'Official Tears': Signs of Sociocultural Type 'Official' According to the National Corpus of the Russian Language

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the consideration of one of the facets of the sociocultural type 'official', which is significant for the linguistic consciousness of native Russian speakers and corresponds to the character traits of a typical Russian official. Based on the analysis of the National Corpus of the Russian Language, the authors represent the prevailing perception of the Russian official rooted in the Russian linguistic consciousness, trace its transformations, as well as identify those components that have remained unchanged for the two centuries. In general, the results of analyzing the Russian adjective 'official' represent a very unsavoury image of a state official. The texts included in the NCRL allowed revealing essential character traits of the Russian official: indifference, ignorance, cowardice, arrogance, insincerity. These traits characterize the sociocultural type 'official', that is a generalized image formed in the linguistic consciousness of native Russian speakers for two centuries.

1 Collocation of the adjective 'official' as the evidence of how the image of an official is reflected in the Russian linguistic consciousness

This study is devoted to the consideration of one of the facets of the sociocultural type 'official', which is significant for the contemporary linguistic consciousness of native Russian speakers. According to V.I. Karasik, "linguocultural character types can have ethnic and cultural significance, express the values of the entire community emphasizing the national and cultural diversity of the ethnics <...> or sociocultural significance describing a particular social group, as opposed to the rest of the society" [1]. Officials in the Russian linguistic consciousness, of course, are opposed to the rest of the society [2].

As part of this study, the traits of a typical official are considered according to the collocation of the adjective 'official' in the texts of the National Corpus of the Russian Language (NCRL) [3]. V.A. Plungjan rightly noted that "with the help of the corpus it became possible not only to solve the known tasks more quickly and effectively but also to put fundamentally new tasks, which were previously practically impossible due to their labor-intensive characteristic" [4]. Among these tasks V.A. Plungjan singles out changes in the frequency of use and collocation of different language units. In turn, these subtle changes in the language, which are the result of analyzing the corpus data, can become the basis of conclusions about the changes in the Russian linguistic consciousness.

When studying collocation of the adjective 'official' based on the NCRL data, we allocate three chronological periods with a certain degree of conditionality: from 1835 (the earliest mention of the analyzed unit, included in the NCRL) until 1916; from 1917 (the year of the February bourgeois and socialist revolutions, which resulted in establishing a new Soviet state) until 1990; from 1991 (the year of the demise of the Soviet Union) up to the present. Such a periodization seems to us quite justified in connection with the fact that the word 'official' in Russian means a state official, that is, the person whose activity is closely connected with the state, the state structure and state policy. In this regard, it is logical to assume that in structurally different states (in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation) officials and their types have different features reflected in the Russian linguistic consciousness. The conditionality of the proposed periodization is connected with the fact that changes in public life and linguistic consciousness do not occur at the same time; and the text, belonging to the same period according to the time of its creation, can relate meaningfully or ideologically to another period. For example, the fragment of the book "Meetings on the sinful Earth" (2001) by S.I. Aleshin, we are interested in, tells about the USSR Minister of Cultural Affairs E.A. Furtseva in 1960-1974: "It is necessary to say that more and more taking the side of the theatre players, she [E.A. Furtseva] simultaneously began to treat the officials' servility and their aiming at overcautiousness with
"stranger indignity" [Samuel Aleshin "Meetings on the sinful Earth" (2001)]. In this case, we are dealing with a characteristic of Soviet, but not contemporary, officials. And similar instances are quite numerous among other uses of the adjective 'official' in the NCRL texts. Therefore, the researcher should not blindly rely on the data provided by the corpus. Samples, obtained on a particular request, need careful investigating and thoughtful analyzing. According to A.D. Shmelyov, "A certain 'scepticism' about electronic corpus may often be associated with occasional illusion that their use itself can ensure the reliability of the research results" [5]. The mere use of the corpus is only a tool in the hands of the researcher, who must be able to efficiently apply this tool on the basis of the research objectives.

The NCRL is an inestimable source of information on the frequency of the linguistic unit occurrence. In relation to the statistics of using the adjective 'official' in the NCRL texts, we find the proof for the verity of our assumptions about the link between historical periods and the linguistic units functioning in the texts of these periods. The NCRL tools allow building a frequency graph of using words both in the whole corpus and in any of its sub-corpus. Regarding the adjective official, the NCRL user through using the tool "distribution by years" receives the chart, presented in Figure 1.

![Fig. 1](image1.png)

**Fig. 1.** The frequency statistics of the adjective 'official' in the NCRL texts of 1835-2018.

The graph of changes in the statistics of using the adjective 'official' in the NCRL texts demonstrates a significant drop in its frequency during the Soviet period and significant growth during the period of post-Soviet Russia. In other words, modern texts, associated with officials, began to mention them more often than in the previous historical period. However, such growth of frequency in using the word 'official' as a noun is not observed in the post-Soviet period according to the NCRL data (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2](image2.png)

**Fig. 2.** The frequency statistics of the noun 'official' in the NCRL texts of 1800-2018.

We believe that the collocation analysis of the adjective 'official' on the extensive NCRL material allows drawing sound conclusions about "psychologically real meaning" [6] of the word 'official', which is the name of the appropriate sociocultural type. The collocation of the adjective derived from this name, especially if the same collocations appear in the texts by different authors, demonstrates "the number of semantic components that updates the meaning of an independent word in the minds of native speakers, in the unity of all its constituent semantic features – more or less vivid, nuclear and peripheral" [6].

Being confined to a specific study, we will focus only on the traits of a Russian official as a sociocultural type.

### 2 The traits of a Russian official as a sociocultural type

The collocation analysis of the adjective 'official' according to the NCRL demonstrates the perception of a state official in the Russian linguistic consciousness, their transformation for two centuries, as well as those ideas that remain unchanged. In particular, regarding the nature of a Russian official, we can conclude that the Russian language speakers reckon an official as an indifferent, ignorant, coward, and at the same time arrogant and hypocritical person.

#### 2.1 Indifference of Russian officials

Judging by the collocation of the adjective 'official' in the NCRL texts, a very important character trait of a Russian official as a sociocultural type is indifference which is verbalized by a representative group of units, combined with the adjective 'official': indifference, callousness, callous nature, induration, coldness, incorruptibility, austerity, reticence, selfishness, "this is outside my area of expertise": "Osip Emilievich was shocked by this official indifference of the young editor and stopped waiting for something spirited from his new friends" [E. Gerstein. Close to a poet (1985-1999)]; "Preparing to print this material, I was reading the papers at my disposal and was again convinced that official indifference may drive anyone to an early grave" [V. Knyazev. I did not send you there (2003) // "Russian Special Forces", 2003.02.15]; "Alexander continued the traditions of Catherine, when in the presence of Nicholas, the secular aristocratic tone is replaced by a dry, formal, boldly oppressive tone, on the one hand, and an unquestioningly obedient tone, on the other hand, a mixture of Napoleonic jerky and rough manner combined with official callousness" [A.I. Herzen. Past and thoughts. Part 4, Moscow, Petersburg and Novgorod (1857)]; However, despite his numerous shortcomings and callous official nature, Fedorov had also a lot of good traits [A.A. Nilsky. Backstage Chronicle (1856-1894)]; "There it [the Soviet power] results in the terrible side of refusals, forced and fragile promises (only just to get loose), official coldness and incorruptibility for the people and an individual with his troubles, torments and lingering hopes" [A.T.

Indifference is a character trait of Russian officials of different epochs, and it is impossible to ignore the fact that this trait of officials does not become less frequently mentioned in the texts of last decades than in the descriptions of Tsarist and Soviet officials. We also note that callousness, judging by the NCRL texts, is found among foreign state officials: "Having faced the indifference of the labour party government, the callousness of the bureaucracy, "Russian" electorate, which contributed to the victory of the labour party, gradually began to lean to the right" [A. Bovin. Five years among the Jews and MFA officials, or Israel from the window of the Russian Embassy (1999)].

Occasional use of the adjective 'official' with nouns, whose meanings have the sense of caring and attention to people (kindness, pity), only confirms the general conclusion about the indifference of a typical official. When it comes to official friendliness, this friendliness is condescendingly insincere: "So tell me more... Where should I start?" "Start from the very beginning" [T. Ustinov. Great evil and petty mischief (2003)]. Sincere sympathy to people, cordiality and sincerity are absolutely impossible for those officials whose image is fixed in the Russian linguistic consciousness. The attention of the official to the surrounding people, of course, is possible, but there must be good reasons, for example, the desire to please higher ranks. In other cases, the official is indifferent, caring and pity are unfamiliar to him: "Officials are those who cannot construct anything, cannot care, cannot drive planes. Officials are neither actors, nor writers, nor artists, nor pilots, nor doctors... If they are deprived of their official work, they are nobody. That is their problem. The same as the loss of body for parasites: worms, lice, fleas. The only way out is to have time to skip from a dying body to another one which is more tenacious. I always say to my mother: Don't cry to official pity. Parasites can have no sympathy. Having lived long, parasites have nonfunctional organs to sympathize with. The worms do not even have the organs of sight and hearing, there are only the parts of the body to get pleasure from food and reproduction" [M.N. Zadornov. The satirist's fantasies (2000) // "October", 2001].

Human sympathy in the official is displaced with professionally necessary callousness and coexistence of human and official is impossible: "When the Kholomansky start to demonstrate the official behaviour, one wants to look out of the window to check if there is a full moon outdoors? He just recalled how he had not been paid for months and "pow!" starving workers are to blame themselves: had not held a constructive dialogue. Human sympathy in the Ambassador is mixed up with official 'it is not my department'" [D. Danilova, D. Kartsev. Went to Kings // "Russian reporter", 2013]. The mention of the full moon here is a hint of the werewolf, 'human official', whose entities replace each other and cannot coexist simultaneously.

2.2 Ignorance of Russian officials

The fact that the sociocultural type 'official' is not exactly bright according to the Russian linguistic consciousness is realized through a combination of the adjective 'official' and nouns 'ignorance', 'dullness', 'foolishness', 'cretinism': "An extraordinarily talented man, a tireless worker seeking to help all unjustly wronged, especially among the fellow filmmakers, Roman Carmen constantly had to fight off the enviers and detractors, official stupidity and ignorance" [A. Carmen. A novel with a sharp storyline. About the madness of the brave, love and party (2001) // "Izvestia", 2001.11.27]; "The situation with the theft of meat is a logical consequence of official cretinism, which led the industry to the brink of collapse" [the collective. Mail service "Ogonyok" // "Ogonyok". No. 10, 1991]; "Seriously though: Why should I lose my only life because of official foolishness?" [Yu. Nagibin. The war at the side door (1990-1995)].

The mention of ignorance is practically not found in the descriptions of the officials of Tsarist Russia through the use of the adjective 'official'. In the XIX-early XX centuries we note only the combinations 'official wisdom' and 'official vision', whose meanings have ironic hints on the intellectual difference of the official from the representatives of other social groups: "But do not forget that nowadays we all live very quickly and that all official wisdom is now measured not in years, but density and even, so to speak, inattentiveness of conservative beliefs accompanied by the willingness to rush aimlessly at a moment's notice" [M. E. Saltkov-Shchedrin. Well-intentioned speeches (1872-1876)]; "Our attitude to society and acquaintances has changed greatly since the son's arrest: having experienced real grief, we instinctively began to avoid people with official vision, and we formed a small but very close circle of supporters instead" [S.A. Savinkova. The years of Sorrows// "Bylye Gody", 1906].

Bureaucratic ignorance during the heyday of Soviet power is also not found in the search results of the NCRL. Of course, it is impossible to draw conclusions about the attitude of Russian native speakers to officials on the basis of the corpus data. According to a fair remark by A.D. Shmelev, "the so-called negative language material cannot be extracted from the corpus in any way without a recourse to the linguistic competence of native speakers, i.e. the information about the fact which linguistic units and structures are unacceptable in this language. In other words, if a certain unit or structure is regularly found in the corpus, we can conclude with some certainty that it is the correct unit or structure of the language; however, if it is not found in the corpus, no conclusions about its acceptability or unacceptability cannot be made (and only assumptions can be made on the basis of analogy) without a reference to the linguistic competence of native speakers" [5]. It should be correspondingly noted that the conclusions about the ignorance of the sociocultural type 'official' made in this article are supported by our research and the other material [2, 7].
2.3 “Official symbiosis of arrogant noncommissioned officer Prishibeev and timid Akaky trembling with fear”

The character of a typical official combines seemingly opposite traits: arrogance and cowardice. This combination was metaphorically described by E.A. Yevtushenko through the mention of two Russian literature characters whose names have become winged. The ability of the official to combine servility and rudeness in his character, as already noted [7], was reflected in the winged unit, which goes to the creativity of M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Either hit in the snout or shake the hand, please” [8]. But if M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin meant the lack of middle ground in the behaviour of the official, the Russian linguistic consciousness reflected the idea of the combination of two polar traits in one official: cowardice and arrogance. And though N.N. Sukhanov wrote at the beginning of XX century: “Long forgotten old-regime, coward and turgid, arrogant and fawning official visage” [N.N. Sukhanov. Notes on Revolution / Book 5 (1918-1921)]; these traits of officials are not forgotten till today.

The representative of the sociocultural type ‘official’ is coward: he is afraid of the authorities, changes, decisions, own skin. Fear, timidity, anxiety, cowardice are the nouns that combine with the adjective ‘official’ in a variety of contexts: "These people have nothing but anxiety about their official skin and, in this case, in addition, half-recognized gloating about the fact that ‘we-feeling publishing house’ (‘we, we,...’) was made to chase its tail” [A.T. Tvardovsky. Workbooks of the 1960s (1965) // "Znamya", 2001-2002; “When Anton writes ‘no’ with chalk on the wall of the ruined house, in this abolition of an action there is a purely official fear of change and desire to swear allegiance to the law among other things” [O.V. Aronson. Communicative image. Cinema. Literature. Philosophy. Part III (2007)].

Creatures of official fear include humility, obedience, obsequiousness, complaisance, toadyism. An interesting fact is the almost complete lack of collocations that testify to the complaisance of modern officials. Almost all texts, which note the use of the adjective ‘official’ with the nouns of this topic group, were written before 1991: “Nelmin also fascinated the two influential dignitaries of the civil office, who somehow came to Kronstadt and visited the battleship under the command of Nelmin. He seemed to them a real, cute but rough ‘loap de mer’, hospitable, direct and open, alien to cunning and official obsequiousness” [K.M. Stanyukovich. “Shore” and the Sea (1902)]; “How exaggerated Mayakovskiy is! Not loved but exaggerated due to official and servile obedience. Stalin ordered: ‘He is the best!’ Well, and the province started to write, and Vladimir Vladimirovich became the Pushkin of our epoch” [A. Mariengof. This is for you, descendants! (1956-1960)].

We have noted only one example, referring to 2000s, but it represents official obedience as the sign of changing times: "The producers of these films [the ‘Watch’ series] have become a kind of hostages of different times: the social time of market lawlessness and the emerged policy of "dictatorship of the law", the time of Hollywood and Soviet cinema and, finally, the cinematic time and the time of television and advertising. The product they produced was naturally heterogeneous. It combines the desire for success, the desire for mass coverage and official obedience, forcing not only to meet the requirements of the market, but also to observe the loyalty of the dominant ideology” [O.V. Aronson. Communicative image. Cinema. Literature. Philosophy. Part III (2007)].

The second side of the official nature, opposed to cowardice, is the above-mentioned arrogance, but, according to the NCRL data, this character trait of the official is much more complex and multifaceted. It is represented by such units as dignity, a complex of supremacy, pride, importance, ambition, hubris. All these traits are united into one group on the basis of the fact that officials, showing the given character traits, have no grounds for that. In other words, the sociocultural type ‘official’ has a peculiar arrogance to consider himself better than others and better than he really is:’I am very glad, of course, not for you, but for myself that I see you here!’ he said seeing me into his office, the decoration of which showed that Zakharevsky worked a lot and became more than mature: he has grown old, official ambition must gnaw him heavily” [A.F. Pysemksy. The people of the 1940s (1869)]; “Petersburg officials were familiar both with a common courtesy and a ministerial order, but they have refused from culinary knowledge or have considered it below their official dignity to dirty hands over a hearth and a frying pan” [F.F. Tornau. Memoirs of the Caucasian Officer (1866-1880)]; ”Alien to the ‘earth’, to anything other than the clerical driving a quill and parading on the parade grounds, to anything else, having no feeling for hunting or mission because of the ingrained class prejudices and official pride, concerning the privilege of his position; he has become a greedy beggar and freeloader depending on the state, seeing it the only useful practice” [F.I. Buslaev. Russian heroic epic (1887)].

And again, we pay attention to the absence of combinations of adjective ‘official’ with the nouns ‘dignity’, ‘superiority complex’, ‘pride’, ‘importance’, ‘ambition’, ‘hubris’ in the texts devoted to modern Russian officials. Probably, the absence of combinations like ‘official hubris’ and others similar in the descriptions of modern officials testifies to the prevalence of cowardice in their character. Whether this fact is
evidence of significant changes occurring in the modern sociocultural type 'official', time will tell. Today we can state the universality of official importance, which has neither temporal nor national borders: "Decency did not pay attention to these warnings and kept a straight official importance on his shaved and crafty yellow face" [D.S. Merezhkovsky, Death of the Gods, Julian Apostate (1895)]; "If we apply to the Italian or American embassy, we see how complicated the procedure of obtaining a visa is. An extremely unpleasant attitude not only to the Russians but also to all visitors is, apparently, a complex of official supremacy in the embassies" [A. Bratersky, S. Pfaffenhofer. Noone enters! In Russia "easy visas" are not searched for (2002) // "Izvestia", 2002.04.23].

The official feeling better, greater, more important than all others is manifested in behaviour. Disgust, arrogance and rudeness are the indicative examples, in this respect, of official behaviour when dealing with 'non-officials': "And the farther you go from Petersburg, the more often you have to observe such 'stories' meeting even greater indifference and fear to be engaged in the 'other department'.<...> especially among petersburgers accustomed to traveling with silent restraint and that pure official disgust concerning road acquaintances, thanks to which one can immediately distinguish the native Petersburger" [K.M. Stanukovich. In a distant land (1886)]; "I used to complain to Tusse about someone's next rudeness - in the house administration, in the publishing house, in the Soviet Union. And she often complained to me about the rudeness of officials. Once, when we talked with her about the nature of official rudeness, she said: 'The Soviet employees have the psychology of a kind of pensioners. They consider their salary as a pension issued by the state on two conditions: They must be in a certain room by a certain time and stay there for 7 hours. And that is all!'" [L.K. Chukovskaya. In memory of Tamara Grigorieva Gabbe (1944-1960) // "Znamya", 2001]; "I am sitting at a lecture on the safety of hiking with schoolchildren and, becoming paralyzed, listen to Hudoklinov. And he was chuckling from the pulpit with official aplomb, throwing the impressions from those rescue efforts on the river Byzb to the teachers' audience. 'Imagine these speleologists, who came up to search in an avalanche wearing scuba diving! We tell them -- you'd be wearing flippers!' And throws up his hands, appealing to trustful listeners what ignorant laymen go on our mountains!" [K. Seraphimov. Expedition to the gloom (1978-1996)].

2.4 Dishonesty of Russian officials

A Russian official, judging by the studied contexts of using the adjective 'official', is almost never honest: he balances between half-truths and lies: "How many were released? How many got into hospital? How many corpses, finally? Without a true answer to these simple questions, even the bitterest, any victory over the terrorists threatens to drown again in official lies and half-truths. Accusations against the authorities in concealing the real scale of the catastrophe on Dubrovka began almost immediately after the assault" [A. Shvedov. The arithmetic of truth or the formula of lies. The truth about the missing (2002) // "Izvestia", 2002.10.31].

By stratagem he seeks to avoid disadvantageous actions: "And what extent of official cunning one needs to possess not to show me the letter by veterans before or during the discussion of the issue at the Secretariat!" [A.T. Twardowski. Workbooks of the 1960s (1969) // "Znamya", 2004]. And one covers the lack of real progress with empty boasting: "In Soviet times, the fondeurs were singing to the tune of Chopin's Funeral March; "In agriculture there will again be a big rise (bis). - Soon there will be a plenum (bis)"” seems what MES exactly told about the USE. And the second voice to the official boasting is the annual part by the ordinary public: these discarded, these bought, these passed the answers to teachers, these were not deprived of their mobile phones" [A. Privalov. About inappropriate creativity // "Expert", 2014].

Official cunning, boasting, lying are direct consequences of official cowardice and the desire to hold the position. And these traits are naturally found mainly in modern officials who have lost the people's trust long ago: "And Oleg Leonidovich is not going to pay like everyone. 'If we listen to our benefactors, the reformers,' he says, 'it turns out that they subsidize us and will soon put the last jacket off and stand on the porch. But they are silent about the fact that we pay up to 100 per cent of water leaks, which, if we believe official tears, will soon flood Moscow. As for you, I do not know, but I do not intend to pay mismanagement and bungling of the officials for the third year" [V. Emelyanenko. Reformer of the people. The only volunteer willing to pay one hundred per cent for housing and services is being sued by utility providers (2002) // "Izvestia", 2002.02.17]. In the combination official tears we see the transformation of the phraseological unit 'crocodile tears', which has the meaning of "hypocritical, feigned pity, compassion, insincere regret" [9]. Officials resemble crocodiles, eating their prey and shedding hypocritical tears.

3 Conclusion

The analysis of the collocation of the adjective 'official' on the basis of texts in the XIX-XXI centuries, included in the NCRL, allowed us to identify the essential features of the character traits of the Russian official: indifference, ignorance, cowardice, together with arrogance, insincerity. The corpus data allow concluding that the named unattractive characteristics in a different extent are manifested in the ideas about the officials of Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union and modern Russia. The indifference of officials is the trait not subject to the influence of time, besides that this trait is found also in foreign state officials. Cowardice is also peculiar to officials of all time, and the ostentatious arrogance and hubris are practically absent in the studied contexts devoted to modern officials. But modern officials are more ignorant and insincere than the officials of the past.
In general, the results of analyzing the Russian adjective 'official' represent a very unsavoury image of a state official. Thus, it is impossible to forget that, according to the experimental data received by the Centers of sociological polls [10], the profession of an official among the Russian respondents is characterized as highly prestigious, certainly, not because of respect to the representatives of this profession, but mainly because of the high official income. And it should be noted that the official character traits described in the article do not belong to a specific state official, even mentioned in the cited texts. These traits characterize the sociocultural type 'official', that is a generalized image formed in the linguistic consciousness of native Russian speakers.

References

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