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The category of “evidentiality” as a tool for transmitting rumors in the English-language media discourse

Abstract

A detailed study of the source of information as well as the nature of the transmitted information is currently in great demand in various fields of Humanities. This paper considers the modus category of “evidentiality” responsible for the source of information and its nature. The aim is to describe the specifics of referring to the category of “evidentiality” in the process of transmitting rumors in the space of the English-language mass media discourse. The material for the study included 1000 evidential statements representing media rumors of the “celebrity gossip” category published in electronic versions of British newspapers in 2023; definitions from Cambridge Dictionary, Collins Online Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries were also used. The proximity of the structure of evidential statements and statements with the meaning of “rumors” enabled to identify various types of categories based on the author’s communicative attitudes, prototypical features of the concept of “rumour”, features of the presentation of the source of information as well as the interpretation of the transmitted information: authentic (20.9%), authoritative (20.5%), perceptual (34.1%) and emphatic evidentiality (24.5%). It was found that the author’s appeal to a particular type of evidentiality of rumors depends on their communicative intentions and determines the perception of information by the final addressee / reader. With the help of the evidentiality of rumors, the author informs / convinces / causes the desired emotional reaction / entertains the reader of rumors. The offered classification helps differentiate rumors from other information updated with the help of evidential semantics.

Keywords: evidentiality type, evidential semantics, mass media discourse, media rumors, functional load expansion, evidentiality operator

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