
HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE UK NATIONAL MEDIA: HIV AND AIDS PREVENTION DISCOURSE

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DOI: 10.24411/2500-1000-2020-10815

Abstract. *Modern infectious diseases strongly affect the expectancy of human life and its quality. The improvement of health literacy and promoting health awareness are some of the main tasks of any government medical policy. Communicative approach can help solve it. The objective of this research is to identify and analyse the discursive features of health promotion on the problem of HIV or AIDS in national media resource of the United Kingdom. The analysis was carried out on three criteria: content, communicative means and pragmatics of communication. The material of the research included texts published on the official website of National Health Service of the United Kingdom (NHS). As a conclusion, the discursive features of health promotion were shown in relation to British culture.*

Keywords: *health promotion, prevention discourse, health literacy, content, communicative means, pragmatics of communication, discursive features.*

Currently the issues of prevention, diagnosis or treatment of diseases are the top priorities of modern healthcare systems all over the world. Infectious diseases rank high on the list of global threats to human health as they strongly affect the expectancy of human life and its quality. The improvement of health literacy and promoting health awareness are priority of a healthcare policy of any national government. According to the World Health Organisation, health promotion is “the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health” [1]. The role of media in this process is considerable as it spreads the information throughout the society and can be a tool of communication between the government, scientists or healthcare practitioners and common public [2; p. 423]. Obviously, success of such communication is associated with the language the media uses, its tone, register, vocabulary and grammar of the text, which are usually referred to as discursive features.

The objective of this research is to identify and analyse discursive features of health promotion on the problem of HIV or AIDS in national media resource of the United Kingdom: National Health Service (<https://www.nhs.uk>). This source provides

relevant material of health promotion through media communication as it represents the government policy in relation to various medical problems. The material of the research included texts published on the official websites of the United Kingdom.

The research is based on the methods of descriptive research [3, 4] and on three criteria: content, communicative means and pragmatics of communication.

HIV / AIDS prevention discourse: content and structure

The criterion of the content is considered to be essential as it indicates what topics the government draws attention to. Regarding the objective of the research, the topics, their components and structure have been identified, described and analyzed.

Any media text in the Internet, i.e. a digital text, is a complicated multimodal phenomenon [5], which content unfolds in many dimensions. Due to this, a linear way of topic representation of a conventional text is largely supported by hypertextual means of verbal and nonverbal origin. These means involve colours, underlining, hyperlinks, icons, menu lines, etc. [6, p. 17]. As a result, the topic in a media text is inextricably intertwined with hypertextual means of its development which

might occur in several directions, modes and dimensions. However, for the purpose of our research we have represented the content structure of a media text as topic and hypertextual means of its development.

NHS webpage collects all the data in the section under the title "HIV and AIDS". It includes Overview, Symptoms, Causes, Diagnosis, Treatment, Living with, and Prevention. In Overview subsection the material is shortly presented on the topics mentioned above. All the other titles of the subsections are very clear, and the audience knows what and where to seek.

The hypertextual means of this website include hyperlinks in a form of words or phrases that are underlined and marked in a blue colour. They support all the topics mentioned in the previous paragraph. Furthermore, the hypertextual means which appear throughout the texts indicate a website of HIV charity organisations, trust campaigns, or HIV testing services location. If the hyperlink has been used, it changes its blue colour to the violet one. They are used to attract audience's attention and provide them with additional information on an extra page or a website.

The analyzed material has demonstrated that NHS has all the data collected in one section with the possibility of quick navigation between the points with the help of hyperlinks and accessing further information in subsections or on other web sites.

HIV/AIDS prevention discourse: the language of communication

The language of HIV / AIDS prevention discourse is the basic medium of health promotion at the national website. This language is a complicated object for analyses as it comprises properties of media and medical discourse, both represented in the digital mode of the Internet. For the purpose of our research we have divided all linguistic means of communication into verbal and non-verbal. Among the variety of verbal means we have limited our research to the vocabulary of HIV / AIDS prevention discourse. Our analysis of non-verbal means has been limited to graphics and visual images.

Vocabulary and terminology: communicative function

The vocabulary choice influences the communication style [7]. In general, health promotion media communication operates with the speech to be comprehensible for people without medical education.

Simple phrases and sentences perform information perception more comfortable to a non-professional audience and provide success of health promotion. NHS web site implements the common vocabulary: shares needles, for people with HIV, the level of HIV virus in the blood is so low, getting HIV, a heroin user, etc. [8], which makes the information perception less complicated. Apart from that, the constant use of contractions marks the colloquial style: It's available as a tablet...; It's very important...; it can't be detected...; If you're a heroin user...; You'll be able to get... [8]. Colloquial means are easier for the comprehension, so they are used to inform and to persuade the audience, which is the very aim of prevention discourse.

However, since medical issues are discussed, it is impossible to manage without a limited use of terminology [5]. In this way NHS uses certain terminology for its texts: post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), the viral load, injecting equipment, undetectable=untransmittable, methadone, medication, antenatal screening, etc. [8] The introduction of a limited number of technical vocabulary attaches great importance and seriousness to the discussed issues, so the audience trusts the source of information.

On the English site both common and technical vocabulary are applied. The majority of topics are interpreted with the help of simple words and phrases, though discussing health issues cannot avoid a limited number of medical terms.

Graphics and visual images

On NHS website there are no pictures related to the topic. However, the text is presented in groups or lists of points, and a visitor perceives the information without any difficulties. In other words, it can be said that a reader-friendly way of information arrangement (headings clustering) is used.

The pragmatics of communication

The language of HIV/AIDS prevention discourse directly or indirectly conveys cer-

tain messages. It is always used to form a particular opinion with the audience, influence, persuade, etc. This aspect of communication is usually described in terms of pragmatics, so the final section of our findings contains our observations on pragmatic issues of prevention discourse. The examples below focus on two commonly used communicative strategies: to raise awareness and to urge for an action. Both are crucially important for prevention discourse, so we have identified what language the British website uses to implement these strategies.

Advice to visit a specialist involves public awareness raising on the necessity of consulting with an expert in any problematic case. The concern about HIV / AIDS prevention cannot be implemented without a strong recommendation to get tested on the infections or to speak to a doctor to get information on how to be protected from the disease.

NHS indicates to the importance of visiting an expert with the help of an imperative: Speak to your local sexual health clinic or GP for further advice about the best way to reduce your risk [9].

Direct appeal to the audience is used to establish contact with the target readers and raise their awareness of the problem. What is more, this strategy accomplishes the communicative strategy of urging the audience for action [5].

The English web site employs the application of you and your pronouns: if you use drugs; Speak to your local sexual health clinic or a GP for further advice about the best way to reduce your risk; if you have been taking

effective HIV treatment; your viral load has been undetectable for 6 months or more; you cannot pass the virus on; If you inject drugs; this could expose you to HIV and other viruses found in blood; If you're a heroin user; If you're having a tattoo or piercing; You'll be able to get; and the imperative: Read more; Want to know more? [8].

Imperative mood and you-pronoun forms are the means of expressing direct appeal to the audience and perform the function of encouraging action.

Conclusion. “Effective HIV and AIDS communication in construction, therefore, involves providing relevant and meaningful information accurately, consistently, reiteratively, and repetitively using multiple methods, mediums, and languages” [9, p. 252].

The analysed health promotion media resource showed that National Health Service concerns a number of topics: a summary of the disease, symptoms, causes, diagnosis, treatment, living with and prevention. It provides the site navigation by the word / phrasal hyperlinks which provide access to additional information in the subsections or on other web sites. Turning to the communicative means, NHS uses common and technical vocabulary and applies a way of headings clustering which makes the perception of information much easier. The pragmatic aspect of communication is expressed by paying attention to the necessity of consulting with a specialist and appealing directly to the audience.

As a result, the indicated health promotion media service performs the communicative strategies of informing and urging for action.

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ПРОПАГАНДА ЗДОРОВЬЯ В МЕДИА-КОММУНИКАЦИИ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ: ПРОФИЛАКТИЧЕСКИЙ ДИСКУРС ВИЧ И СПИД

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Аннотация. Инфекционные заболевания в современном мире значительно влияют на продолжительность жизни человека и её качество. Повышение уровня медицинской грамотности и осознанного отношения к собственному здоровью являются одними из основных задач любого государства в области здравоохранения. Решение этих задач может осуществляться и коммуникативными способами. Цель данного исследования заключается в выявлении и анализе дискурсивных особенностей профилактики ВИЧ / СПИД в национальном медиа-ресурсе Соединенного Королевства. Материалом исследования послужили тексты, опубликованные на официальном сайте National Health Service Соединенного Королевства (NHS). Анализ текстов проводился по трём критериям: содержательное наполнение, коммуникативные средства и прагматика коммуникации. В результате выявлены дискурсивные особенности текстов медицинской профилактики британской лингвокультуры.

Ключевые слова: пропаганда здоровья, профилактический дискурс, уровень медицинской грамотности, содержательный аспект, коммуникативные средства, прагматика коммуникации, дискурсивные особенности.