

CRISES, CONFLICTS AND DISCOURSE OF CRISES SITUATIONS

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Статья затрагивает проблему разграничения таких понятий, как «кризис», «конфликт» и «дискурс кризисных ситуаций». Анализируются различные подходы к классификации кризисов, описываются различия конфликтов и кризисов, дается определение дискурсу кризисных ситуаций, приводится классификация кризисных ситуаций с точки зрения лингвистики и дискурсивного анализа.

The article is devoted to such notions as crisis, conflict and the discourse of crises situations. The author analyses different approaches to the classification of crises, identifies the difference between crises and conflicts, defines the phenomenon of crises situations discourse and classifies crises situations from the point of view of text studies.

Ключевые слова: кризисная коммуникация; дискурс кризисных ситуаций; конфликты; типы кризисов; классификация кризисных ситуаций.

Keywords: crises communication; discourse of crises situations; conflicts; types of crises; classification of crises situations.

Crisis communication is a complex phenomenon which is interested not only for the communication theory but also for humanities. The notion of crises in this article is represented as social action from the point of view discourse studies and has a high level of public influence. Crises are an integral part of life of any society and can occur in any area. Facing with a crisis periodically we understand that the system of particular relations (economic, political or social) doesn't work any more and it is necessary to change something in order to find a way out of the situation. In professional literature, the concept of crisis has been interpreted in different ways, but mostly it is directly related to the economic sphere. The most successful definitions are provided in Ozhegov's explanatory dictionary, where the concept of crisis is described as: 1) a sharp, drastic change in something; 2) a breakdown of the economic life due to contradictions in the development of the society; 3) a plight. Russian economist E. M. Korotkov says: crisis is an extreme aggravation of contradictions in the socio-economic system, challenging its environmental viability [5, p. 14].

The concepts of "crisis" and "crisis situation" is used in many scientific areas – linguistics, psychology, sociology, conflictology, etc. Crises in various fields of human activity stimulate the solution of many psychological, sociological, legal and moral issues, such as communication problems, people relations, socio-psychological climate, and others. The positive role of crises appeared in the earliest theories of the linear development of the society. A Well-known formation theory by C. Marx's is based on the ways of production, changing of which leads to socio-economic crises and causes class contradictions. It means that the crisis is not only an inevitable, but also a necessary stage for transition from one social formation to another [9, p. 489–499].

It is necessary to distinguish the notions of "crisis" and "conflict", which can sometimes be treated as synonyms. R. Dahrendorf defines conflicts

as any relations between the elements, which can be characterized by the objective ("latent") or subjective ("clear") oppositions [4, p. 142–147]. It is a process of interaction, the development of relations. And a crisis is a crunch point in the development of relations.

According to the degree of contradictions accumulation at the international level M. M. Lebedeva identifies several consequential stages of the conflict: conflicting relations, conflict actions without the usage of weapons, a crisis, an armed conflict [7, p. 22]. Thus, a crisis is a step in the development of the conflict, the transition to this stage can be characterized as a sharp and sudden deterioration of the relations, unpredictability and loss of control. The crisis does not simply mean the deterioration of relations, but also a transition to a qualitatively new condition. If it is not possible to settle the crisis by means of crisis diplomacy, and the sides are beginning to show more and more hostilities towards each other, thus the crisis can be followed by military actions and an armed conflict [11, p. 51].

Another point of view that the crisis is preceded by a conflict, is expressed by V.A. Barsamov, taking into consideration the relations between the concepts of "political crisis" and "political conflict", and points out:

- crisis is understood as a negative and problematic situation in the society or within a political system;

- crisis is considered to be a pre-conflict stage, after which the conflict reaches its highest, the most severe form [1, p. 16]. Russian researchers O. A. Ryzhov and J. V. Yakovets also support this point of view. The authors believe that in the human society and in the nature as well all the phenomena are repeated periodically generating a kind of spiral of alternating booms and busts during the transition to a new state of the system. J. V. Yakovets offers the following typology of such cycles: natural and ecological, demographic, technological, economic, political, spiritual, historical [12, p. 202].

Among the developers of the theory of crises one can distinguish Russian scientist A.A. Bogdanov-Malinovsky. Taking into consideration the concept of crisis, he essentially defined its characteristics. Usually, crisis means to be a termination or a milestone of the process which has the character of a struggle. In a broad sense A. A. Bogdanov-Malinovsky defines crisis as a sharp discontinuity, leading to changes in the organizational forms of the system, its transition to a new state or leaving the scene. [2, p. 93]. There are two types of crises: conjugation crises that mean the formation of new connections and separation crises that presuppose a break of relations and the creation of absolutely new boundaries. [2, p. 300]. However, the boundaries between them are conditional: "Every crisis is a chain of elementary crises of one type or another".

Thus, there are two points of view on the relations between the concepts "a crisis" and "a conflict". Some scientists consider a crisis to be narrower than a conflict, others believe that a crisis is preceded by a conflict. Some researches use these concepts as synonyms. But from the point of view of conflictology the ideas of the crisis as a conflict development stage are the most reasonable. We also adhere to this position and understand the concept of crisis as a clash of contradictions or a conflict of interests in the society, under the influence of human activities or environmental changes that endangers the existence and the development of the society. So, it is necessary to define the notion of the discourse of crisis situations as well as to determine its place in the existing typology.

The discourse of crisis situations is speech generations, the content of which is related to a particular sphere of public life, and describes the conflict of social interests caused by human activities or environmental influences, and endangers the comfortable existence of the society and its development. It includes all speech generations directly aimed at the description, analysis and management of the crisis situations.

Crisis situations include natural environmental disasters and disasters caused by human activities, problems of social and humanitarian character, economic and political difficulties, etc. Many of these crises affect more or less the sphere of international relations, but are not necessarily accompanied by a conflict. Crisis situations are characterized by the following features: 1) time factor which presupposes a relatively high rate of events in comparison to the ability of their overcoming; 2) crises are sometimes accompanied by violence, cruelty, victims; 3) the tension caused by a crisis occludes rapid comprehension of the situation and prolongs an immediate response from the authorities; 4) crises usually influence the emotional state of people that helps to exert influence on their perception and to form the necessary understanding of the events and even to manipulate the public opinion directly or by means of mass media (depending on the goals, motives and existing social prerequisites).

Facing the issue of the classification of crises I. K. Larionov points out that all crisis can be classified in the following way with the reference to economy: 1. According to the scale of coverage: a) separate (or individual); b) local (or group covering only a part or a group of processes or business entities); c) system crises (affecting the entire economy in general). 2. According to the levels of the economy: a) micro; b) meso; c) macro; d) global. 3. According to the reasons of occurrence: a) random; b) regular; c) cyclic. 4. According to the impact: a) painful; b) destructive; c) catastrophic. 5. According to the time of influence: a) the short-term; b) medium-term; c) long-term. 6. According to the sources and background: a) internal; b) external; c) mixed, from internal and external sources; d) natural; e) artificial. 7. According to the possibility to overcome: a) surmountable with internal forces; b) surmountable with external assistance, or under external influence; c) insurmountable [6, p. 105].

Professor E. M. Korotkov divided crises according to:

1. The scale of manifestations: common and local. Common is a span of the entire socio-economic system, local touches only a part of it.

2. The problematics of the crisis: macro crises and micro crises.

3. The structure of relations.

Economic crises mean a sharp deterioration in the economic state of the country, manifested in a significant decline of production, disorder of the prevailing industrial relations, bankruptcy of enterprises, growing unemployment, and as a result in a reduction of the living standards and the population's welfare. The financial crisis also represents this group. It is a profound breakdown of the financial system, accompanied by inflation, non-payments, currency volatility.

Social crises occur in the exacerbation of a conflict or a clash of interests of different social groups or entities: workers and employers, trade unions and employers, workers of different professions, etc. This group includes political crises. It is a kind of crisis in the political structure of the society, the crisis of power and management of the society, the crisis of the realization of interests of different social groups, classes.

Organizational crises appear as crises of separation and integration activities, the distribution of functions to regulate the activities of individual units, as the separation of administrative units, regions or subsidiaries.

Psychological are crises in the psychological state of a person, manifested in the form of stress, usually they become widespread in the form of the feelings of insecurity, panic, fear for the future, job discontent, legal and social vulnerability.

Technological crises arise as problems of new technological ideas in conditions of obvious need for new technologies.

4. The sources of origin: natural, social, environmental. Natural are caused by natural

conditions (earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, climatic change, floods). Social crises are caused by public relations in all their manifestations. Environmental crises occur when environmental changes are caused by human activities (resource depletion, environmental pollution, the occurrence of dangerous technologies, and disregard for the requirements of the laws of ecological balance).

5. Predictable, unexpected, explicit, latent, sharp, soft, lingering, temporary and cyclical crises.

6. The area of activity: endogenous crises occur within the municipal entity, usually as a result of incorrect management. For its detection more research is usually needed in the field of marketing and management based on internal analysis. Exogenous crises arise for the reasons beyond the control of the municipal entity, for example, high inflation, high interest rates on loans, the instability of the tax system and intergovernmental fiscal relations, social tensions, etc. [5, p. 35].

Based on the duration of crises S. Cutlip, A. Center and G. Broome identified *unexpected crises*. They occur suddenly, so that there is no time to prepare and to plan how to overcome them (for example, an air crash, the death of the head, earthquakes, panic). Such crises require an indicative action plan worked out in advance. *Looming crises* give time for planning, but can break out unexpectedly (for example, the discontent of workers, a poor staff morale, abuses and insults at work). In this case task is to predict the crisis by taking corrective steps. *Continuous crises*. They last for a long time in spite of the efforts of management to stop them (for example, gossip or speculation reported by the media, or transmitted by word of mouth) [9, p. 37].

D. News and A. Scott on the basis of the origin and consequences of the crisis allocate destructive and non-destructive crises, natural, intentional and unintentional crises [9, p. 45].

O. Lerbinger categorized eight types of crises: natural disasters, technological crises, confrontation (individual and group pickets, rallies, boycotts), malevolence (criminal acts, including kidnapping, burglary, spying), Organizational Misdeeds (violation of administrative values, corruption, misrepresentation about the product or about themselves), workplace violence (illegal actions in relation to employees), rumors, terrorist attacks [8, p. 17–22].

Thus, there are many approaches to the classification of crises depending on various factors but it is reasonable to divide the types of crises on the scale, sources and manifestations of the basic spheres of social relations for the convenience of studying of the discourse of crisis situations.

On a scale all crises situations are divided into global and local. According to the sources and spheres of social relations manifestations we distinguish economic, social (including political), humanitarian (legislative), natural, technological, psychological crises situations. In this classification, the terms

economic and social crisis should be understood just as they appear in the classification by E. M. Korotkov.

The *humanitarian* crisis is the situation at the territory of one or more specific regions, countries, when there is a systematic violation of human rights. Such violations constitute a clear threat to peace and security in the region or around the world but despite this the authorities are unable or unwilling to put an end to violations of fundamental human rights in the country which leads to urgent interaction by the international community to eliminate this situation. This type of crisis is actually legislative. Such crises as the migration crisis, terrorist attacks, wars (except information and psychological warfare), religious conflicts are related to this type of crises.

Natural crisis is a result of natural changes and does not depend on human actions: earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and other natural disasters. Viruses of unknown origin, epidemic, pandemic are also included in this type of crises.

Man-made crisis occurs when the natural changes are induced by human activities (environmental pollution, the development of dangerous technologies, the depletion of natural resources, negligence and violation of safety requirements in the production).

Psychological is a crisis of human psychological condition. Such crises are divided into individual, interpersonal, group, and “individual – group” crises. The crises that have a mass character, which are based on suggestibility, as well as methods and tools of impact on the crowd are of a particular interest to this study. An example of a psychological crisis is information warfare (information and psychological war).

In spite of the diversity of crises situations, all of them are united by one type of discourse – the discourse of crisis situations which has numerous functions:

1. The function of social control or regulation (creation of prerequisites for unification of behavior, thoughts, feelings and desires of a large number of individuals, i.e. public opinion management with the help of a language) [13, p. 44].

2. The function of information and orientation. Informing the audience about the events, the formation of a picture of what is happening in the minds of the society.

3. Influencing function. The formation of beliefs, values and motivation for action and evaluation of the situation, agitation through symbols, reasoning, emotional pressure.

4. The function of social solidarity which presupposes integration within the whole society or individual social groups.

5. The function of social differentiation is the fragmentation of social groups.

6. Inducing function means escalation of the crisis or vice versa putting population into a false sense of security [10, p. 36].

Taking into consideration the variety of functions of crisis situation discourse, one can conclude that the aim of crisis discourse is to influence the minds of

people and impose decisions. The crisis discourse is an extremely broad concept, encompassing language system, speech and text and allowing a number of scientific interpretations. The most important functions are considered to be information and orientation, social control and influence. Crises situations of the six named types have quite distinct

boundaries, but sometimes it is possible to observe their mutual overlapping, which is explained from the point of view of the consequences and the impact of one type of crises on the society. For example, the consequences of the migration crisis led to changes in the structure of the EU (the Brexit), i. e. humanitarian crisis provoked social.

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