

## Genre Styles of Phatics: PR Communication in Media Discourse

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**Abstract:** The study is devoted to the analysis of phatic genre styles in mass media. This phenomenon allows giving complex description of different discourses. The speech genre is defined by such characteristics as intention, the usage of text patterns existing in national culture, the influence potential of the text realizing. The intention complex researching and main (dominating) intention determining allows singling out original speech genres and specific genre styles in different discourses. In particular, PR communication is represented by informing, persuading and phatic genres. Phatic genre style of PR communication includes some strictly phatic genres such as congratulation and genres combining informative content and phatic form; the latter include by-liner, invitation and letter.

**Key words:** Phatic, speech genre, PR communication, genre style, congratulation, invitation, by-liner, letter

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### INTRODUCTION

As it is commonly known, the notion of genre style was introduced in scientific use by M.M. Bakhtin and described in his work «the problem of speech genres».

‘In essence, language or functional, styles are nothing other than genre styles for certain spheres of human activity and communication. Each sphere has and applies its own genres that correspond to its own specific conditions. There are also particular styles that correspond to these genres’ (Bakhtin, 1979).

The media discourse which has been developing fast in the recent years is not an exception and can be divided into three distinct branches: journalism, PR and advertising. There is a set of typical genres to describe each of these branches.

Genre style is determined by such characteristics as thematic and compositional unity of utterance, speaker’s emotionally estimating position as well as speaker’s attitude towards others members of speech communication (Bakhtin, 1979). Giving a more precise definition of a genre style helps to work out a systematic compound description of different directions within the bounds of mass media discourse. This objective seems crucial due to the media discourse complexity.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Elaboration of the notion of a genre style implies studying the following sides of text activity: ‘...processes of goal setting, choice and usage of genre models accepted in a given culture (the whole utterance and its components, basic and optional), fulfillment of complex

structured cognitive-communicative actions, realization of illocutionary potential of utterance with regard to intentions hierarchy’ (Salimovskij, 2002).

Study of text intentionality and extraction of dominating intention in the hierarchy of intentions makes it possible to identify distinct genres and genre styles of different spheres of communication.

At the present stage of linguistic study development it is believed that genre styles are combined on the basis of typical goal settings.

These goal settings determine special characteristics of discourse building, its functional coloring and the patterns of linguistic means selection and usage’ (Salimovskij, 2002).

Aforesaid allows to state that there exist special genre styles of journalism, PR communication and advertising. Each of these branches of mass media is distinguished by its own intentionality—a range of typical goal settings. Thus, journalism is characterized by the following goal settings: informing, forming socially valuable estimations and prompting to action (Duskaeva 2015a, b).

**Basic notions:** PR communication builds its set of intentions in connection with the main focus creating and/or changing the image of the subject of PR. Informing in PR communication is circumscribed by the interests of the subject of PR and its audience; so selection of information is conducted in strict adherence to these demands. Evaluation activity of those who write/speak is aimed at creating positive estimation of PR subject’s activity. Prompting is associated with further cooperation development.

It is reasonable to distinguish groups of genres within PR communication on the grounds of dominating speech intention which makes it possible to define the following genre groups: informing, persuading and phatic genres of PR (Stilistika i literaturnoye redaktirovaniye, 2015). The latter represent the genre style of phatics in PR communication.

Why is it really possible to perceive phatics as a forming factor for a genre style? Understanding phatics as an intention suggested earlier in the works by (Vinokur 1993a, b) allows to speak of this phenomenon as of an extra linguistic factor predestinating the selection and combination of linguistic means in speech. Even more so, there are no special linguistic means in language-lexemes, grammar forms or syntax constructions that could help to undoubtedly distinguish phatic speech in the flow of informative speech and vice versa.

Being a type of indirect communication (Dementyev 2006), phatic communication requires some additional interpretive efforts. This is not actually the contents of utterance but perception of what has been left unsaid 'the aura of communication' (Murzin, 1998). It could be expressed by means of language game, inclusion in text of precedent phenomena, employing allusions and reminiscence, the usage of other style vocabulary which produces a required contact-establishing effect, addresses, vocatives, personal pronouns, etc.

Such diversity of phatic communication manifestations makes it possible to claim that phatics is formed already at the stage of emergence of communicative intention and obtains manifestation not by certain language means but in methods of text organization which are specific to each sphere of communication-compositional-stylistic forms (tonalities and genres).

'...Realization of specific typical goal settings defines the typical content of speech acts and therefore, the peculiarities of selection of various-level linguistic means' (Salimovskij, 2002).

In other words, phatics is a pre-speech phenomenon, dealing with goal setting which is the main factor of genre forming. The main purpose of phatics is to speak about things in a manner listeners want to hear that is to make the atmosphere of mutual intercourse pleasant.

**Theoretical background:** Initially phatics is understood as contact making which limits the sphere of its manifestation to common everyday speech discourse and dialogic speech in fiction (Vinokur, 1993b; Dementev, 1997, 2006; Formanovskaya, 2006; Bykovskaya, 2003). Latest researches enable us to formulate a wider understanding of phatics (Gushchina,

2006; Zaiceva, 2004; Samojlenko, 2010; Soldatova, 2009; Fedotova, 2004; Chernik, 2002) and phatic intentionality, stating that it is a fully independent phenomenon partially opposed to informativity and existing in line with it, in mass media as well (Andreeva, 2006; Duskaeva *et al.*, 2011; Duskaeva, 2015c; Klyuev, 1996; Fedosyuk, 2000; Chepkina, 2000; Chernyshova, 2004, 2007).

In modern researches (Zajceva, 2012; Samoylenko, 2010; Soldatova, 2009), phatics is understood wider than just establishing a contact; it also concerns testing a contact and maintaining it throughout the communication. Consequently, we may talk of phatic intentionality which is presented by the following specific goal settings: establishing a contact, arranging it, keeping it going, testing it, destruction of a contact, breaking it with plans for further keeping in touch. These goal settings are relevant exactly for media discourse due to its specifications as well as for PR communication. PR communication as activity aims at facilitating:

Establishing understanding and goodwill between a person or an organization and other people, groups of people or society on the whole through spreading explanatory material, information exchange growth, estimation of social reaction (Chumikov and Bocharov, 2003).

Taking into consideration the above mentioned classic definition, one can substantially claim that phatic intentionality is in demand in PR communication and may be a basis for the formation of a specific genre style.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The examination of empirical material enables to identify proper phatic genres of PR communication (congratulation, invitation, by-liner, letter) standing out in a marked contrast among other PR genres. While the majority of PR texts are characterized by the lack of subjectivity and emotionality of exposition, by reserved evaluation, by impact on the addressee through the choice of facts, phatic genres on the contrary are oriented at personal intercourse, imitation of the subject-subject speech interaction, establishing and maintenance of contact with addressee and displaying unity with him. Dominant communicative intention is to establish and maintain speech communication between the PR subject and the target audience. Let us consider some of the above mentioned genres.

Ontologically congratulation arises in everyday communication and belongs to ritual genres. The structure of congratulation is strictly defined, however, while in everyday communication the realization of congratulation genre is sufficiently expressed by means

of such structural components as address, formulation of reason and wishes for a PR text it is important to supplement this structure with a narrative part which emphasizes the addressee's significance and his contribution to the common cause. In congratulation the focus is fully shifted from the addresser to the addressee of the communication and phatic intention becomes dominant: artificially polite, respectful appeal to target audience aims at establishing and sustaining of contact, raising the social status of the addressee. Congratulation is characterized by festive tonality with the addressee's significance possibly being exaggerated in a stating part. The essential part of PR congratulation is evaluating intention. Likewise in other genres of PR communication rising publicity capital of PR subject, this is a meliorative evaluation.

As a PR-genre, congratulation may be addressed towards either a social group united on the basis of professional activity or common interests or to a separate person a well-known public man or an ordinary staff member of organization that is characteristic of corporative editions.

Compositional conceptual blocks comprising the formation of congratulation are the following: address, defining the target audience of congratulation (1); nomination of the event as a reason of congratulation itself (2); stating part where addressee's virtues are displayed (3); wishes as being a peculiarity of a congratulation genre (4); the signature under congratulation (5).

Conceptual blocks (1) and (5) being frame components of a text reflect a display of phatic intention of the text in etiquette speech genres. Address (1), having a contact establishing function, may be expressed through a variety of linguistic means. Depending on the goal setting of the author's text, linguistic means express different distance between subjects of communication: dear colleges, dear friends, etc. The second conceptual block denotes the event as a reason of publication. Congratulate with accompanying nomination of event (2) is a indispensable formula which brings well known informality in situation of communication, sustaining and keeping safe the established contact. Through maintaining and enforcement of a contact (3) characteristic of PR communication meliorative evaluation is expressed due to strong qualifications and well coordinated work, dedicated work and professionalism, reliability and responsibility, social stability, etc. Special wishes to addressee (4), being the essential part of congratulation genre, express its main goal setting. As a rule, this unit is rather typical but if author brings more originality to his congratulation, the more unique and original congratulation will be, the greater significance it

will have for addressee. As the main intention of genre is phatic-purpose to establish kind atmosphere of interaction, sustaining contact with target audience or further intercourse it is very important to find the right words, especially if congratulation is personal.

Since, one of the main goal settings of PR communication is to establish peer dialogue between the subjects of communication to create, sustain and maintain contact, means of phatics are realized in PR not only in separate genre forms but also in informative texts and in professional PR genres.

Let us examine functioning of phatics in by-liners-an address to outside or inner public to create or maintain the image of organization. There are event-related and periodic by-liners. The reason to issue an event-related by-liner could be some news event, informing of which helps to hold positive image of company and enhance public trust in it. Periodic by-liners are an essential part of each issue of corporative publication coming ahead of feature articles.

A by-liner serves in the first place to create contact with audience, shorten the distance between top management staff and subordinates or a whole company and outer audience by means of indirectly expressed evaluation to establish the positive image of a company to enhance a managing director's status. As a rule, this genre is presented in form of an appeal article signed by the managing director of an enterprise. Personal address to tenacity of target audience in a pointed manner is supported with such components as a photo or facsimile signature of the official on whose behalf the text is published.

Let us refer to the example (available from the official website of sport festival of PJSC Gazprom (<http://www.gazpromsportakiada.ru/index.php?id=1211>). Publication date: August 2013). Greeting of Alexey Miller, the Chairman of the Management Committee of PJSC Gazprom.

Dear participants and guests of the 10th summer sport festival of PJSC Gazprom! On behalf of the Management Committee of Gazprom and personally myself I congratulate you with the start of these competitions.

This summer Kazan played as the host of the summer World Universiade. Now we shall together witness one more significant event a sport festival of PJSC Gazprom. This will be a real sports holiday. Almost 2.5 thousands of children and adults will take part in competitions.

Sport rears person's very best qualities: tenacity of purpose, determination, ability for team working. These qualities help staff members of Gazprom to gain victories not only on the sport but also in the professional

ground. And in the younger generation sport competitions develop skills for leadership, adherence to healthy lifestyle.

It has become a good tradition for Gazprom to take an active part in support and promotion of mass sports. For the last 6 years about one thousand of sport projects have been built and reconstructed in the framework of the program 'Gazprom for children' >90 thousands of children have receive the opportunity to go in for favorite sport every day.

We believe it is important to go on with this work in future both on corporative and nation-wide levels. I wish all members of the 10th summer sport festival sport ardor, good luck new achievements and to spectators positive emotions and vivid impressions.

In the given example the next semantic units are extracted: the title, expressing a genre characteristic of the text; the address with an emphasis on the personal form of communication to the targeted audience; the stating part that includes naming of the event, perception of it among similar ones, reasoning rationale of the importance of the event, a prospective characteristic with promise to precede with started projects; the wish that functionally breaks the contact and simultaneously encourages further communication interaction. Phatic intentionality in this text is expressed in imitation of subject-subject communication that is intensified by inclusion of the head officer's personal name and direct address to the public (establishment of contact). Enforcement and support of contact are possible because of personalization of communication that is emphasized through the use of first person pronouns we believe it is important and the reflexive pronoun myself, second person pronouns congratulate you, formulas of identification together with you we shall together witness first person verbal forms I congratulate, wish the adverb with semantic belonging of action to the speaker on behalf of myself. There are exclamation constructions in the text that underline emotional agitation of the speaker and are considerably used to enforce the contact with the reader: dear participants and guests of the 10th summer sport festival of PJSC Gazprom! It is of interest that although, the event described in the by-liner does not directly deal with the organization's activities, it still can meet a response among people: the organization of sport competitions for the common good is raising the company's publicite capital. The main communicative intention of the researchers of the publication is formulation of positive image of the company and auspicious intercourse with would-be consumers of the product.

Likewise other PR genres that of a by-liner requires optimistic communication tonality to deal with

public. Meliorative evaluation and redundant emphasis on importance of PR subject in organization of event is carried out in reserved and formal manner. We should point out the angle of the event presentation in the contents: it comes along exclusively in connection with the organization. In speech form we point out, firstly, words with positive evaluation connotation significant event, real holiday, good tradition, believe to be important, superlatives the very best qualities, secondly, words without any stylistic meaning in the language but indicating approved with people notions tenacity of purpose, determination, ability for team working to gain strive for victories develop skills for leadership.

The importance of phatic intentionality in a by-liner text is detected in the way the contact is broken: social stroking of target audience creates friendly atmosphere of communication and intention for further contact.

The genre that combines realization of informative and phatic intention is invitation. The semantic center of genre is information about the event; phatic goalsetting is accomplished through the way a text is organized in which depending on an event and target audience, diverse language means are in demand. For example ([jf.spbu.ru/tema/211-8410.html](http://jf.spbu.ru/tema/211-8410.html). publication data June 2014):

- Graduates!
- Formal presentation of diplomas to the graduates will be held on the second of July. Come, let's embrace each other!
- Time schedule
  - 11:30, the hall-gathering of the graduates. Photo session
  - 12:00, room 603-baccalaureate, Journalism: full-time tuition, full-time and postal tuition (second higher education)
  - 12:10, room 203-specialty journalism: full-time and postal tuition, postal tuition, parallel tuition
  - 12:15, room 102-specialty public relations (full-time and postal tuition), specialty advertising, baccalaureate advertising and public relations (full-time-postal tuition, second higher education)
  - 12:30, room 403-magistracy journalism and advertising and public relations
  - 14:00 library-congratulation of the students who graduated with honors
  - 15:00 the end of the ceremony

Compositional-semantic units of invitation: address; nomination of the event, accompanied with etiquette formula of invitation; expanded stating part that includes the details of the event.

**Table 1: Phatic intentionality in PR communication**

Goal setting	Way of realization
Establishing of a contact	Greeting (genre depends on the addressee) Presentation (reasons of address) Address, especially personal (genre depends on the addressee)
Sustaining of a contact	Dialogical composition of a text Formulas of identification (us, together with you)
Breaking a contact with an aim of further communication	Farewell, wish Invitation to cooperation (genre depends on the addressee) Contact information, signature (genre depends on the addressee)

In this example the invitation is exaggeratedly informal because it aims at establishing the contact with students; exclamatory constructions provide emotionality to the text and serve to create high spirits. The etiquette formula of invitation is drawing attention to itself (come, let's embrace each other!). It establishes informal friendly tonality of communication, shortens the distance between the addresser and the audience. This interpretation of the event is unexpended for academic environment for the intercourse of teachers and students and establishes powerful contact-setting potential of the text on the whole. The informative part of the text contains answers to the questions: what will happen (invitation is a genre with future perspective), when it will happen, what are peculiarities of the would-be event. Each answer to a hypothetical question of the addressee is formed in a separate paragraph for easier understanding.

Creative approach in writing invitations always attracts attention of the targeted audience and undoubtedly serves to fulfill the main genre goalsetting-entering intercourse and providing attention to the event.

Analysis of empiric materials allows to state that phatic genres in PR communication realize such goal settings which combine them into a separate genre style. Let us present phatic intentionality and means of its realization in PR communication in Table 1.

Phatic speech naturally enters the structure of PR-communication. Phatic intentionality, co-existing and co-acting with informative intentionality, corresponds to the main PR goal settings, its employment helps to solve tasks of PR communication more effectively.

PR requires phatics as a form of presenting information: in independent genres by means of including of speech phatic genres into the structure of professional genres in realization of particular intentions. Phatic intentionality is directed at establishing friendly atmosphere of intercourse, shortening the distance between addressee and addresser. It imitates subject-subject communication, builds up personalization and targeting performance of communication. All this serves the aim of realization of main trend of communication-establishing and fixing in public mind the positive image of PR subject.

It is precisely the above listed peculiarities of phatic communication that are valued most of all and present an

effective way in solving tasks of effective communication in conditions of modern development of mass media speech practice.

## CONCLUSION

In the study each of them is given stylistic and intentional analysis. Particular intentions of phatic intentionality in PR communication are the following: setting up the contact with the reader or listener, supporting the contact, breaking the contact but aiming to continue the communication. Speech resources used to realize each particular intention are represented in Table 1.

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