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メディアで用いられる言葉の変化： ステレオタイプが続く

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Language Change in Media : Stereotypes perpetuated

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Language Change in Media

- Stereotypes perpetuated -

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Abstract

Media is said to be the Fourth Estate in modern democracies. However, national media also use stereotypes to perpetuate self-images of its own culture and prejudiced images of other cultures. An analysis of the reporting and broadcasting by German media concerning the recent Greek debt crisis will illustrate this power. The outcome demonstrates that media cannot be ignored in the teaching of ICC and its training, and that true media literacy is essential.

Keywords: media, stereotype, media literacy

1 INTRODUCTION

In modern democratic states, media is often said to be, in addition to the executive, legislative and judicial powers, legal Fourth Estate. Although media does not have a power of its own to change politics or to punish power abuse, by publishing thoroughly investigated reports/articles and by raising public discussions, people can be made aware of problematic situations in society, can get involved and sometimes change those situations (Leyendecker, H., 2009). Media's role is to 'check' the government and other public institutions by critically investigating their acts/deeds, to write about them and inform the public. In a democracy, the existence of differently orientated newspapers, magazines, TV programs etc. are necessary for the public to obtain different information leading people to form their own opinion on a certain subject (BPB, 2011). On the other hand, it has historically been said that published news is not necessarily the opinion of the public but that the prevailing (ruling) opinion is the opinion of the rulers e.g. those in power. (*Die herrschende Meinung ist die Meinung der Herrschenden*) (Marx, K. & F. Engels, 2014).

Over the past 20 years or so, the media in Germany have become more and more similar in their reporting

and the opinions they propagate. Albrecht Mueller (2009) in his book 'Meinungsmache' (The Making of Public Opinion) gives various examples of non-fact related publications in media which reported non-critically on political decisions. Journalists being members of think-tanks and other organizations close to power are one reason for this. This has been well demonstrated in the TV program 'Die Anstalt' (run in the German ZDF-channel in 2014). Another reason for this situation is that print media have become concentrated in the hands of a few owners or foundations, such as the publishers Bertelsmann and Springer, who control more than 75% of the German print media. These groups have continued to cut personnel. (Berger, J., 2014). Only a few journalists are employed full-time and have a very restricted time-budget to investigate a certain subject. Many articles are written by freelancers or part-time journalists, whose income depends on how far they comply with unspoken rules (Berger, J., 2014). Also, many journalists no longer specialize in a certain field, such as science/ economics/ politics etc., but have to write on any subject they are assigned (Habermas, J., 2010).

On the other hand, however, media's role in society cannot be overemphasized. It forms people's self-images and their images of others. Media continuously perpetuates culture as well as ideas, images, and stereotypes - about the culture of the country where the media is based and other countries' cultures. (Krause-

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Ono, M. & S. Waechter, 2008). In daily life, orientations and decision-making are often based on stored stereotypes and prejudices. They are also often used to identify one's own group as good and others as bad, or at least to create a moral distinction between groups (Thomas, A., 2006; Tajfel, H., 1982). Stereotypes and prejudices are omnipresent and often, for good or for bad, replace reflection, questioning, and doubt when they are most needed. To become aware of one's stored stereotypes and prejudices, one requires reflective consciousness. To overcome them, points in common with the other group have to be found, focused, and trained on (Thomas, 2006). The latter is always an important part of ICC-training, lessons, and workshops. In fact, in every training or teaching of ICC, awareness raising of media's role and its working is necessary for the development of true media literacy. So far, however, in the field of ICC itself, media's role have not yet been fully studied and investigated (Sueda, K., 2009).

Therefore, media always has a significant role in the perpetuation and reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudices in public opinion, especially when other nations and countries are concerned. In the case of the EU, with its 28 member-states and within the Eurozone with 19 member-states, stereotypes and prejudices among the countries and about each other abound. In this situation, and especially since the start of the so-called Euro-crisis in 2010, the responsibility of the media is of even greater importance. Foremost is the responsibility of the German media, as Germany is economically the biggest and most influential country of both groups. This paper examines, to a certain extent, how the majority of German media portrayed Greece and what effect this had.

2 BACKGROUND

After the Lehman Shock in 2007/8, the German media reported only for a very short time that this was a financial crisis of banks. Very soon the story was rewritten into a state debt crisis with enormous consequences for the EU countries in the EU's south and/or periphery such as Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece. Although in the majority of these countries, the percentage of debt in comparison to the GDP had not been high before the crisis, this changed after 2008 and in 2010 Greece was bankrupt (OECD statistics 2011).

A default then would have helped the Greek people, but not the big private investors, European banks, who had invested/speculated without thoroughly checking and now had a pile of bad loans. A default would have meant the bankruptcy of some of the banks. The IMF was

called in by the EU and the ECB and together they forged a 'rescue program for Greece', using the ESM, which was mainly a smoke-screen to hide the bailout of, among others, two major German and French banks (Prichet-Edwards, 2015).

Within a year, most of the bad loans had been shifted to the public sector. Those loans had to be shouldered mainly by the Greek people and tax-payers of the other EU-countries (Flassbeck, 2015). Very little of the money lent by the ECB, EU and the IMF reached a typical Greek citizen. Instead, a draconian austerity plan was installed and supervised by members from the IMF, the ECB and the EU, who ensured that the Greek government in power would not deviate from the path forced upon them.

The loans granted had to be used to pay interest rates and old loans back. The result was a shrinking of 25% of the Greek economy within the past five years. Wages are down by a third. Unemployment is up to 27% (60% among young people). Suicides have risen 40%, and the young and bright try to leave the country (Flassbeck, H., 2015). Because Greece has no control of the common currency, the Euro, it has to pay high interest rates for money borrowed, which combined with the shrinking economy, inflates the whole original debt.

Only recently, the research department of the IMF admitted (Telegraph, June 2015) that the imposed austerity program on Greece did not work as had been planned and that the entire prognosis had been wrong. The IMF debt report on Greece was published three days before the referendum on July 5, 2015 (IMF, 2015).

If, what has been summarized above, would have been investigated properly by so-called quality print media in Germany and reported on in a neutral and fact-sticking manner, the opinion of the German public would almost certainly be very different today.

3. GERMAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE GREEK DEBT CRISIS

Europe is no longer what J.N. Hughes-Wilson (2002) portrayed in the cartoon 'The perfect European should be ...' in the late 1990's. In 1995 the EU had expanded to 15 members, which were all former Western European countries. In the cartoons, stereotypes about each other were portrayed in a way that elicited sniggers and laughs about one's own image. Existing stereotypes were used to raise awareness in a non-threatening way. Since then the EU expanded to 25 countries in 2004 and to 27 countries in 2007. In 2007, the EU also celebrated its 50th anniversary and things seemed fine on the surface.

After the Lehman Shock, however, stereotypes and prejudices have risen again, especially since 2010.

Germany's self-stereotype is to be very serious, hard-working, and analytical, sticking to the rules, and taking written words for truth (Schroll-Machl, 2002). This combined with its idea and focus on the necessity of a balanced budget, plus its paranoid fear of inflation, was negatively instrumentalized by the German media in their reporting on Greek debts. From 2010 onward, instead of explaining the fact that at least one big major German bank had to be bailed-out, the widely read newspaper BILD (2 million printed, and read by about 8 million people) became the cheerleader in Greece-bashing with most of the other printed media following. BILD used simple headlines, very little text using prejudices and no explanation of the real and actual facts: (Bildblog, 2015).

- Greece broke/bankrupt! [*Griechenland pleite!*]
- Then sell your islands, you broke Greeks ... and the Acropolis with it! [*Verkauft doch eure Inseln, ihr Pleite-Griechen ...und die Akropolis gleich mit!*]
- That's how good they have it, those broke Greeks [*So gut geht's den Pleite-Griechen*]
- Greeks richer than us! [*Griechen reicher als wir!*]
- NO! No more billions for the greedy/voracious Greeks! [*NEIN! Keine weiteren Milliarden für die gierigen Griechen!*]
- I am worried about my money [*Ich habe Angst um mein Geld*] etc.

These and similar slogans were/are repeated in other mainstream print media, such as in FAZ, WELT, SZ, and BZ as well as in talk-shows on TV, even in programs of good standing. The Greeks are continuously portrayed as irrational, lazy, stubborn idiots, the ones responsible for the whole mess, squandering money and still wanting to party on German tax-payers money. This is done in a blunt and condescending tone. In contrast, the EU, ECB and IMF are backed by the media leaving no doubt who is right and who is wrong. The ground was prepared to put, in the public opinion, all the blame on the 'lazy' Greeks.

It is not easy to find articles in mainstream media which try to explain what really happened. The whole responsibility is put onto the Greeks, with no word about the bail-out of the banks or the problems of sharing a common currency without the legal tools to balance surpluses and deficits among its member-states, with no word about the rigid implementation of the austerity program by IMF officials in Athens and their behavior towards an elected Greek government. The latter was even forbidden to pass any laws in parliament before the

negotiations were concluded and the debts paid back (Nicos Kotsias, Greek secretary of state, May 2015).

Instead, in nearly all media the German tax-payers are told they are paying for the Greek debts. Germans are turned and emotionalized against the Greeks and vice-versa. After the election in January 2015, when the leftist Syriza government pledged to negotiate new terms of repayment, the concerted Greece-bashing rose to a crescendo and became increasingly very personal.

Prime Minister Tsipras and his finance minister Yanis Varoufakis are portrayed in nearly all mainstream media as tricksters, gamblers, betrayers, who do not do their homework, and are childish, crazy, treacherous and insincere (Wolf, W. 2015). Especially since the moment Tsipras announced plans to hold a referendum, he and his government were accused of blackmailing and threatening institutions, and compared to a child, who has lost its temper and gone wild (Mueller, A. 2015).

The bombardment of Greece-bashing news continues nearly hourly as many print media have an online version which is updated several times a day. Of course, it is impossible to publish thoroughly researched news at such a pace. However, all those constantly and everywhere repeated reports drive the message home: the Greeks are the bad, we are the good and do not want to be duped. The Greek budget is a hole that can never be filled. Let the Greeks go and don't throw good money at them.

After having 'brainwashed' the public, the media exculpates itself by citing the newest poll, which shows that the majority of Germans (more than 60%) do not want "to give any more of their money to the Greeks. The Greeks should exit the Eurozone and go back to a Drachma currency and leave the EU altogether" (ZDF Politbarometer, June 2015).

One of the rare moments of truth could be found in the German ARD TV program *Hartaberfair* (2015) where the following was reported: Jean-Claude Juncker, now president of the European Commission mentioned at an official event in Brussels on April 20, 2011: "When things become tight, one has to lie!" [*Wenn es Ernst wird muss man lügen!*]

The bashing is sometimes less crude, but maybe all the more powerful as the following interview (ARD Tagesthemen, June 2015) of the president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, by Thomas Roth, anchor of the German ARD news-program Tagesthemen, shows.

The aim is to propagate that IMF, ECB, and the EU are the good side and that on the Greek side reigns ideology and irrationality. This message is cleverly embedded in

deprecatory remarks, which are all the more credible, as the main part contains some insights, such as that austerity does not seem to work and that an employment program for Greece is necessary. (Mueller, A., 2015).

The remarks in question are the followings:

1. Schulz thinks that there is reason in politics, “even on the side of the Greek government [*selbst auf Seite der griechischen Regierung*][Translation by the author]”.

2. Schulz: “We feel stressed out/ get the needle [*Wir fühlen uns genervt*]”

3. Schulz: “We too do not understand some of the reactions any more. [*Wir verstehen auch manche Reaktion nicht mehr*]”

4. Schulz: “We do not understand why these people (the Greek government) do not accept it, but maybe we will get enlightened. [*Warum diese Leute (die griechische Regierung) das nicht akzeptieren, verstehe ich nicht, aber vielleicht lernen wir es noch.*]”

5. Schulz: “That is why I am a bit astonished that Mr. Tsipras does not want to agree to the offer, but maybe he will still see reason. [*Deshalb bin ich so etwas ein bisschen erstaunt, dass der Herr Tsipras die Angebote nicht annehmen will, aber vielleicht kehrt die Vernunft ja noch bei ihm ein.*]”

6. T. Roth: “What is he playing at there? [*Was er da treibt.*]”

7. Schulz: “This government must finally understand that so many people want to help her. [*Da muss diese Regierung endlich begreifen, dass so viele Menschen ihr helfen wollen.*]”

The above tactics are well described in Albrecht Mueller’s book ‘*Meinungsmache*’ (2009) (The Making of Public Opinion).

For five years now, Greece suffered under austerity and is still told that they are not doing their homework, e.g. to put through ‘reforms’ and privatize Greek assets such as ports, logistic infrastructure etc. According to Galbraith (2015), what is explained in Naomi Klein’s book ‘*The Shock Doctrine*’ (2007) seems to be the exact blue-print for what was and is done to Greece.

4. CONCLUSION

In the past 20 years, more and more print media are concentrated in the hands of a few which has led to staff cuts, rationalizations and out-sourcing. Most of the remaining full-time journalists are connected to various think-tanks and institutions, and are too close to the centers of power to be interested in reporting on themes from a different and a differentiating perspective. Simply copying releases of news agencies and other

media, repeating remarks of politicians and so-called ‘experts’ without questioning their content has become normal. This has been well demonstrated by ‘*Die Anstalt*’ (2014).

When reporting on events; media perpetuate auto- and hetero-stereotypes and prejudices which transport negative messages (Allport, 1979). The latter are especially dangerous as they play on crude, non-reflected emotions and are easily believed when presented in a way compatible with people’s self-image. This could be easily seen in the German reporting on Greece with the media greatly influencing how ideas and opinions are shaped.

Those in elected and non-elected positions of power tend to utilize media for their own purposes, such as to form public opinion. This was already well described by Eduard Bernay in his book ‘*Propaganda*’ in 1928. In today’s world this is often done in a concerted action by various actors writing for print media or appearing on TV, giving interviews etc. to achieve these goals. Media are no longer independent, but moves in aligned actions, which when examined closely, often repeat each other, thereby enforcing the message to be pushed through (Habermas, J., 2010). With this method, a lie repeated several times by various actors in various media is seen as true (Mueller, A., 2009). People tend to believe media, which is therefore a very important factor in intercultural communication.

ICC can no longer ignore media when it comes to ICC training and/or sensitization courses about other cultures. The best course will be in vain if the power of media and its usage is not addressed. Fortunately during the past couple of years, this has been pointed out by various researchers in Japan (Sueda, K., 2009) and has been also addressed by the author (Krause-Ono, M., 2014) in previous publications.

It is essential to deal with stereotypes and prejudices, both how they come into being and how to resist them. They are never helpful in finding a solution and rather aggravate an already tense situation. Real media literacy has to be taught, questioning the words or text published and broadcast. This may require individual research of the facts. In the case of the Greek debt crisis this is of utmost importance, as the political and economic future of a whole continent might be at stake. Important questions to ask would be: Cui bono? (For whom is it good or who does it really serve?), plus repeatedly asking ‘why?’. It is essential to get actively informed and not to rely on mainstream media. Each individual must watch out for easy messages which use stereotypes and prejudices in order to put one side down. If this is the

case, as in the German media reporting on the Greek debt crisis, an ICC-training course for the journalists and those behind them is indispensable.

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メディアで用いられる言葉の変化
ーステレオタイプが続くー

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概要

現代の民主主義においてメディアは第四階級と言われているが、メディアもまた自文化のセルフイメージと他文化に対する片寄ったイメージを保持し続けるためにステレオタイプを用いている。最近のギリシャ累積債務危機に関するドイツメディアの報道と放送を分析すると何が起きて来るのか。その結果が示しているのは、メディアに関する ICC の教育とそのトレーニングをないがしろにすることはできないということであり、真のメディアリテラシーが不可欠だということである。

キーワード： メディア、ステレオタイプ、メディアリテラシー

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