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IN THE SPEECH GENRE  
“READER’S LETTER  
TO THE NEWSPAPER”**

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In the article, properties of the addressee in the genre “letter to the newspaper” in the Soviet Union and in the emigration society are considered. As the data show, the most important for the issue under analysis is to distinguish the following three types of the addressee: the mass addressee, the formal addressee, and the principal one. The mass addressee includes the whole readership of the newspaper. The formal one is the editor-in-chief of the newspaper who the author of the letter addresses just to observe the courtesy norms. By the principal addressee I mean the person or the group of people whose attention or reaction is really important for the author and who are mentioned in the body of letter. Throughout the article I show in which manner these three types of the addressee interact and which language mechanisms serve to introduce them, the particular attention being given to the differences between the letters to the Soviet and to the emigrate newspapers. One of the important conclusions I draw in the end of the article is that the presence of the mass addressee in letters to newspapers leads to substantial shifts in communicative purposes of specific types of letters.

**Keywords:** letters to newspapers, properties of author and addressee, indirect addressee, illocutionary purpose, genre of discourse, linguistic properties of letters to newspapers, mass communication, courtesy forms.

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The main components of any communicative situation are the participants of communication, namely, the speaker (author) and the addressee. The role which the addressee plays in the process of creation of any text is as significant as the role of the author (see [Arutjunova 1981] and [Formanovskaja 2002: 77] on the ‘factor of addressee’). While creating the speech product, the author always takes into account the way in which it can be perceived and interpreted by the addressee. Moreover, the organization and the structure of the text vary considerably, depending on the reaction it expects. This is why the same event can be described differently when speaking to different people.

In what follows, I will analyze in detail properties of the addressee in one speech genre, namely, ‘readers’ letters to newspapers’. My empirical data contains readers’ letters which were published in four newspapers (two emigrant ones, “Poslednie novosti” and “Vozrozhdenie”<sup>2</sup>, and two Soviet ones, “Pravda” and “Izvestija”<sup>3</sup>) from 1920 until 1929. All these letters were included into the column called ‘Letter to the editorial board’.

Many features of the addressee of readers’ letters follow from the fact that in the genre under analysis, there are in fact three types of addressee, and not one addressee. Below I refer to them as ‘mass addressee’, ‘formal addressee’ and ‘direct (target) addressee’. In what follows, I consider each of the three types and describe their interaction with each other.

### ***Mass addressee (the audience of the newspaper)***

The letters to newspapers are a part of public communication – this is what defines to a high degree their composition and various linguistic properties. Since the letters I deal with are published in large scale newspapers, they (as well as newspaper texts of any other genre) are designed to be read by many people. In other words, the main distinctive feature of readers’ letters to newspapers is their orientation to the mass (public) addressee. Even letters which are formally addressed to one person or a small group of people take a mass addressee into account, because they can be read by anyone who buys and reads a newspaper issue.

### ***Formal addressee (the editor of the newspaper)***

Throughout the article, the term ‘formal addressee’ refers to the editor of the newspaper which the letter is directed to. Usually the presence or absence of the formal addressee does not

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<sup>2</sup> The daily newspaper “Poslednie novosti”, published in Paris from 27.04.1920 until 11.05.1940, was regarded as the central organ of Russian emigrant society. Its editor in chief was P.N. Miljukov. “Vozrozhdenie” was also a Paris daily newspaper. It was published from 3.6.1925 until 7.6.1940.

<sup>3</sup> “Pravda” is a daily newspaper, published in Moscow and founded by Vladimir Lenin in 1912. It had the greatest readership among all Soviet newspapers.

Another Soviet newspaper, “Izvestija”, began to be published in Moscow in 12.03.1918. It is also a daily newspaper which has much in common with “Pravda”.

influence the successfulness of realization of the author's communicative intention. It rather marks the letter as more or less polite. Note that the letters published in the emigrant newspapers always contain a mention of the formal addressee – it is addressed to means of so-called 'courtesy formulas'. Some of them precede the main part of the letter, while others follow the main part. Different forms of address constitute the first group: for instance, *Милостивый Государь Господинъ Редакторъ!*; *Многоуважаемый г. Редакторъ* 'Dear Sir, Mr. Editor' in the emigrant newspapers and *Уважаемый / глубокоуважаемый / многоуважаемый товарищ редактор!*; *Товарищ редактор!*; *Уважаемый гражданин редактор!* '(Dear) Comrade Mr. Editor' in the Soviet Russia. These forms of address show that the newspaper as an institution which can be helpful in discussing or solving some problems is mainly represented in the readers' perception by its editor in chief<sup>4</sup>, though it is not clear at all if the letter will be read and answered by the editor himself.

According to Formanovskaja (2002: 86), 'the address helps the author to establish and maintain the contact with the partner in the communication, to regulate the mental representation of the communicative situation as a whole and the roles of partners, their social and personal relations.' The forms of addressed listed above are very illustrative of the communicative situation they function in. For instance, the address can serve as a reliable criterion for distinguishing between emigrant and Soviet letters, even if the orthographic differences are not taken into account.

It is common knowledge that social development and changes in the political orientation of the society tend to result in linguistic and communicative changes which manifest themselves very clearly in the form of address. Formanovskaja (2002: 90) claims that after the October Revolution, this domain was subject to drastic changes. The nominations which reflected the social hierarchy of the old type (*милостивый государь* 'Dear Sir', *сударь, господин* 'Sir') ceased to be used in the Soviet society, giving their place to the generalized address *tovarishch* which reflected the social equality of virtually all speakers.

The address, which occupies the position before the rest of the utterance ('free address') has not only a phatic, but also an appellative function: it calls for addressee's attention or is an appeal to the addressee to listen for the speaker [Formanovskaja 2002: 86]. In the case of readers' letters to newspapers, this is not the case. Though it can be claimed that there is a free address position, this address seems to be purely formal, because the editor in chief is not the principal addressee which the main illocutionary force of the letter is directed to. This is why both communicative functions characteristic of the address (the phatic and the appellative ones)

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<sup>4</sup> Only in several letters in our corpus of 500 letters to newspapers the author addresses himself to the editorial board as a whole, and not to the editor in chief, e.g.: *Прошу редакцию «Правды» не отказать напечатать следующее* 'I ask the editorial board of "Pravda" not to refuse the publication of the following' (Pravda – 14.07.1922).

are reduced. The contact is being established not with the formal addressee, but with the target one (see below on this type of the addressee). In other words, the explicit address to the editor is just imposed by the rules of politeness. This formality of the address manifests itself in that in many letters the address is replaced by abbreviations, such as *М. Г., господин редакторъ*, *М. Г., г. редакторъ* ‘Dear Sir, Mister Editor’, *Ув. Тов. редактор* ‘Dear Comrade Editor’ and sometimes even *М. Г. Г. Р.* ‘Dear Sir, Mister Editor’.

Besides the address directed to the formal addressee (editor in chief), the class of initial courtesy formulas<sup>5</sup> includes a publication request.

(1) EN: *Не откажите предоставить въ редактируемой вами газетѣ мѣсто нижеслѣдующимъ строкамъ.* (Poslednie novosti – 14. 12. 1923 (I)).

‘Do not refuse to give some space in the newspaper you are the editor of to the following letter’ [lit. ‘to the following strings’].

(2) SN: *Прошу вас незамедлительно опубликовать от моего имени нижеслѣдующее заявлениe.* (Pravda – 28. 10. 1922)

‘I ask you to publish immediately the following declaration signed by my name.’

In most cases, the publication request, just as the address follows one of the standardized forms, it can be said to be one of templates of readers’ communication with the newspaper. Deviations from the standard patterns are rather rare. One of them is illustrated by example (3) where the publication request is expressed by an indirect speech act:

(3) EN: *Увѣренъ, что мое открытое письмо къ г. П. Брюнелли найдетъ мѣсто на гостепріимныхъ столбцахъ вашей газеты, какъ нашла и статья «Чернорабочій» (ном. 1330).* (Poslednie Novosti – 04. 10. 1924).

‘I am sure that my open letter addressed to Mister P. Brunelli will be given some space on the hospitable pages of your newspaper, as well as the article “A worker”’.

Besides the cases which I have already mentioned, the reference to the formal addressee is manifested in the standard courtesy forms which conclude many of the letters:

(4) EN: *Примите, г-нъ редакторъ, выраженіе нашего совершеннаго уваженія* (Poslednie Novosti – 11. 06. 1929).

‘Please accept, dear editor, the expression of our sincere respect’.

(5) SN: *Примите уверения в совершенном к вам почтении.* (И – 25. 04. 1923).

‘Please accept the assurance of our sincere respect to you’.

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<sup>5</sup> Publication requests are sometimes found at the end of the letter, but these examples are rare.

In the emigrant media, the concluding forms are even more standardized than the address and the publication request. They are often abbreviated, as is the case with addresses, using forms like *Примите и проч.*, *Примите и пр.* ‘Accept etc.’. The tendency to use abbreviated forms show that the phatic communication in newspapers was conventionalized to a high degree in the period under analysis, as compared to the present time. It is highly improbable for a modern letter to newspaper to begin with an abbreviation like *М. Г. Г. Р.* ‘Dear Sir, Mister Editor’ and end with *Примите и пр.* ‘Accept etc.’ A letter of this sort would remain unclear to readers.

Interestingly enough, in Soviet newspapers concluding forms almost entirely ceased to be used. In Soviet newspapers one almost do not find any final courtesy formulas which are almost inevitably present in emigrant ones. Our corpus includes only three Soviet letters containing a final formula. However, in Soviet letters we see some new formulas: *С товарищеским / коммунистическим / революционным приветом* ‘With friendly / communist / revolutionary compliments!’ which are used analogously to traditional ones. Usually a signature follows a formula of this sort.

Almost the same should be said about concluding courtesy forms (addresses and publication requests). They are also rather rare in Soviet letters, contrary to emigrant ones – in other words, the formal addressee is not always present in the Soviet newspapers. This difference between the Soviet state and the emigration is illustrative of the general tendency: in 1920ths, the preceding courtesy forms were already out of use, while the new courtesy forms had not been established.

In the body of letters the formal addressee is rarely referred to, either by a direct address or by an indirect reference. However, there are some exceptions, such as that in (6) where the formal addressee is not only mentioned in the initial and final zones, but is also referred to in the body of the letter by means of possessive pronouns.

(6) SN: *Уважаемый товарищ редактор!*

*В виду возникшего недоразумения прошу опубликовать следующее мое письмо:*

*В беседе об итогах воздухоплавательных испытаний, данной мною **вашему** сотруднику и помещенной в газете от 21 ноября, я сообщил неправильные сведения о работе корреспондента «Комсомольской Правды» тов. Розенфельда. Это недоразумение произошло не по вине **вашей** редакции.*

*Оставляя в силе первую часть беседы, касающуюся недостойного журналиста поведения корреспондента «Рабочей Радиогазеты», сообщаю, что по произведенной мною проверке работа тов. Розенфельда не вызывает никаких сомнений. Наложить пятно на пилота, а тем более на организации, снарядившие аэростат, у меня, конечно, не было ни желания, ни основания. Н. Г. СТАБРОВСКИЙ. (И – 22. 11. 1928).*

‘Dear Mr. editor [lit. ‘Comrade editor’]!

In view of possible misunderstanding, I ask you to publish the following letter:

In the discussion of results of airplane tests which I had with your employee and which was published in the issue of November 21, I communicated to him a wrong piece of information concerning the work of the correspondent of “Komsomol’skaja pravda” Mr. Rozenfeld. This misunderstanding was not a fault of **your** editorial board.

Although I consider the first part of my evaluation, concerning the improper behavior of the correspondent of “Rabochaja radiogazeta”, to be true, I would like to tell that, as my check showed, Mr. Rozenfeld’s work does not call for any doubt. I certainly did not wish or have a reason to slander either the pilot or the organizations which prepared the airplane to the flight.’

Each letter to a newspaper has, along with the formal addressee, a target addressee. This participant of communication is considered in the following section.

### *Target addressee*

I use the term target addressee to refer to a person or a group of people who are real addressees of author’s communicative intention and are mentioned in the letter. In the examples below the target addressee is marked in bold:

(7) EN: *Милостивый Государь г-нь Редакторъ! Позвольте мнѣ при посредствѣ Вашей уважаемой газеты выразить глубокую благодарность **американскому консулу Воллосъ, и г.г. Батолину, Захарову, Скидельскому и Чермоеву**, пожертвовавшимъ по 500 франковъ за билетъ на устроенный мною концертъ въ Клариджъ-Отелъ въ пользу русскихъ бѣженцевъ...* (Poslednie Novosti – 18. 12. 1920).

Dear Sir, Mr. Editor! Please let me express through your newspaper, which I respect very much, deep thanks to the American consul **Wallo**s and **Misters Batolin, Zakharov, Skidel’sky and Chermoev**, who donated 500 franks each for tickets to a concert in Claridge-Hotel for the benefit of Russian refugees which I organized.

(8) EN: *29 мая (по новому стилю – 11 июня), – пятьдесятъ лѣтъ со дня взятія русскими войсками гор. Хивы – столицы Хивинскаго ханства.*

*Прошу **боевыхъ товарищей** откликнуться, сообщить, въ какой части служилъ, чинъ, имя, отчество, фамилію, при какихъ обстоятельствахъ находился въ отрядѣ.* (ПН – 12. 06. 1923).

‘On May 29 (June 11 New Style) it will be fifty years since the Russian troops seized the city of Khiva, the capital of the Khanate of Khiva. I ask each of the **comrades-in-arms** to respond to this letter, to tell me the place where he served, the military rank, the name, the surname, and the circumstances of his service in our detachment’.

(9) SN: *Мы, красноармейцы N стрелкового полка, N-ской дивизии, приносим глубокую благодарность **Красному Московскому Союзу Печатников** за присланную нам в полк библиотечку <...>* (Pravda – 06. 01. 1921 (II)).

‘We, Red Army soldiers of the Rifle Regiment N of the Division N, are deeply thankful to the **Red Moscow Union of Printers** for a little collection of books sent to our regiment.’

(10) SN: *Обращаюсь с убедительной просьбой ко всем лицам и учреждениям, знающих, где можно в пределах РСФСР найти одну из упомянутых выше книг, сообщить по адресу: Москва, Остоженка, № 53, институт красной профессуры, Р. Вайсберг. (Pravda – 17. 02. 1923 (I)).*

‘I address to **all people and institutions who are aware of where I can find one of the abovementioned books in Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic** my earnest request to send me the relevant information to the following address: Moscow, Ostozhenka street, house 53, Institute of Red Professors, R. Vaisberg’.

Our sample includes several letters where the formal addressee is identical to the target one – in other words, the editor is a principal addressee, cf., for instance, (11):

(11) EN: *М. Г. Павелъ Николаевичъ.*

*Вы ходите на остриѣ ножа, хотя въ послѣднихъ номерахъ «Новостей» чувствуется, что взятый вами курсъ травли Русской Арміи Вы стараетесь нѣсколько смягчить. Будучи совершенно безпристрастнымъ и скорѣе вашимъ заступникомъ, я считаю долгомъ предупредить Васъ, что Вамъ грозитъ серьезная опасность со стороны тѣхъ, которые не в силахъ были сѣорганизоваться (sic!) и проявить достаточное напряженіе противъ техъ, которые ихъ травили сознательно или подъ чьимъ нибудь вліяніемъ.*

*Примите увѣреніе въ моемъ уваженіи. (Подпись неразборчива) Парижъ, 7 іюля 1921 года. (Poslednie Novosti – 10. 07. 1921).*

**Dear Sir, Pavel Nikolaevich!** [i.e. Pavel N. Miljukov, the editor in chief of “Poslednie novosti”].

‘You live on a razor’s edge, though in the last issues of “Novosti” it is obvious that you are trying to make your attacks to the Russian Army less sharp. Though I am a totally unbiased person, or even belong to your defenders, I consider it to be necessary to warn you about a serious danger that threatens you from those who did not manage to organize themselves and resist successfully to the people who attacked them by their own wish or under someone’s influence.

Please accept the expression of my sincere respect’.

The cases where the target addressee is identical to the mass addressee are much more numerous. It happens when the author addresses himself to the whole audience of the newspaper which can be mentioned explicitly, as in examples (12) to (15), or not mentioned at all – in the latter case, the fact that the author speaks to all readers can be inferred from the content of the letter.

(12) EN: *Покорнѣйше прошу всѣхъ желающихъ принять участіе въ проектируемомъ мною кооперативѣ, сообщить мнѣ о своемъ согласіи по адресу...* (Poslednie Novosti – 09. 11. 1921).

‘I earnestly request **everyone who wants** to participate in the co-operative society I am planning to organize to communicate his wish to the following address... / to inform me by the following address...’



(13) EN: *Приводя выше изложенные факты, мы обращаемся съ просьбой ко **всѣмъ, кто можетъ и долженъ придти къ намъ на помощь и улучшить наше существованіе и лѣченіе.*** (Poslednie Novosti – 24. 05. 1922).

‘After stating the relevant facts, the we want to make a request to **everyone who is able to and have to help us and improve the conditions of our life and treatment.**’

(14) SN: *Уважаемые товарищи! На днях в «Правде» была напечатана статья т. М. Кольцова, в которой он рассказывает о новых подвигах убийцы т. Воровского–Морина Конради. <...> По-моему **русским читателям** эту пикантную подробность следует знать.* (Pravda – 11. 10. 1924).

**Dear Comrades!** Recently “Pravda” published an article by M. Koltsov where the author reported new crimes of Morin Konradi who was the killer of Comrade Vorovsky. <...> I suppose that Russian readers have to know these ‘spicy details’.

(15) SN: *Поэтому заявляю перед **всем общественным мнением вообще и перед всеми московскими рабочими в частности, а также перед всеми анархистскими организациями России, что я в настоящий момент не буду вести никакой политической и организационной работы как в массах, так и в организациях анархистов, в анархо-синдикалистском духе.*** (Izvestija – 30. 09. 1921).

‘This is why I declare **before the public opinion in general**, and, in particular, before all Moscow workers and all Russian anarchist organizations that from now and on I will not carry out any political or organizational work in spirit of anarcho-syndicalism, either in the masses or in anarchist organizations’.

Along with examples where the formal, target and mass addressee are easily distinguishable, there are letters where it is problematic to draw a clear-cut border between the three types. Examples (16) and (17) are especially interesting in this respect:

(16) EN: *Поэтому Русскій Отдѣлъ Информационнаго Бюро на Иностраннѣхъ Языкахъ (быв. Амер. Кр. Креста) обращаетъ вниманіе **вашихъ** [редактора – Е. Н.] **читателей и другихъ лицъ заинтересованныхъ въ розыскѣ родныхъ и знакомыхъ на слѣдующій порядокъ письменнаго къ намъ обращенія...*** (Poslednie Novosti – 23. 06. 1921).

‘This is why the Russian Department of Information Bureau in Foreign Languages (formerly the Information Bureau of American Red Cross) wants to remain readers and other people who want to look for their relatives and friends that they should address themselves to us in the following way.’

(17) EN: *Разрѣшите мнѣ, пожалуйста, обратиться **къ вамъ** [к редактору – Е. Н.] и просить черезъ посредство вашей уважаемой газеты обратить вниманіе **вашихъ читателей** на мое безвыходное, критическое положеніе. <...> Умоляю **добрыхъ людей** откликнуться и посылно помочь: буду искренне и чистосердечно благодарна.* (Poslednie Novosti – 30. 12. 1928).

‘Let me please address myself **to you** [the editor] to draw **your readers**’ attention to the critical, hopeless situation which I face now. <...> I pray for all **kind people** to respond to this letter and help as far as possible. I will be sincerely thankful to all of you’.

In these two examples, the formal and semantic markers of target addressee seem to be in conflict. The formal criterion (the use of second person pronoun, as in *vashikh chitatelej* ‘your readers’) points to the editor as a target addressee. However, the content of the letter makes it evident that the communicative intention is directed to the whole audience of the newspaper, which is, therefore, the target addressee. An unusual fact about this letter is that the formal and the target addressee are mentioned in the same noun phrase *vashikh chitatelej*.

Traditionally, two types of addressees are distinguished in linguistics: direct (immediate, concrete, personal) addressee vs. indirect (secondary) addressee (see [Formanovskaja 2002] for details). The direct addressee is an addressee which the speaker’s communicative intention is directed to. The speaker always constructs its speech product, taking into account the impression it will have on the direct addressee. The direct addressee is marked in text by means of second person pronouns and verb forms, addresses, imperative constructions, questions and so on. The notion of target addressee I use is synonymous to the direct addressee.

The term **indirect addressee** is used for another participant of the communicative situation. The speaker does not address the indirect addressee, but takes him / her into account when constructing his speech: the presence of the covert indirect addressee influences the choice of the content and the form of the utterance, though less than the presence of the direct addressee (see also [Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1990], [Formanovskaja 2002]). Although the opposition of direct vs. indirect addressee is mainly to describe oral communication, it also turns out to be relevant for a number of written and mixed genres. For instance, Anna A. Zalznjak (2010) proposes to use the notion of indirect addressee to describe such genres as diaries, dedicatory inscriptions on books, modern forms of address on an envelope, address formulas of birch-bark letters, headlines of applications, girls’ albums, congratulatory addresses, etc. The notion of indirect addressee is equally important for the description of readers’ letters to newspapers.

Irrespectively of the type the letter belongs to and of whether the author mentions or not the formal or the target addressee, the author always remembers that his speech is public. Even if the author addresses himself to an individual target addressee, he understands that his communicative intention will be known to all the readers of the newspaper, i.e. to the mass addressee which is often represented as an indirect addressee. Below I will describe possible manifestations of the presence of the mass addressee in the letters under analysis.

First, the presence of an indirect addressee can be inferred from the general knowledge of properties of the communicative situation under analysis. One of the essential features of media communication is its public character. Second, there is linguistic evidence which confirms the presence of an indirect addressee. Primarily, these are different sorts of clarifications and comments which the author and the target (direct) addressee obviously do not need, as in (18):

(18) EN: *Милостивый Государь, Господинъ Редакторъ! Позвольте мнѣ при посредствѣ вашей уважаемой газеты принести отъ лица всего зарубежнаго союза нашихъ русскихъ военныхъ инвалидовъ, горячую, единодушную, благодарность графу Д. М. Граббе за великую отзывчивость его благороднаго сердца и патриотическое дѣло – устройства въ его имѣніи въ Польшѣ, близъ историческихъ «Казачьихъ Могилъ», пріюта и довольствія для десяти нашихъ наиболее тяжелыхъ инвалидовъ, заброшенныхъ судьбою въ Польшу.* (В – 18. 08. 1925).

‘Dear Sir, Mr. Editor! Please let me bring through you newspaper the deepest and warmest thanks on behalf the union of Russian military invalids abroad to Earl D.M. Grabbe for the tenderness of his noble heart and for his patriotic action – **organization of an asylum providing the ration for ten of our invalids who happened to be in Poland and who are in the gravest health conditions in his country estate in Poland, near the historical “Kazak graves”**’.

The letter in (18) belongs to the letters of thanks. Although the author explicitly addresses himself to the target addressee (Earl D.M. Grabbe), the letter has, along with the phatic function, an informative one. The author describes in detail addressee’s merits which form the grounds for the letter. This description is apparently to the mass addressee, because Earl D.M. Grabbe himself does not need any clarifications concerning the asylum he founded himself. In a personal letter which presupposed only the target addressee, the author would presumably include only a brief thank expression with no clarifications<sup>6</sup>.

The situation with Serafimovich’s letter in the Soviet Russia is very similar. The author polemizes with A. Lunacharsky on the way of representation of priests in Soviet theatre plays:

(19) SN: *Только вот мужества прямоты и искренности у т. Луначарского не хватило. Почему он не рассказал о той гнусной, подлой травле, которую разыграли вокруг этой пьесы театральные спецы, употребляя все усилия, всяческие приемы, лишь бы сорвать постановку ее? <...>*

*Т. Луначарский, да вы помогите поставить эту пьесу на московском театре. <...>*

*Не стал бы трогать этой истории, не до того теперь. Но раз вы выволокли это грязное белье, приходится приоткрыть уголок этого разлагающегося театрального мира, к которому и вы будто имели некоторое отношение за эти три года.* (Pravda – 18. 02. 21).

‘However, it turned out that **Mr. Lunacharsky [lit. Comrade Lunacharsky] did not have courage to speak sincerely**. Why did he not tell everyone about the disgusting, low attacks on

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<sup>6</sup> For the sake of comparison, some examples from Anna A. Zaliznjak’s book (Zaliznjak 2010) about the diary genre can be considered. According to Zaliznjak, though the diary is a case of self-addressed communication, the author knowingly introduces to the text some comments redundant to him, expecting that another person (indirect addressee) will probably read the diary:

*The role of an ‘older friend’, an adviser is taken on by Mulja (Samuil Gurevich). This person is an intimate friend of my sister Alja, a unique person.* (G. Efron. Diary. Moscow, 2004. Volume 1. Page 16.)

*I have always liked to argue with Kot (Konstantin Efron), my cousin.* (G. Efron. Diary. Moscow, 2004. Volume 1. Page 16)

In author’s words, “in the communicative situation of diary inscriptions the figure of the addressee as a key factor of genre organization is built as follows. The immediate [i.e. direct – Elena Nikishina] addressee is the author himself. However, another, indirect addressee is included into the situation – namely, a potential reader, including ‘the future generations’”.

the play which were begun by theatrical specialists who take all efforts, all kinds of methods to make its staging impossible? <...>

**Mr. Lunacharsky, please, help (me)** to stage this play in Moscow theatres! <...>

I was not going to touch upon this story, there are more important matters to think about. But since **you brought this story to the light**, I have to reveal something about this decaying theatrical society which **you seem to have also been related to** during the last three years’.

If we read this letter thoroughly, we note that the author alternately uses second and third person when speaking about Lunacharsky. The fragments where the target addressee is referred to in third person are organized as a narrative where Lunacharsky is the principal character, and author’s intention is to express his indignation to the audience. In contrast, when Lunacharsky is addressed in second person, he is a real addressee. It turns out that the letter, besides the target addressee, has also a mass addressee (the audience). It is not obvious which addressee should be considered as the main one.<sup>7</sup>

Along with clarifications which are too explicit for the target addressee, the mass addressee manifests him/herself in the way the target addressee is referred to. The examples above show that in letters to newspapers the target addressee is often described using third person forms and constructions (for instance, instead of the default construction like *Obrashchajus’ k vam, druz’ja* ‘I speak to you, my friends’, the author chooses something like *Obrashchajus’ k druz’jam* ‘I speak to my friends’). Imagine the following situation: on a meeting, the chair asks everyone to vote (the addressee is a group of people). He can use either the second (‘Dear friends, I ask you to vote’) or the third person (‘Let everyone vote now’). If the chair speaks to only one person, both options are available again (the second person, as in ‘And now, Peter, vote, please’ or the third one, as in ‘And now I ask Peter vote’).

In contrast, if the speaker addresses himself to one person and no one can hear him, the use of the third person is prohibited. It is impossible to say *Pust’ X vyjdet iz komnaty* ‘Let X / I ask X to leave the room’ if only the speaker and X present. Thus, the choice of third person forms results from the fact that some people, other than the speaker and the addressee can hear or read the communication – in the case of letters to newspapers it is the mass addressee (the audience). Third person references to the target addressee is especially frequent in letters of thank, cf. (18), (20) and (21):

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<sup>7</sup> The French sociologists D. Maingueneau in his analysis of so-called “public letters” (*lettres publiques*), i.e. letters which are addressed to the general public (i.e. a presidential contender’s pre-election address) uses a theatrical metaphor: he treats public letters as personal letters transferred to a theatre play situation (*une mise en scène publique de la relation épistolaire privée*). The common feature between a play and a public letter is that each word is addressed to the audience, and it is the audience which is the main addressee of everything that takes place on the scene. [Maingueneau 1998].

Kerbrat-Orecchioni [1990: 92] considers a similar situation of oral communication: “Every time when the contextual conditions lead to a rearrangement of addressees hierarchy, one can speak of a ‘communicative trope’: the addressee which can be claimed to be a direct one by formal reasons (i.e. the use of address forms) plays in fact a secondary role, while the participant who has a status of indirect addressee by formal criteria is in reality the main addressee of the utterance”. (translation by Elena Nikishina).

(20) **SN**: *Кроме того, благодарим старшего по эшелону тов. Хованского за хорошую постановку дела и заботы об эшелоне.* (Izvestija – 04. 06. 1921).

‘Besides this, we are thankful to **the commander of the troop train Comrade Xovansky** for the good organization of the work and the care of the echelon.’

(21) **SN**: *Хотя жизнь моя и не представляет особенной ценности, но все же я считаю необходимым через посредство вашей уважаемой газеты выразить горячую благодарность вагоновожатому трамвая № 17-й тов. Бородулину за спасение моей жизни быстрой остановкой вагона в тот момент, когда я, поскользнувшись (вблизи ЦК РКП), очутился между двумя ставками колес.* (Izvestija – 15. 03. 1923).

‘Although my life is not of any particular value, I consider it necessary to express my deep thanks to **the driver of the tram number 17 Comrade Borodulin** for saving my life by stopping the coach quickly at the moment when I found myself between the two axles of wheels after slipping on the road near the building of Central Committee of Russian Communist Party.’

If the author thanks the addressee in a personal letter which no one else can read, he hardly ever uses the third person, as well in oral communication. Cf. examples from personal letters:

(22) *Благодарю Вас, дорогая, за скорый ответ на мое письмо* (из письма А. И. Булгакова к В. М. Покровской, 1889 [Земская 2004: 43]).

‘**I thank you, my dear**, for a quick answer to my letter’ (from A.I. Bulgakov’s letter to V.M. Pokrovskaja, 1889, [Zemskaja 2004: 43]).

(23) *Спасибо тебе, дорогой друг, за поздравление, которое пришло ко мне вчера* (Из письма М. А. Булгакова к А. П. Гдешинскому, 1939 [Земская 2004: 186]).

‘**Thank you, my dear friend**, for your congratulations that I received yesterday’ (from M.A. Bulgakov’s letter to A.P. Gdeshinsky, 1939, [Zemskaja 2004: 186]).

I conclude that the presence of the mass addressee (an indirect or a direct one) in the communicative situation of reader’s letter to a newspaper results in important shifts of communicative intentions of letters. When the author composes his text, he cares not only about the target addressee, but also about the mass addressee and does his best to make the text clear for him. He seeks to make explicit everything that the target addressee can easily infer. This is why letters to newspapers, irrespectively of the subtype they belong to, shows common features with informative and appellative genres.

For instance, letters of thanks are traditionally regarded as a phatic genre. However, since the informative zone of the letter becomes wider and more detailed (the author is trying to describe the merits he thanks the addressee for), this type of letters has some properties of the report letters. The appellative component is also represented in virtually all letters, because the

author composes the text, so that it draws attention of many readers: to reach this aim, they use, among other things, appellative formulas and subjective, positive or negative, evaluation

### *Abbreviations*

EN – emigrant newspapers

SN – Soviet newspapers

### *Sources of letters*

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Vozrozhdenie. Paris. 1920-1929.

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