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The identity representation of a Russian politician: a comparative analysis of two interviews

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the interviews of two government officials – both ministers (of education and defence) at the time the interview was conducted – and how they (de)construct their institutional and professional identities in their discourses. The analysis is based on the distinction of the voices present in the discourse. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is used to determine which of the voices (and identities) is most vividly presented in the interviews. For this purpose, modality, discourse markers and positive connotations are also explored. In conclusion, the paper establishes a connection between the cultural background of the speakers, the use of voices and the reader's perception of those voices. Obviously, the general tone (friendly or aggressive) of discourse depends on how the voices are distributed. A stronger politician's personality is more efficiently constructed through his identification with the institution of power and less frequent reference to the voice of the 'other'.

Key words: agents, voices, identity, connotation, modality, cultural background

1. Introduction: general overview of the research

The purpose of this paper is to study a discursive representation of the institutional and professional identities of government officials. The research is based on the comparative analysis of two interviews published in the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* (*Известия*) at the end of 2010. Both interviewees are ministers (male) who summarize the results of the reforms carried out in their professional areas (defence and education); the discourses of these interviews have an identical communicative goal. As the interviews have many similar characteristics, they are appropriate for a comparative study. The first interview is given by Anatoliy Serdukov who has been the

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Russian minister of defence since 2007. His term was renewed in the government formed by President Putin in May 2012. The other interviewee, Andrey Fursenko, was Russia's minister of education from 2004 to 2012. These ministers were both considered the least popular ministers (see, for instance: the newspaper *Anapa-Pro*, http://anapa-pro.com/category/3/article/29; http://большоеправительство.рф/press/1570/; http://www.bfm.ru/news/2012/04/11/zjuganov-obrugal-serdjukova-i-fursenko.html; Internet discussions: http://otvet.mail.ru/question/53952576/) because of numerous problems and unsuccessful reforms in their professional areas. Although there are some differences between these speakers in terms of age and their birthplace (Fursenko was born in 1949 in St. Petersburg, then Leningrad, the intellectual centre of the country; Serdukov was born in 1962 in a small southern village), their interviews are still a reliable basis upon which to draw conclusions about the linguistic tools used in identity (de)construction and about the effects of these linguistic tools on the reader.

I attempt to analyze the construction of these two politicians' identity by singling out the voices in the discourse of their interviews. This method is well known among those who are interested in critical discourse analysis (CDA) and who are aware of the necessity to begin identity research by distinguishing the participants (that is, the voices) and the nature of the relationship between them (Fairclough 2003). In an identity study about speeches using qualitative and quantitative analysis, Van de Mieroop (2005: 110) observes that the "voices are the social agents in an interaction, the people who are present in the setting and who construct identities. The voices are identified on the basis of the reflection of their presence in the text". Inability to distinguish voices can lead to a limited interpretation of numerous meanings.

According to Joseph (2004: 4), group or individual identities "function distinctly enough on the deictic (pointing) or name level". Voices are distinguished through the deictic use, which is the use of pronouns "relevant for all kinds of different angles of identity study" (Mieroop 2005: 111) and which is important for expressing "positioning in the narrative" (Dyer & Keller-Cohen 2000: 292). Pronouns and other meaningful linguistic tools can be conveniently used in quantitative methods. In this particular research, the frequency distribution percentage of pronouns and other noticeable repetitions is calculated. The statistical data illustrate which voice is the most active and help to conclude how it affects the narration. After having discerned voices and having analyzed the use of modality, connotations, various syntactic constructions, and discourse markers, I correlate these findings with the discerned voices and draw conclusions about the tone of narration and the identity (de)construction of both speakers. Remarks

are made about the effect of these voices on the reader. Interestingly, these conclusions coincide with Russian people's perceptions of these politicians (vividly expressed on www.youtube.ru).

While trying to reach the objective of this research – which is to describe the representation of two Russian politicians' identities in the discourse of the interview and to analyze the communicative effect which the linguistic tools of identity (de)construction produce on reader – a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used.

While translating the examples from Russian into English, I tried to preserve the distribution of voices, structures and other characteristics typical of Russian language. That is why in some translations into English there might have been other, more standard, translation choices. However, to my mind, preserving the Russianness of the examples helps to better illustrate some points of discussion.

2. On identity and discourse

There are numerous studies of various kinds of identity and their representation in discourse. The notion of *identity* is of paramount importance for humanities studies: it can provide researchers with insights into how the behaviour of bilinguals change when they switch from one language to another (Pavlenko 2006); in marketing, it explains how to make goods appeal to people's tastes (that is, to their identities) which may be the most promising route to persuasion (Comello 2009); it is an important tool for understanding the legal system of a nation (Kjær & Palsbro 2008), etc. However, all of these studies have been carried out by Western scholars; unfortunately, Russian academic circles have not paid much attention to the study of identity.

The term *идентичность* (which has become quite fashionable in press) is mostly used by politicians and publicists who seem to have no clear understanding of this term. For example, a chief editor of a Russian magazine claims that this term is often used as a substitute for the term *mentality* (Драгунский 2002); a textbook on intercultural communication defines the term as a human desire to form connections within society and identify oneself with ideas, beliefs and cultures (Садохин 2004). Obviously, the well established connection in the Western academic tradition between this term and the critical discourse analysis, which explores the relationship between the individual and society (for example, Fairclough 2003) is still lacking. This article is an attempt to bring to attention this "missing link" by presenting a discourse analysis of the interviews of government representatives.

Furthermore, the article's objective is to study Russian politicians' identities (professional and institutional) by means of their interviews. Slay & Smith (2011: 85) understand professional identity

"as one's professional self concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences". They distinguish three means of professional identity construction: the process of socialization, adapting to career transitions, and the influences of one's priorities and self-understanding (*id.*). In other studies, it has been noticed that professional identity is often developed and examined within an institutional context in which expertise is shown through the reactions to the events depicted in the narratives (Dyer & Keller-Cohen 2000: 286, 289). From these remarks, it is possible to conclude that professional and institutional identities are tightly bound together. Nevertheless, Mieroop tries to differentiate these two types of identities. In describing the institutional identity, she states that it is constructed when the speaker acts as a mouthpiece of the organization he/she represents and "the company image is the focus of identity construction", whereas speakers construct their professional identity when they present themselves as experts (Mieroop 2005: 108).

However, speakers often become professional experts as they work within and are supported by a particular institution. Cultural background should be taken into consideration in any discourse study as any organization "is essentially a cultural construct" (Trompenaars 2003: 183). Even if there is no discussion about the speakers' cultural identity, culture as a background must be acknowledged. It becomes especially topical when dealing with professionals from cultures characterized by high uncertainty avoidance, defined as "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous and unknown situations" (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005: 167). In Russia, a country with a rather high index of uncertainty avoidance, it is expected that professionals be emotional and may come across "as busy, fidgety, easygoing, emotional, aggressive and suspicious" (*id.* 2005: 172). In addition, Russian people try to avoid unfamiliar risks, which often involve spending their whole career working at the same institution. As a result, their professional and institutional selves are often merged.

3. The analysis of interview 1

3.1. The voices

In discourse voices are manifested through markers expressing "the *self*- and the *other* dimension. By *self* we refer to the author and by *other* to the reader and other persons related in one way or another to the community in question" (Fløttum *et al.* 2008: 14). The analysis of voices in the interviews is based on the selection of the signals expressing the dimension of the speakers (the self) (usually by means of first person pronouns) and of the other (pronouns, nouns) and the

nature of the relationship between them (passive and active verbs, infinitives). The nature of this relationship can be intensified through the use of particles and syntactic structures.

In the first interview given by the minister of defence, Anatoliy Serdukov, four voices are discerned. The speaker makes ample use of pronouns, which often substitute nouns naming professionals involved in his sphere of activity. Table 1 illustrates the statistical results of the meaningful accents:

Unit of analysis (a word)	Quantity (out of 1933 words)	Frequency of representation (in %)
WE (all cases), corresponding forms of a verb	72	3.7 (The WE voice)
I (all cases), corresponding forms of a verb	13	0.7 (The I voice)
YOU (all cases)	6	0.3 (The YOU voice)
HE/SHE (all cases), corresponding forms of a verb	15	0.8
Officer, military man, person on the waiting list, commanding officer, commander	9+6+2+5+1=23	1.2
The OTHER voice	-	2
System (Система)	12	0.6
Must (Должен)	12 (WE, 3)	0.6
May (Можем)	5 (WE, 2)	0.3
MODALITY (TOTAL)	17	0.9
MODALITY, (used with WE voice)	5	29.4
Infinitives	69	3.6
Passive Constructions	14	0.7
Already (Уже)	9	0.5
But (но)	7	0.3

Table 1: the quantitative analysis of the discourse of interview 1

These are the voices of WE (3.7%), OTHER (2%), I (0.7%) and YOU (0.3%). When determining how active each of these voices is, I have also counted those cases when the verb is used without a pronoun as the Russian verb shows the grammatical categories of person, number and gender.

The voice of WE is the most active one. This voice is used to express the institutional identity of the speaker and is important for a

positive perception of a political leader in Russian collectivist society. Serdukov identifies himself with numerous changes taking place in the defence sector and mentions such actions as providing army officers with new apartments free of charge and introducing new management and financing strategies. Out of all the questions, Serdukov begins his answers to 13 questions (76% of his responses) with the pronoun WE. He brings into focus his institutional identity primarily when speaking about reforms (example 1) which he tends to describe as the "system":

(1) *Наша цель* – подготовка нового поколения российских офицеров. …*Мы* сделали перерыв в наборе абитуриентов в военные училища. Это связано с тем, что сейчас есть достаточное число молодых офицеров, которые в ближайшие годы могут и должны служить. *Считаю*, что в этих условиях принимать курсантов, одновременно увольняя офицеров, было бы неправильно.
'*Our aim* is to bring up a new generation of Russian officers. …*We* took a break in accepting new students into military schools. This is connected with the sufficient number of young officers who in the future years *can* and *must* serve in the army. *I think* that in these circumstances it would not be right to accept new students to military schools and at the same time dismiss the officers.'

The I voice can be heard in some parts of the discourse, especially when Serdukov speaks about the success of the changes in his sector. He stresses the professional skills that help him in organizing the reforming process. However, he often expresses his own expert opinion and distinguishes himself as a professional by stepping "out of the institutional role through the frame of the narrative of personal experience" (Dyer & Keller-Cohen 2000: 299). That is why he is voicing his institutional identity together with the professional one (example 1).

To appeal to the addressee and to make his speech more emphatic, Serdukov makes use of the YOU voice (using the informal pronoun '*ты*') (example 2):

(2) Если *ты* служишь, то получаешь по четырехсотому приказу очень приличные деньги. Жильем *обеспечиваем*. Есть стопроцентное укомплектование техникой. Почти стопроцентное – без одного-двух процентов – военнослужащими. Получается: если *ты* выбрал эту профессию, то *служи*. Но здесь *спотыкаемся* о слабую исполнительскую дисциплину – большой бич в армии.
'When *you* serve in the army, *you* get very good money in accordance with the four hundredth order. *We* provide accommodation. There is one-hundred-percent provision of necessary equipment. Almost one-hundred-percent staffing – one or two percent less – with military men. But here *we* stumble over weak discipline – a big scourge in the army.'

The second person singular pronoun is usually used with people we know well (close friends) or when a speaker hierarchically stands higher than his/her listeners (at school this form is used by teachers speaking to their pupils). Similarly, as Fairclough & Wodak (1997) observe, Thatcher used this pronoun in her interview to implicitly claim being "just an ordinary person, like her voters".

Finally, Serdukov frequently reconstructs the voice of the OTHER. It represents a collective image which creates the background against which the professional and institutional identities of the speakers appear most favourably. It is a very important voice in the practice of CDA: "Excluding the voices of the 'other' may lead to constructs or theories that provide limited understanding and predictive ability" (Slay & Smith 2011: 89). This voice shapes the aggregative image of those who prevent Serdukov from coping smoothly with his duties (alienating strategies) (example 3):

(3) Недавно проводили коллегию в Хабаровске. Выслушали доклад *командира армии*, который должен был провести 87 различных мероприятий, а провел всего два. О какой боеготовности и дисциплине можно говорить, если *офицер* не исполняет свои обязанности?
'Recently a military board was held in Khabarovsk. The report of the commanding officer was presented. This commanding officer *should have organized* 87 various activities, but he organized just two. How can one speak about combat readiness and discipline when an *officer* does not fulfil his duties?'

In this interview the WE and OTHER voices are the most vivid ones; the other two voices help the main ones to be heard. The YOU voice is used to create a special friendly tone of the narration.

3.2. Positive connotations and identity deconstruction strategies

The voice of the OTHER helps Serdukov dissociate himself from the processes he does not want to identify with. Usually these are negative events from which he wants to distance himself. Naturally, the pronoun WE is never used in such cases:

> When building institutional identity, the connections between these negative word connotations and the company have to be prevented. The speakers therefore use different subjects: the neutral form *men* (*one*) is used, while the speaker is actually talking about farmers, which are usually referred to by the *we*-form (Mieroop 2005: 122).

The issue of the 'detachment' has been raised in previous CDA studies. Van Dijk, for instance, speaks about 'de-focusing', which

happens when the agent is de-emphasized "by passive constructions and nominalizations; that is, by leaving agency and responsibility implicit" (2003: 359). In media accounts, this approach is applied to make government involvement in certain events less obvious. Van Dijk (2003) mentions the work of Fowler (1979), in which linguistic 'tools' such as the analysis of transitivity in syntax, lexical structure, modality and speech acts are described.

The positive results of the changes in which the defence minister underlines his involvement are intensified with expressions with a permanent positive connotation: *Мы готовы пойти им навстречу* 'We are willing to meet them halfway'; *В этом году мы сделали очень серьезный шаг вперед* 'This year we took a very important step forward'; *На самом деле, когда запускаем любой процесс, стараемся организовать систему* 'Actually when we start any process, we try to organize the system', etc.

Infinitives and perfective verbs naming actions, parallel constructions, grammatically parallel forms showing that two or more ideas or actions are equally important, all these are linguistic tools which emphasize the positive results of the reforms (example 4). Moreover, according to Fairclough & Wodak (1997: 272-273), parallel constructions as a representation of "the large-scale linguistic devices" organizing a speaker's contribution can express a politician's rhetorical power by putting emphasis on certain ideas and drawing the addressee's attention to them. The example below shows how Serdukov stresses his wish to save in the army and connects it with the increased combat readiness of the army:

(4) При желании можно *подсчитать (Infinitive, perfective verb)*, сколько мы *сэкономили (perfective verb)* и на узлах связи, и на самих средствах связи, и на скорости. И как результат - боевая способность армии *увеличилась* (*perfective verb)* на 50 процентов.
'If necessary, one can *calculate* how much we have *saved* on communication sites, and on communication means, and on speed. And, as a result, the combat readiness of the army has *increased* by 50 percent.'

There are a few events Serdukov does not want to be connected with. Two tactics that help the speaker to alienate himself from these processes have been established in this discourse.

The first way in which Serdukov deconstructs his own institutional identity is the use of the pronoun YOU (example 2). In this example the defence minister stresses that he provides army officers with everything they need. However, he is not connected with the weak discipline that others (officers and commanders) cannot maintain. Though YOU is a separate voice through which the speaker tries to appeal to some of his target audience, Serdukov does not use this voice to construct his

institutional identity. It seems that the YOU voice, similar to the voice of the OTHER, is used to create a background (or a contrast) for intensifying Serdukov's valuable input into the process. The voice of the OTHER is a very efficient tool in those parts of the discourse in which the speaker wants to disconnect himself from negative events. Through this voice a number of association chains are created: "speaker – WE – fight for positive changes" and "commander – OTHERS – conflicts" (example 5):

(5) Сейчас это чистое хулиганство (дедовщина, прим. – И.Х.), уголовно наказуемое преступление, с которым *мы* боролись и будем бескомпромиссно бороться. Здесь важно, чтобы *командир* находился в подразделении, выполнял свои обязанности в полном объеме. Тогда никаких конфликтов быть не может по определению.
'Nowadays this is obvious hooliganism (*violence against younger conscripts in the army*), which is prosecuted by the law and which *we* have been and will be fighting uncompromisingly. In this case it is important for the *commander* to be in his division and to fulfil his duties diligently. Then, by definition, there will not be any conflicts.'

The contrasts (example 5) stress Serdukov's remarkable role in the military reform and are made obvious through the reference to the image of the enemy who prevents Serdukov from fulfilling his plans smoothly. While giving the interview, the speaker invokes such contrasts several times. They make it clear to the reader that the others do things which the speaker does not approve (example 6). The narration reveals that the others know less and are less skilled than Serdukov. Here, both professional (intensified with the I voice) and institutional identities are presented in discourse:

(6) Система военного образования нуждается в серьезной реформе. Когда *я* начал посещать училища, то *увидел*, как относятся к будущим офицерам. *Я* понял: у такого офицера служба не вызовет ничего, кроме ненависти и отвращения. *Тебя держат в казарме, строят, гоняют.*
'The system of military education requires serious reform. When *I* began to visit military schools, *I* saw how future officers were treated. *I* understood that this officer could feel nothing but hate and disgust towards army service. *You* are *held in barracks*, you are *formed up* and *chased.*'

The use of passive constructions and the introduction of an abstract agent are also efficient means of identity deconstruction (examples 6, 7):

(7) В этом году мы сделали очень серьезный шаг вперед – создали единую очередь военнослужащих. Раньше *учет велся* по

разным направлениям, главкоматам, округам, *что* создавало сложности в учете бесквартирных.
'This year we made a very important step forward – we created a single line for all the military personnel (*waiting to be provided with an apartment*). Before various areas *were taken* into consideration, such as central authority divisions or regional divisions, *which* made it difficult to estimate those who needed to be provided with accommodation.'

Serdukov expresses the idea that he had nothing to do with the way in which officers were previously provided with housing (example 7). However, Serdukov has been the defence minister since 2007 and it is difficult to imagine him not having been involved in this process.

There is one more interesting tool which helps the speaker to use the voice of the OTHER and at the same time make his discourse more vivid. It is the use of rhetorical questions. Sometimes it is not clear whom Serdukov asks these questions. However, the fact that he acknowledges some problematic issues with the help of rhetorical questions makes a positive impression on the reader (example 8):

(8) Отменять мы ничего не будем. Что касается демографических проблем, то они, безусловно, есть и мы их будем учитывать. *Как решать эту проблему?* Думаю, если финансовое положение страны позволит, то мы попытаемся все-таки вернуться к теме контрактной армии.
'We will not cancel anything. Concerning the demographic problems, they exist, of course, and we will take them into consideration. *How to solve this problem?* I think, if the financial situation in the country allows, we will try to return to the discussion of a contract-based army.'

The discourse of this interview demonstrates several subtle tactics of alienation which help the speaker to disconnect from some negative events he does not want to be identified with. One of these is the use of passive constructions or of an abstract agent (YOU, for example). All these alienation methods are constructed with the help of the voice of the OTHER – an aggregate image of the enemy or some kind of an obstacle keeping the speaker from fulfilling all his plans efficiently.

3.3. Modality and discourse markers

In Russian modality is usually expressed by mood, intonation, particles, modal words which express speaker's attitude towards the discussed issue, notional verbs (explicit expression of modality), an unusual word-order, or by other semantic structures (implicit expression of modality). In this interview, modality is expressed explicitly by means of the verb *должен* (must). In a way, the Russian reader – a representative of a high-power distance culture – expects and

even welcomes an overt expression of obligation from a representative of authority – in this case, military power. However, in some cases modality is softened by the use of *может* (*may* – for possibility). In all, there are 17 cases of obvious modality expression. Out of all these cases, only 5 are connected directly with the WE voice. However, the strong modality expression is rather infrequent and does not change the tone of the interview into that of a military order.

The comparison of the two interviews shows that to understand the tone of the narration, it is important to locate the receiver of the modality, *i.e.* it is important to distinguish who must do something. In those cases, when the receiver of the modality is the representative of the OTHER voice, the discourse acquires an aggressive connotation (example 3). Serdukov connects 25% of MUST cases with either of his identities. The other cases refer to the system of crediting, officers, and field engineers. A strong obligation can be softened by the verb *могут* 'they can' making it sound like this: young officers must serve in the army because it is their own choice (example 9):

(9) Это связано с тем, что сейчас есть *достаточное число молодых офицеров*, которые в ближайшие годы *могут* и *должны* служить.
'This is connected with the fact that there is now a *sufficient number of young officers* who in future years *can / are / will be able to* and *must* serve in the army.'

It seems noteworthy to say a few words about the discourse markers which express speakers' attitudes towards the described events. Discourse markers often inform the reader about the nature of the relations between the characters of the discourse. In general, discourse markers can be considered an important means of learning more about the speech behaviour of the addresser (Хутыз 2010). The markers which Serdukov uses in the interview underline the complicated and multilevel nature of the reforms he is involved in. These are such discourse markers as *с одной стороны, с другой стороны* 'on the one hand, on the other hand'; *не только, но* 'not only but'; *да, но* 'yes, but', etc. (example 10):

(10) *С одной стороны*, мы постарались минимизировать уровни управления; *с другой стороны*, технически оснастить их.
'*On the one hand,* we tried to minimize the levels of management, *on the other hand*, provide them with all the necessary things.'

3.4. Conclusions about interview 1

The general tone of this interview leaves the reader with an optimistic impression. Serdukov reconstructs the voice of the OTHER by

referring to various agents in six of his answers (less than a half of all of his answers). This shows that he mostly wants to identify with the majority of the events he is talking about. This voice is not varied. It includes only those agents who are in the same professional field with Serdukov (military specialists and commanders of the army). As the analysis of the other interview shows, the voice of the OTHER that is not varied is important for creating a general positive and successful tone of the narration.

The use of infinitives clearly states the actions. The active identification of the speaker with the processes, the vivid tone of the narration achieved by the use of informal YOU, rhetorical questions and parallel constructions, all these tools intensify the friendly voice of Serdukov and make the reader believe in him as a rather skilled professional.

4. The analysis of interview 2

4.1. The voices

It is the minister (now ex-minister) of education, Andrey Fursenko, that gave this interview. To comply with the steps undertaken for the study of Interview 1, the statistical analysis of this interview is presented in Table 2:

Unit of analysis (a word)	Quantity (out of 2 403 words)	Frequency of distribution (in %)
WE (all cases), corresponding forms of a verb	40	1.7 (The WE voice)
I (all cases), corresponding forms of a verb	31	1.3 (The I voice)
HE/SHE/THEY (all cases), corresponding forms of a verb	30	1.2
Person, people, society, teacher	8+17+5+12=42	0.3+0.7+0.2+0.5=1.7
The OTHER voice	72	2.9
System (Система)	7	0.3
Possibility (Возможность)	3	0.1
Must (Должен)	24 (WE, 7)	1
Need (Надо)	9 (WE, 1)	0.4
May, Can (Можем)	8 (WE, 1)	0.3
MODALITY TOTAL	41	1.7
MODALITY (used with the WE voice)	9	22
Infinitives	92	3.8
Passive Constructions	14	0.5
Already (Уже)	4	0.2
But (но)	25	1

Table 2: the quantitative analysis of the discourse of interview 2

Having taken into consideration the use of pronouns and lexical and grammatical accents, three voices have been discerned in interview 2: the voices of OTHER (2.9%), WE (1.7%), and I (1.3%). The same methodology used in Interview 1 is applied to determine how active each of these voices is.

The voice of the OTHER is the loudest. It is used, as has been established earlier, to reconstruct a collective image of those who prevent the speaker from achieving the desired results and to create the background against which a speaker's professional skills are shown to best advantage. The other two voices, WE and I, are very close in frequency distribution.

The voice of the OTHER is mostly comprised of such agents as *people, person, society, teacher*. Basically, these are the agents whom Fursenko blames for his professional failures and does not want to identify with. From the very beginning of the interview, the tone of the discourse is rather aggressive. This can be attributed to the fact that the institutional identity of the minister of education may be deconstructed by indirectly placing the blame on the reader who is a part of the society, an individual, and in some cases, a teacher. Those who represent the voice of the OTHER are often presented with a negative connotation (examples 11, 12):

(11) Многих не устраивало даже то, что *я* старался не давать невыполнимых обещаний. В одном регионе мне так прямо и заявили: "Другие хоть обещали, а вы и этого не хотите..." Да, *не хочу*. Но зато все, что *я* планировал, в основном выполнял. Правда, есть *люди,* которые принципиально не приемлют того, что *я* говорю и делаю.
'Many were not satisfied with the fact that *I* tried not to make promises which I could not keep. In one region, I was told openly: "At least others promised, and you don't even want to do that…". Yes, *I* do not wish to do that. But *I* kept most of my promises. True, there are *people* who on principle do not want to accept what *I* am saying and doing.'

(12) С *оппонентами* вообще стараюсь общаться как можно чаще. Как правило, *люди* они весьма принципиальные. Единственное, что меня огорчает при общении с ними, - это то, что часто эти *люди* абсолютно не слышат аргументов собеседника. Пытаюсь с одной стороны зайти, с другой, как-то объяснить свою позицию, а мне в ответ повторяют одно и то же. Как пластинку заезженную включают.
'I try to communicate with my *opponents* as often as possible. As a rule, they are *people* with principles. The only thing that upsets me while dealing with them is that these *people* absolutely do not want to hear the arguments of their interlocutor. I try to explain it in one way, then in another, to clarify my position somehow, and I am told the same thing again and again, as if I were listening to a worn-out record.'

The people described as opponents (example 12) are depicted as unable to understand the position of the minister. However, he does not provide the reader with concrete information. He emotionally expresses his discontent, especially when he compares the arguments of the "people" with a worn-out record which, to my mind, sounds extremely disrespectful. Moreover, it is obvious that the I voice is very important for this speaker and he uses it as a benchmark of professionalism: ***я*** *старался не давать невыполнимых обещаний* '**I** tried not to give promises which I could not keep'*; Да,* ***не хочу****. Но зато все, что* ***я*** *планировал, в основном выполнял* 'Yes, **I** do not wish to do that. But, **I** kept most of my promises', etc.

The WE voice is supported by the use of the I voice. This is reflected in the frequency distribution of the voices: the representation frequencies of the WE (1.7%) and I (1.3%) voices are very close. The following example (13) demonstrates a simultaneous reconstruction of all the voices to express the same idea. This organization of voices prevents the minister of education from distinctly presenting either of his identities:

(13) Если же говорить о школе, то *я* считаю принципиально важным, чтобы средняя зарплата учителей соответствовала средней зарплате по экономике конкретного региона. Это требование, которое надо выполнять. У *нас* же таких регионов сегодня около двадцати, а в остальных она пока отстает - в среднем примерно на 30%. Но при этом в 2005 году в современных условиях училось не более 15% *наших* школьников, а сегодня - уже больше половины. Так что направление *нашей* работы правильное и темпы в принципе нормальные, но пока *мы* не решим вопрос с другой половиной, удовлетворения быть не может.
'When speaking about school, *I* think it is extremely important that teachers' salaries correspond to the average salary of the region. This is a requirement that needs to be fulfilled. *We* have about 20 such regions; the others are lagging behind by 30% on average. However, at the same time in 2005, no more than 15% of *our* school pupils had a chance to study in renovated schools; today that figure is more than 50%. Thus we are heading with our work in the right direction with the right speed, but until *we* solve the problem with the other half of the schools, there can be no satisfaction.'

4.2. Positive connotations and identity deconstruction

There are no obvious means of invoking positive connotations. An attempt is made to create them by means of comparisons. First, Fursenko describes a situation "somewhere" in Europe or China which is not as good as the situation in Russia. Then he adds more details about the better situation in contemporary Russia (example 14):

(14) С другой стороны, сегодня много говорят о научно-образовательном прорыве *Китая*. Но не забывайте, что китайское государство - абсолютно не социально по сравнению с нашим. Подавляющее большинство населения Китая практически не знает, что такое пенсия, больничный, бесплатное профобразование и т.д. Там за все надо платить. Возвращаясь к вопросу об оплате высшего образования, следует сказать, что он стоит довольно остро во всех странах. И в России, что очень важно, большая часть людей получает образование за счет бюджета. Для этого надо просто хорошо учиться и в школе, и в вузе.
'On the other hand, much is being said about the scientific and educational breakthrough in *China*. However, do not forget that the Chinese state has no social benefits in comparison with us. The overwhelming majority of China does not know about such things as a pension, sick leave, free professional education, etc. Everything must be paid for. Speaking about the issue of price for the high education, it is necessary to say that it is very topical in all countries. And in Russia, most people are getting a free education, which is very important; one just has to study well both at school and university.'

The alienation techniques aiming at identity deconstruction are similar to those used in Interview 1. They include passive constructions and agents who are different from the speaker. An interesting feature of this interview is the use of modality in either passive constructions or with the other agents. The modality level of the interview is 1.7%. Out of the total representation of modality (41 cases), the cases when Fursenko is the bearer of the obligation represent 22% (9 cases). The other bearers of modality are people or inanimate objects (the system of education, salary, etc.). Because the modality agent is so varied, the discourse transmits the idea that everybody, BUT NOT the speaker must fulfil numerous obligations (examples 13, 15). This kind of passive modality produces a negative impression on the reader and is intensified by the use of discourse markers similar to those which one uses to defend oneself from accusations:

(15) Поэтому, когда я говорил о ремонте, я имел в виду и то, что *старая система образования должна* существенно, качественно поменяться практически во всех аспектах. *Новое российское образование* должно максимально использовать не только имеющийся отечественный, но и зарубежный опыт.
'That is why, when *I* was speaking about renovations, *I* meant that *the old system of education must change* qualitatively in all aspects. *The new Russian education* must to a great extent rely not only on local, but also on foreign experience.'

(16) *Человек* не может быть успешным, если неуспешна его страна, окружение, друзья. *Он должен* понимать, что это неразрывно связано. Иными словами, нельзя быть счастливым, когда вокруг много несчастных. *Этому тоже надо учить.*
'A *person* cannot be successful, if his country, surroundings or friends are unsuccessful. *He must understand* that these are all closely connected. In other words, it is impossible to be happy when many unhappy people are around. *One must be taught to realize this.*'

When the minister is asked direct questions about negative events in education, he immediately switches to passive constructions (example 17). Although the minister identifies with the sphere of education, he distances himself from the ineffective use of money (or stolen money) in the area he is responsible for:

(17) **Ф.:** Проблема еще и в том, что деньги, которые по нарастающей поступают в образовательную сферу, далеко не везде расходуются оптимальным образом.
И: Воруют?
Ф.: Скорее, неэффективно используют. В образовании, как и в других отраслях, остро не хватает высококвалифицированных менеджеров. Но именно наша сфера сверхчувствительна к таким вопросам.
'F.: Besides, the problem is that the money, more and more of which is invested into the educational sector, is not always used in the best way.
I.: Is it stolen?
F.: It is rather used inefficiently. In education as well as in other fields, there is a sharp lack of highly qualified managers. But our sphere is particularly sensitive to such issues.'

4.3. Discourse markers and style

It has been mentioned that the discourse markers used in this interview are reminiscent of those which help speakers to defend themselves from accusations. These are such expressions as *но зато* 'however, but'; но если 'but if'; *вот почему* 'that is why', *а вот* 'besides', *правда* 'to tell the truth'.

Fursenko uses the contradictory *but* (*however*) (1% of the uses) in various combinations. For comparison, Serdukov uses this marker (0.3%) on its own to introduce new information or to compare facts. However, he never uses the particle to intensify the righteousness of his actions. In Fursenko's interview, the marker fulfils that function quite frequently (examples 11, 13, 14). Of course, in some cases this marker expands the information and provides the reader with more possible choices (15).

Moreover, the use of this marker together with colloquial expressions makes the discourse too emotional for a professional interview. A plausible reason for the use of spoken language expressions is that the speaker wants to become closer to the people that he often blames for not understanding what his reforms are about. Such expressions can surprise the reader and make him/her doubt the speaker's professionalism. Some of these expressions are: *хватить через край* 'that's going too far' (about how active his opponents are), *включать заезженную пластинку* 'listen to a worn-out record' (about answers and questions of his opponents), *тусуются* 'hang out' (about problem students), *развелось много разного жулья* 'packs of swindlers are bred' (highly emotional expressions about the lack of high quality educational programs) (example 18):

(18) Главный вопрос: где взрослый человек может получить качественную образовательную услугу? *Слишком уж много разного рода жулья вокруг этого нынче развелось.* Мы должны способствовать созданию нормального, цивилизованного рынка образования взрослых.
'The most important question is: where an adult can get educational services of high quality? *These days too many packs of swindlers have been bred.* We must assist in the creation of a standard and civilized market of educational programs for adult learners.'

4.4. Conclusions about interview 2

The general tone of this interview is aggressive and makes the reader feel accused of the problems in the educational sector. This happens because many agents are included in the voice of the OTHER. What is more important, some of these agents, apart from teachers and university rectors, are people and society – universal categories which readers are likely to associate with.

The interview has three voices. The voice of the OTHER is the strongest. The WE and I voices have almost the same frequency distribution. It means that both institutional and professional identities of the speaker are overwhelmed by the other agents whom he often brings into focus. The I voice, which is more responsible for the construction of his professional identity, is always supporting the construction of institutional identity (the WE voice), which sometimes makes the speaker sound a bit complacent for no apparent reason.

Fursenko frequently reconstructs the voice of the OTHER to blur the connection between problems and his actions. The deconstruction tactics of his identity are passive constructions and introducing other agents often loaded with strong modality.

The narration is often emotional; this is achieved through the use of argumentative discourse markers and colloquial expressions. A positive feeling about the changes in the educational sector is achieved by resorting to contrasts describing a situation which might seem worse than the situation in Russia.

In the interview there is no obvious identification of the speaker with the processes he is involved in, which is shown by the lower frequency distribution of the WE voice.

5. Conclusions

The conclusions are drawn from the comparison of the results of the analyses of the two interviews of the two least popular ministers. One of these ministers, Anatoliy Serdukov, whose interview has a much more positive tone, was reestablished in his position (in May 2012) in the new cabinet formed by the newly elected president Putin.

The general tone of discourse depends on how the voices are distributed. A reconstruction of a strong institutional identity of the addresser via the WE voice produces a more positive impact on readers, especially if they are representatives of a (Russian) collectivist culture, in which "the 'we' group (or in-group) is the major source of one's identity, of which there are many" (Hofstede 2005: 75). Interview 2, in which this voice is weakly presented, will have a less positive impact on the reader.

The positive and over-all favourable impact is strengthened by how often the voice of the OTHER is reconstructed: the less frequently the better. If the author refers to this particular voice frequently, the reader gets the impression that the addresser avoids taking responsibility for some of his mistakes. Moreover, as the comparison of the two interviews shows, in those cases, where the agents constituting the voice of the OTHER are numerous and do not necessarily belong to the speaker's area of expertise, negative and aggressive modalities become even stronger.

It is necessary to remember the speakers' cultural background, which might give deep insights into the interpretation of the results. Both ministers are representatives of high-context Russian culture, where people are mostly collectivist with high uncertainty avoidance factor. Therefore, it is expected that readers find more appealing the personality of a strong politician, who acknowledges problems and mistakes and identifies himself with the institution of power and the people he represents.

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