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**VERBALIZATION OF CAUSE-AND-EFFECT
RELATIONSHIPS IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS REPORTING IN
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA
(CASE STUDY OF 2025 SOUTHEAST ASIA FLOODS)**

Abstract

This article examines how cause-and-effect relationships in the 2025 Southeast Asia flooding are verbalized in British and American English-language media through texts from The Guardian, BBC, and CNN. The theoretical framework combines cognitive linguistics, media linguistics, and critical discourse analysis via contextual-interpretive and comparative analysis of media texts. The study reveals that British publications tend toward objectification and de-agentivization of natural phenomena, emphasizing systemic factors and institutional responsibility, while American media dramatize events through active personification of nature, enhancing emotional audience impact. The findings clarify how agency, metaphorization, and adjectival nominations shape crisis media discourse and inform crisis communication strategies.

Keywords: discourse strategy, de-agentivization, metaphorical personification, nominative system, text modality, pragmatic function, critical linguistics, informational impact, ideological meaning, communicative tactics

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**ВЕРБАЛИЗАЦИЯ ПРИЧИННО-СЛЕДСТВЕННЫХ СВЯЗЕЙ
ПРИ ОСВЕЩЕНИИ ЧРЕЗВЫЧАЙНЫХ СИТУАЦИЙ В
АНГЛОЯЗЫЧНЫХ СМИ
(НА ПРИМЕРЕ НАВОДНЕНИЙ В ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ АЗИИ 2025 Г.)**

Аннотация

Статья посвящена выявлению и описанию способов вербализации причинно-следственных связей при освещении наводнений 2025 года в Юго-Восточной Азии в британских и американских англоязычных СМИ на материале текстов The Guardian, BBC и CNN. Теоретической основой исследования служат когнитивная лингвистика, медиалингвистика и критический дискурс-анализ; применяется контекстуально-интерпретационный и сравнительный анализ медиатекстов. Установлено, что британские издания склонны к объективации и деагентивизации стихийных явлений, акцентируя системные факторы и институциональную ответственность, тогда как американские СМИ драматизируют события, активно персонифицируя природу и усиливая эмоциональное воздействие на аудиторию. Результаты уточняют роль агентивности, метафоризации и адъективных номинаций в формировании медиадискурса при описании кризисных ситуаций и могут применяться в практике кризисной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: дискурсивная стратегия, де-агентивизация, метафорическая персонификация, номинативная система, модальность текста, прагматическая функция, критическая лингвистика, информационное воздействие, идеологический смысл, коммуникативная тактика

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**ТҮШТҮК-ЧЫГЫШ АЗИЯДАГЫ 2025-ЖЫЛДАГЫ
СУУ ТАШКЫНДАРЫНЫН МИСАЛЫНДА АНГЛИС ТИЛДҮҮ
ММКЛАРДА ӨЗГӨЧӨ КЫРДААЛДАРДЫ
ЧАГЫЛДЫРУУДАГЫ СЕБЕП-КЫРДААЛ БАЙЛАНЫШТАРЫН
ВЕРБАЛИЗАЦИЯЛОО**

Кыскача мазмуну

Макалa 2025-жылдагы Түштүк-Чыгыш Азиядагы суу ташкындарын чагылдырган The Guardian, BBC жана CNN материалдарында себеп-натыйжа байланыштары кандай тилдик каражаттар менен берилерин изилдейт. Теориялык негиз катары когнитивдик лингвистика, медиалингвистика жана критикалык дискурс-анализ колдонулду; ыкма катары контексттик-интерпретациялык жана салыштырма талдоо жүргүзүлдү. Натыйжада британдык маалымат каражаттары табиятты объективациялап, деагентивдештирип, системалык факторлорду жана институттук жоопкерчиликти көрсөтөрү аныкталды. Америкалык медиада стихийлер көбүнчө персонификацияланып, метафоралар жана эмоционалдуу эпитеттер аркылуу драмалашат. Жыйынтыктар агентивдүүлүк, метафоризация жана адъективдик номинациялар кризистик дискурсту калыптандырып, кризистик коммуникацияны жакшыртууга жардам берерин сунуштайт. Мындай айырмачылыктар окурмандын кырсыкты кабылдоосун, күнөөлөөнү жана ишеним деңгээлин өзгөртөт, ошондой эле редакциялык стратегиянын прагматикалык максатын ачат, тажрыйбада колдонууга ылайыктуу сунуштар берилет.

Түйүндүү сөздөр: дискурстук стратегия, деагентивдештирүү, метафоралык персонификация, номинативдик система, текст модальдуулугу, прагматикалык функция, критикалык лингвистика, маалыматтык таасир, идеологиялык маани, коммуникативдик

тактика

The problem of verbalizing emergency situations (ES) in mass media discourse is at the intersection of several linguistic disciplines: cognitive linguistics, media linguistics and critical discourse analysis. As T.A. van Dijk noted, news does not merely reflect events; it is a complex construct in which grammatical and lexical structures serve the purposes of ideological and pragmatic influence [1, p. 112]. In the context of global climate catastrophes, such as the floods in Southeast Asia in 2025, media discourse becomes a space for the struggle over the interpretation of cause-and-effect relationships.

In this context, verbalization is understood as the process of translating extra-linguistic reality into linguistic forms, where the choice of each unit is determined by the publication's discursive strategy. According to N. Fairclough's theory, the analysis of media texts requires studying not only semantics but also grammatical structures, such as voice and agency, which may obscure or emphasize responsibility for the events taking place [2, p. 54]. This study is based on

the works of domestic and foreign linguists in the field of media language functioning (T. G. Dobrosklonskaya), nomination theory (N. N. Boldyrev), and cognitive mechanisms of discourse (V. I. Karasik) [3; 4; 5].

The empirical basis of the study consists of publications from British and American English-language media (The Guardian, BBC, CNN) dedicated to the coverage of floods in Southeast Asian countries in late 2025. The analysis is conducted using media texts that were in the public domain at the time the research was prepared.

British quality press traditionally demonstrates a commitment to an analytical approach in event coverage. Within this framework, a specific event is not viewed in isolation but is subjected to rational comprehension and interpretation. Journalistic analysis relies on explaining cause-and-effect relationships and identifying the structural factors that determine the development of the situation. Thus, an individual event is integrated into broader macrostructures of global knowledge - political, economic, social, and cultural contexts - allowing the reader to perceive the occurrence

as part of a holistic worldview.

The Guardian is characterized by the verbalization of emergency situations through the prism of the "environmental imperative." In the article "Asia floods: visual guide to the flooding, extreme weather, cyclones and monsoon," the linguistic design of the text is aimed at establishing cognitive distance [6]. The use of the construction visual guide marks the text as popular science rather than purely event-driven reporting.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the "Learning" frame is implemented here. As N. N. Boldyrev points out, the use of terminological nominations (cyclones, extreme weather) allows for the "objectification" of chaos, translating it from the realm of irrational fear into the realm of scientific analysis [4, p. 92]. The text explicitly explains the mechanisms of the catastrophe: "Tropical cyclones are powerful spinning storms that bring heavy wind and rain...". The verbalization of causality here is systemic: flooding is not an accident, but part of the climate crisis. As N. D. Arutyunova notes, such a method of world representation strives for logical completeness and the minimization of the subjective factor [7, p. 215].

In the article "Indonesia and Thailand flooding: death toll tops 350 as rescuers struggle to reach worst-hit areas," the verbalization shifts toward a dramatic confrontation [8]. The verb tops emphasizes the dynamics of the rising casualty count, creating a sense of uncontrollability. A key linguistic marker here is the verb struggle when describing the actions of rescue teams. This forms the concept of a "heroic confrontation" between systematic human efforts and the destructive power of nature. The superlative adjective worst-hit verbalizes the geographical peak of the disaster. Materials from the BBC demonstrate an engagement with the category of evidentiality (attribution of information sources). In the article "More than 400 killed in Indonesia flooding, officials say," the

headline is structured through the juxtaposition of a fact and its official verification [9]. The linguistic marker officials say functions as an "objective filter." A crucial tool here is de-agentivization. In the seminal works of R. Fowler, it is noted that the use of passive constructions (were killed, were destroyed) allows for a shift in focus from the active force to the patient or object of the action [10, p. 78]. In BBC reporting, nature is only rarely presented as an active "killer" or a source of intentional action; more frequently, it is described as a background against which tragic events unfold and human losses are recorded. This linguistic strategy confirms the thesis that British media discourse generally strives for factual restraint, avoiding excessive imagery and emotionally charged descriptions of the aggressiveness of natural phenomena.

However, in exceptional cases, such as the headline "Once in 300 years' rain hits Thai city as floods ravage South East Asia," a hybridization of styles is observed [11]. The use of the verb ravage semantically correlates with the discourse of war. This lexical choice conveys the scale of the destruction as something unprecedented and exceptional, emphasizing its intensity and destructive power, and shapes the reader's perception of the event as something beyond the normal and expected course of natural processes.

In contrast to their British counterparts, American media - specifically the CNN news network - employ media strategies aimed at maximizing emotional impact and creating an "effect of presence," positioning the reader or viewer as an immediate witness to the events. As R. Wodak notes, such strategies often rely on appealing to the audience's basic emotions - fear, anxiety, empathy - and are accompanied by a simplification of the cause-and-effect relationships between events [12, p. 63]. As a result, the media narrative is constructed in a way that triggers an instantaneous and pronounced emotional response in the recipient, fostering a sense of involvement and per-

sonal engagement, even if this results in a decrease in analytical depth, the complexity of causal interpretations, and the contextual understanding of events. This strategy emphasizes the dramatic and personalized nature of providing information, where the focus shifts from an objective explanation of the causes of the disaster to an emotional perception of its consequences.

The primary linguistic difference lies in the application of the category of agency. In the headline "More than 1,100 killed as deadly storms cause flooding and landslides across Asia," the storm is endowed with subjectivity [13]. The verb cause establishes the direct "guilt" of the elements. The epithet deadly, combined with active verbs of action (hit, strike), creates the image of a hostile Subject in the reader's mind.

As G. Lakoff notes in the theory of metaphor, the personification of inanimate forces of nature allows humans to conceptualize chaos through familiar categories of struggle and aggression [14, p. 34]. Flooding in CNN's discourse is presented not as the result of a combination of climatic, geographical, and social factors, but as an active and purposeful enemy "attacking" a specific region and its population. Thus, the natural disaster is verbalized as a full-fledged Agent endowed with destructive power and quasi-intentional will, which heightens the drama of the media narrative and contributes to the formation of an image of confrontation between humanity and a hostile natural force. The headline "How a cocktail of rogue storms and climate chaos unleashed deadly flooding across Asia" [15] is most illustrative in terms of the verbalization of natural disaster. This headline implements a complex, multi-layered system of metaphorical transfers that forms a specific interpretative framework for the event. The simultaneous use of several metaphors is not accidental; it is aimed at intensifying the expressiveness and dramatic potential of the message. Firstly, the cocktail metaphor

serves to verbalize the synergistic effect of combining several factors, including extreme weather conditions and climate change. Such a designation creates the perception of a chaotic and difficult-to-predict mixture of causes, each of which amplifies the destructive action of the other. Secondly, the metaphor of the criminal or marginal subject (*rogue storms*) endows the storms with traits of antisocial and uncontrollable behavior. The adjective *rogue* (outcast, stray, out of control) transfers characteristics of intentional violation of norms onto a natural phenomenon, thereby enhancing the effect of personification and the hostility of the elements. Thirdly, the metaphor of the wild beast, implemented through the verb *unleashed*, forms an image of a destructive force that has broken its chains and lost all constraints. This verb implies the existence of external control that was previously lost, and indirectly reinforces the feeling of catastrophic and irreversible nature of the events.

Collectively, these metaphorical strategies form what is known as the "discourse of catastrophism," within which the emergency situation is represented as a unique, dramatically exceptional incident rather than an element of a predictable and analyzable system of natural and social processes. Furthermore, the use of the lexeme *chaos* instead of the more neutral *change* finally shifts the interpretation of the event into the realm of an irrational threat, amplifying the sense of instability, uncontrollability, and existential danger to humanity and society.

Adjective nominations play a pivotal role in shaping the modality of a media text, as they establish the evaluative vector for interpreting the described event. As part of this study, a selection of the most frequent adjectives used in the coverage of the 2025 floods in British and American media was analyzed.

In the British quality press, evaluative-analytical lexemes dominate, such as *systemic*,

avoidable, and *unprecedented*. These adjectives appeal primarily to the reader's rational perception and orient them toward an analytical understanding of the situation. In particular, the verbalization of an event through the adjective *avoidable* carries an implicit critique of infrastructure conditions and the level of political responsibility, thereby shifting the interpretation of a natural disaster from a purely natural sphere into the realm of social and managerial factors.

In American media, by contrast, descriptive-emotional lexemes prevail, such as *horrific* and *apocalyptic*. Such adjectives are intended to enhance the dramatic effect and emotional impact on the audience by promoting hyperbolization of the event's scale. The use of such vocabulary is consistent with the logic of commercially oriented media models, in which emotional engagement of the reader or viewer becomes a key communicative priority.

The analysis of cause-and-effect relationships is impossible without examining voice constructions. The study revealed that British media predominantly use passive voice forms when describing victims and destruction. The use of the passive voice allows authors to distance themselves from a direct attribution of guilt to the elements, shifting the focus from the acting force to the fact of the occurrence itself, thus leaving space for discussing the role of the human factor and

institutional conditions.

American media, conversely, demonstrate a steady trend toward using the active voice, where a natural phenomenon most often acts as the subject (for example, "The storm destroyed..."). This grammatical verbalization endows the elements with the characteristics of an active participant in the events and accords with the general communicative strategy of dramatization and the personalization of natural disasters.

The conducted comprehensive linguistic analysis of emergency situation verbalization in British and American media discourse allows for the following generalizations. The verbalization of cause-and-effect relationships in English-language media is not a neutral process. It is determined by the pragmatic goals of the publication and national characteristics of communication. British media construct an "analytical map" of the event, utilizing de-agentivization techniques and references to official institutions, which allows for the verbalization of the flood as an element of a manageable global system. American media construct a "dramatic scenario," utilizing active agency and expressive metaphors, which verbalizes the catastrophe as an unpredictable act of aggression by nature.

The results contribute to the development of media linguistics and can be used in developing crisis communication strategies, as well as in teaching discursive analysis.

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