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Role of Mass Information Communications in Contemporary Society

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ABSTRACT

Mass information communications — legacy mass media, digital journalism, social platforms, and hybrid media systems — have become a constitutive environment for contemporary social life. From a philological standpoint, their societal role is mediated not only by institutions and technologies, but by texts, genres, discursive strategies, and value-laden linguistic choices that shape public relevance, collective identities, and interpretive frameworks. This article synthesizes communication theory (agenda-setting, framing, mediatization) with discourse-analytic and media-linguistic approaches to show how language functions as a key mechanism through which media perform social functions: informational, integrative, normative, and cultural-symbolic. Methodologically, the paper proposes a multi-level model for analyzing media influence as discursive production of social reality, combining critical discourse analysis, genre analysis, and multimodal attention to digital affordances (hyperlinks, hashtags, visual-verbal coupling). Results are presented as a set of recurring philological patterns in contemporary mass communication: (1) salience-making through lexical and syntactic foregrounding; (2) evaluative framing via nominations, metaphors, and presuppositions; (3) hybridization of genres and registers (news–opinion–entertainment convergence); (4) intensified intertextuality and quote economies; (5) platform-shaped compression and memetic stylization. The

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discussion argues that media power in modern societies is increasingly exercised as semiotic governance: steering attention, normalizing interpretive schemes, and circulating value hierarchies through textual forms. The paper concludes with implications for philological research and media literacy education.

Keywords: mass communication; media discourse; media linguistics; philology; framing; agenda-setting; mediatization; critical discourse analysis; genre hybridity; multimodality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mass information communications in the 21st century should be understood less as a sector (“the media”) and more as a dense communicative infrastructure: it organizes public attention, distributes socially authoritative descriptions of events, and supplies languages for interpreting reality. Communication theory has long treated media as a source of effects (e.g., what media do to attitudes). Yet contemporary environments — algorithmic feeds, influencer-driven news, “platform publics,” and accelerating cycles of outrage and mobilization — make it difficult to separate “media influence” from the discursive construction of the social itself.

A philological approach foregrounds a basic claim: media do not simply transmit information; they produce textually organized meanings. Their societal functions are enacted through how events are named, which actors are granted agency, what is presupposed as common sense, and which genres are used to authorize interpretation. The “role” of mass information communications therefore includes a linguistic dimension: the continuous production of culturally recognizable discourse patterns that stabilize (or destabilize) social categories such as “us/them,” “normal/deviant,” “truth/propaganda,” or “crisis/recovery.”

Classic media research shows that salience and interpretation are central mechanisms. Agenda-setting argues that media influence what audiences treat as important by making issues salient (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing theory stresses

that media texts select and highlight aspects of reality to promote problem definitions, causal attributions, moral evaluations, and remedies (Entman, 1993). Mediatization research shifts the lens: media are not an external force acting on society but a long-term transformation where social institutions and everyday life become increasingly shaped by mediated communication (Couldry & Hepp, 2013).

From a philological standpoint, these theories become analytically productive when translated into text-centered questions: Which linguistic resources make something salient? Which narrative and evaluative forms construct frames? How do platform constraints reshape genres and styles? This article addresses these questions by integrating theoretical perspectives and proposing a methodological model for philological analysis of mass information communications in contemporary society.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Agenda-setting research provides a foundational insight: the prominence of issues in news correlates with perceived public importance. McCombs & Shaw's empirical study remains a key point of departure for understanding media as a system of attention allocation. For philology, the value lies in operationalizing "prominence" in linguistic terms: repetition, headline placement, lexical foregrounding, thematic structure, and rhetorical summarization.

Framing theory complements this by explaining not only what becomes salient but how it becomes meaningful. Entman's definition — selection and salience serving problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral judgment, and remedy suggestion — has become standard. Philological work links framing to lexical choice ("migrant" vs "illegal"), metaphor ("flood," "invasion"), syntactic agency (active vs passive constructions), and evaluative modality (certainty markers, evidentials).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) treats discourse as socially consequential: power relations and ideologies become naturalized through recurring textual patterns. Van Dijk's principles of CDA emphasize focus on dominance, inequality, and the

sociopolitical stance of analysis. Carvalho's framework for "media(ted) discourse" integrates textual analysis with contextual dimensions and proposes comparative strategies (synchronic/diachronic, inter-media comparisons) for linking discourse to social embeddedness. Van Dijk's work on news discourse and ideology further demonstrates how topics, coherence, lexicalization, and implication structures can encode ideological polarization.

These approaches are especially relevant because contemporary "mass information communications" include both institutional journalism and participatory production, where ideological patterns circulate through reposts, quotes, screenshots, and memetic fragments.

Couldry & Hepp conceptualize mediatization as an orienting concept for communication theory, highlighting broad consequences for social organization under pervasive media. For philology, mediatization matters because it predicts transformations in public language: compression of argumentation, acceleration of intertextuality, intensified personalization, and platform-calibrated style.

Russian scholarship has developed "медиалингвистика" as a systematic approach to studying language in mass media. Dobrosklonskaya's doctoral dissertation (2000) formalized theoretical and methodological foundations for media linguistics (on English-language material) and explicitly addressed media functions in the information society. Later, Dobrosklonskaya & Zhang (2015) discuss the institutionalization of media linguistics and its research directions in Russia and abroad.

Philological dissertations have also examined media discourse as a site for cultural values and identity boundaries. For example, Grechikhin (2008) analyzes "language of intolerance" in Russian media and ties it to the "own/other" opposition as a cultural-semantic mechanism. Buryakovskaya (2014) studies communicative characteristics of mass culture in Russian- and English-language media discourse, highlighting axiology and communicative strategies. Contemporary journal articles expand the scope to digital media practices and value-oriented integration in communication, including axiological studies of media integration (Valyulina & Milyukova, 2025).

Existing research richly describes media effects, frames, ideologies, and mediatization. The gap addressed here is integrative and philological: a structured model of how mass information communications perform societal roles through textual and genre mechanisms across hybrid media environments. This article contributes: a multi-level analytic model connecting societal functions to linguistic-discursive mechanisms; a synthesis of English-language communication/discourse studies with Russian media-linguistic traditions; a results section specifying recurring philological patterns of contemporary mass communication.

III. METHODS

This is a theoretical-analytic study with a methodological proposal. It does not present a single-corpus quantitative experiment; rather, it systematizes findings from discourse and media-linguistic scholarship into an operational model usable for philological research and teaching.

The key analytical unit is the media text in an expanded sense: not only a news article but also headlines, push notifications, short video captions, hashtags, quote-tweets, and comment threads as part of a communicative complex. This aligns with media-linguistic understandings of media text as a semiotically heterogeneous sequence (verbal + visual + audio).

The proposed philological model analyzes the role of mass information communications through four interconnected levels:

Level 1: Linguistic micro-level (lexico-grammatical choices)

- nomination and categorization (labels for actors/events)
- agency and transitivity (who acts, who is acted upon)
- modality and evidentiality (certainty, sources, hearsay)
- evaluation (loaded adjectives, intensifiers, pejoratives/euphemisms)

Level 2: Textual-meso level (cohesion, argumentation, narrative templates)

- headline–lead alignment and summarizing strategies
- presuppositions and implicatures
- metaphorical scenarios (crisis-as-war, politics-as-game)
- narrative roles (heroes/victims/villains; “ordinary people” voice)

Level 3: Genre and register level (institutional and hybrid forms)

- news/opinion/analysis boundaries and their erosion
- infotainment and personalization
- dialogization (interviews, “explainer” genres, Q&A, listicles)

Level 4: Platform and multimodal level (digital affordances)

- hyperlinking and intertextual chains
- hashtagging as indexing and stance-taking
- visual-verbal anchoring (images, screenshots, meme templates)
- algorithmic salience (platform-driven circulation patterns)

This framework operationalizes “salience” (agenda-setting) and “interpretive schemas” (framing) in philological terms, and links them to mediatization as a macro-condition.

The model is triangulated against established discourse-analytic principles: CDA’s attention to power/inequality (van Dijk), and Carvalho’s integration of textual and contextual dimensions for media discourse.

IV. RESULTS. PHILOLOGICAL PATTERNS OF MASS INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

A consistent result across media environments is that “importance” is discursively manufactured. Agenda-setting becomes visible in philological terms through:

- headline economy (compressed, high-impact lexical choices);
- repetition across formats (headline + push notification + social post);

- foregrounding devices: enumeration, contrastive pairs, superlatives;
- topic chaining: sustained prominence via recurring thematic series.

In classic agenda-setting terms, media shape “what to think about.” Philologically, this is achieved via textual prominence: repeated naming, stable collocations (“energy crisis,” “migration wave”), and template-like headline constructions that normalize issues as enduring social objects.

Framing becomes linguistically observable when texts:

- select a problem definition by naming (“protest” vs “riot”);
- attribute causality through agency encoding (active voice foregrounds responsibility; passive voice obscures it);
- deliver moral evaluation via lexical polarity, metaphors, and presuppositions;
- suggest remedies using deontic modality (“must,” “should,” “need to”).

Entman’s four framing functions — problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, remedy — map cleanly onto these textual mechanisms.

A stable media-discursive pattern is the construction of social groups through pronominal and lexical binaries:

- “we/our people/taxpayers” vs “they/outsidere/elites”
- positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (common CDA pattern)

Van Dijk’s approach to ideology in news emphasizes how topics, lexicalization, and implication structures can reproduce ideological schemata. Russian philological work similarly shows how media discourse can intensify the “свой — чужой” opposition and encode intolerance through language choices and evaluative schemas.

Contemporary mass communication increasingly blends genres:

- news adopts interpretive and affective registers (“what it means,” “why it matters”)
- analysis becomes personalized (authorial stance, identity performance)
- entertainment registers enter informational products (irony, meme references)

This hybridity is not merely stylistic; it changes the social role of media by transforming public information into identity-oriented, value-signaling discourse. Russian media-linguistic research treats such shifts as central to the development of the discipline and its objects.

Another result is intensified intertextuality: media texts increasingly function as nodes in chains of citation:

- embedding “what others said” (screenshots, quotes, links)
- rapid uptake and recontextualization (a phrase becomes a headline becomes a meme)

This produces a social effect: authority is redistributed. The role of mass information communications becomes less about issuing a single authoritative account and more about orchestrating a contest of voices — often while still steering interpretive frames through selection and sequencing (Carvalho’s text–context integration is directly relevant here).

Digital platforms enforce constraints: character limits, vertical video formats, thumbnail logic, and algorithmic competition. Philologically, this encourages:

- compression of causality (“X because Y”) into slogans;
- affective markers and intensifiers;
- formulaic rhetorical questions;
- hashtag stance markers that function as evaluative tags.

The result is that public discourse becomes more “portable”: fragments circulate faster than arguments. Under mediatization, this is a structural condition of contemporary social communication, not an occasional distortion.

Beyond information, media distribute values — what counts as admirable, shameful, threatening, normal. Axiological analyses in Russian scholarship explicitly treat media integration and digital community discourse as value-oriented interaction. Philologically, axiology appears in:

- evaluative lexicon (positive/negative adjectives; moral vocabulary)
- narrative roles (victim/culprit/rescuer)
- normalization through repeated evaluative frames

Thus, the societal role of mass information communications includes value governance — the circulation and reinforcement of norms through language.

V. DISCUSSION

The results support a shift from “effects” to “production.” Media influence is not only a matter of persuasion after exposure; it is also the continuous production of: public objects (issues that “exist” socially because they are named and tracked), public actors (figures stabilized through repeated descriptions), public emotions (affective repertoires: fear, outrage, hope), public morality (evaluation templates). Agenda-setting and framing describe key mechanisms; philology specifies how they operate textually.

CDA emphasizes that discourse contributes to dominance and inequality, and that analysis must link micro-textual patterns to macro-social structures. In contemporary mass information communications, power is increasingly exercised as semiotic governance: governing attention (what is seen), governing interpretation (what counts as the “right” reading), governing affect (what to fear, mock, admire), governing legitimacy (who is credible). This is consistent with approaches that integrate textual and contextual analysis of media discourse.

Under mediatization, public discourse becomes more dependent on media forms and platforms. For philology, this means: studying not only language but language-in-

platform-forms; treating genre as dynamic and hybrid; expanding the object of analysis to include multimodal fragments and intertextual chains. Russian media linguistics explicitly argues for such expansion and for a systematic approach to “language of media” as a distinct field.

If mass information communications shape society through discursive mechanisms, then media literacy should include philological competencies: detecting nomination strategies and euphemisms, identifying agency manipulation (who is made responsible), distinguishing information from evaluation, reconstructing presuppositions and missing premises, recognizing genre cues and hybrid persuasion. This turns philology into an applied civic discipline without abandoning its core: rigorous textual interpretation.

VI. CONCLUSION

This article argued that the role of mass information communications in contemporary society is fundamentally discursive. Media act not only as channels of information but as producers of socially binding meanings through language, genre, and multimodal textual design. By integrating agenda-setting, framing, mediatization, CDA, and media linguistics, the paper proposed a multi-level philological model for analyzing how media perform societal functions: allocating attention, structuring interpretation, circulating values, and producing identity boundaries.

Key conclusions:

- Salience and importance are textually engineered through repetition, headline logic, and thematic chaining.
- Frames are constructed via nomination, agency encoding, evaluation, and presupposition patterns.
- Media power in modern societies increasingly operates as semiotic governance, consistent with CDA’s focus on discourse and dominance.
- Under mediatization, platform constraints accelerate genre hybridity and fragment circulation, requiring expanded philological objects of study.

- Russian media-linguistic traditions provide robust tools for treating media language as a systematic field and for connecting media texts to cultural axiology.

Future research can operationalize the proposed model on comparable corpora (news sites, Telegram channels, TikTok news formats, TV transcripts) using mixed methods: corpus linguistics for salience patterns and qualitative discourse analysis for framing/axiology.

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