everybody was happy and contended, and lived happily ever after." The image of the "mad witch" is an allusion to the fairy tale "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and the image of the witch who wanted to take Snow White's life.

Figure 3

Actor R. Atkinson reciting a fairy tale about M. Thatcher

After the story is finished, a voiceover reads the title that appears on the screen: "That was a party political broadcast on behalf of the Social Democratic Party". Representatives of the Social Democratic Party were opponents of Mrs Thatcher's conservative policies (Barberis, McHugh & Tyldesley, 2000), which prompted the programme's authors to reflect their antipathy by portraying her as a "mad witch". The inappropriateness of the studio atmosphere (faulty design, recitation of the text in a different style while maintaining the formality of political discourse, etc.), and the satirical text of the fairy tale are a comedy of the format of political programmes in the UK.
Verbalisation of comic coverage of the Conservative Party's policy

The study suggests that for creating a high-quality audiovisual product, its multimodality that is taken into account, with the help of which the programme authors influence or manipulate public opinion. These examples have proved that satirising the socio-political life of the UK is a leading feature of their identity. The means of realising this task are both satirising specific individuals and the problems of the state's functioning. It has been found that some passages can combine verbal and non-verbal means of communication to form a holistic audiovisual image that encourages the viewer to perceive the situation from a different perspective.

In the future, as part of my multimodality dissertation, it is planned to delve into the topic of visualising various aspects of British life.

References:


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