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Conceptual approaches to the definition of the term «fact»

Abstract. Different significant features, which correlate with the word «fact», are actualized through the peculiarities of the notional system of different branches of scientific knowledge. There is no single common scientific interpretation of the term «fact». The purpose of the research is to investigate the semantic structure of the term «fact», to formulate and substantiate its definition. Definition wording of the social-communication term «fact» involves identifying its taxonomic relations: the place of the notion among other notions and semantic (hierarchical, causal-consequential) connections between them, realized through the logical systematic of the notion. To detect essence of the notion of «fact» should be investigated universal properties and relations of objective realization forms of this phenomenon – the general structures which build categorical scheme.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research consist of scientific theories and concepts which form the fundamental scientific positions in philosophy, social communication, mass media, terminology. Philosophical theory of cognition generates factual concepts by studying the processes of obtaining knowledge about the essence of things, natural and social phenomena. The basic platforms of philosophical generalizations concerning the epistemological nature of the facts include: correlation of objective reality and language; dependence of human cognitive activity and language creation; the relations of objective reality and judgments about it. The social and communication aspects of the factual concepts are focused on the investigation of the functional characteristics of the fact in mass media creativity and editing, correlation of the fact with the objective reality and human consciousness. Specificity of the study requires the use of basic notions of the theory of the term, application of methods for terminological analysis: analysis of the semantic structure of the term «fact»; detection of the term relevance to the requirements of uniqueness and accuracy; establishment of the term signifies; categorical analysis of the notion.

By creating a system of knowledge about the essence of the fact it is possible to provide modeling of social-communication term «fact»: the establishment of significant properties, connections and relations, allocated in notions definitions which are related with notion of the fact by generic-species relations: genitive notion – fact, specific notions – phenomena, processes, events. The semantic structure of species notions includes the meaning of «changing a particular

object». This changing is a factor of the cognitive process and their transference to the consumer of information by means of social communications is a component of the knowledge management system, since it is conscious and purposeful. Comparison of the logical relations between notion of «fact» and notions, which are connected to it by causal-consequential relations, is relevant. Social-communication notion of «fact» has close causal-consequential relations with the notion of «information»: the fact is origin of information in diversity of interpretation versions. Changes in space and time lead to appearance as a consequence of, which is reproduced by sign equivalents of a particular sign system.

Conducted research makes it possible to conclude that for the social communications sphere we consider the following scientific definition to be reasonable: the fact is an obvious change of the objective reality in space and time, objectified and interpreted by the system of social communications for human cognitive activity. The fact reveals as a complex, systemic phenomenon, realized in space and time and manifests in the triad of interconnected and interdependent signs, which have epistemological, dialectic, social and communicative aspects.

Keywords: fact definition, mass media, social communication

I. Introduction

At the heart of the methodological model of mass media activity is the method of presenting facts which organically combines the fixation and reflection of objective reality in the author's presentation, focus on the purpose-oriented audience; effectiveness of the word. The phenomenon of fact and its interpretation is a central component of mass media practice. The interpretative nature of content in social communication is determined by the essence of social status and the purpose of mass media. Mass media, by representing the fact and its interpretation, structures the objects and subjects of journalistic activity, identifies or doesn't identify them with one or another participant of events, adapts or doesn't adapt them to certain participants of events, creates or extinguishes the conflict. In accordance with the above, formulation of the term «fact» definition is actualized by appealing to the basic principles of the term theory concerning logical and linguistic requirements for the term definition: establishment of its taxonomic relations (the place of the notion among other notions and semantic relations between them, which exist due to the logical systematic of the notion).

Objective's setting. The purpose of the study on the definitions of the term «fact» is to clarify the meaning of the term, that is, the establishment of the ratio of material form (word-term) and mental content (the generalized image associated with this word-term). In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the problem: to establish realities named by words (denotate), which

are combined with the reality of the «fact» by taxonomic relations, that is, the belonging of certain units to a certain class, their subordination, ratio and volume; to define a syllogism, which reflects the basic differential characteristics and forms a generalized imaginary image of reality, called the word «fact»; to formulate the scientific definition of the term «fact».

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research consists of scientific theories and concepts which form the fundamental scientific principles in philosophy, social communication, mass media and terminology. Philosophical theory of cognition generates factual concepts by studying the processes of obtaining knowledge about the essence of things, natural and social phenomena. The basic platforms of philosophical generalizations concerning the epistemological nature of the facts include: correlation of objective reality and language; dependence of human cognitive activity and creation of language; relations of objective reality and judgments about it. The social and communication aspects of the factual concepts are focused on the investigation of the functional characteristics of the fact in mass media creativity and editing, correlation of the fact with the objective reality and human consciousness. Specificity of the study requires the use of basic notions of the theory of the term, application of methods for terminological analysis: analysis of the semantic structure of the term «fact»; detection of the term relevance to the requirements of uniqueness and accuracy; establishment of the term signifies; categorical analysis of the notion.

The functioning of the term «fact» in many disciplines and, in particular, in the theory of social communications, predetermines the existence of different definitions of this reality, as evidenced by the works of domestic and foreign scientists. Specificity of the conceptual system of disciplinary scientific knowledge actualizes various features of the signifies, which correlates with the word «fact», so different definitions, inherent for different disciplines, are forming. The only commonly accepted interpretation of the scientific term «fact» is absent. A similar situation is observed with the interpretation of the widespread inter-branch term «information».

In philosophy, the phenomenon of «fact» is considered from the perspective of the reality of fact, that is, its ontological and epistemological nature is investigated.

The factual concept of L. Wittgenstein, based on the principle of declaration of representation of true reality through the facts, is in the context of his views on the correlation between reality and language [Wittgenstein, 1995, p. 24]. The main concepts of L. Wittgenstein regarding the fact are: the world is a totality of facts, and not things; facts determine the world and it is determined that these are all facts; the world divides into facts; the totality of facts defines what is an event and what is not it; we create our own images with the facts; the image is a fact; to find out whether the image is true or false it is necessary to compare it with reality; no image is a priori true.

According to L. Wittgenstein, the fact is the basic essence of human cognitive activity and the creation of language. Fact is an important factor in the chain of evolutionary processes: complete totality of facts forms the world → a person forms images, understanding of the fact, which is materializing (understanding) through the word → birth of a language. The philosopher implies the polysemy of the term «fact» by interpreting it both as a phenomenon of true reality, and as its image in the human mind. Person verifies truth or false of image by comparison with true reality and primary fact. L. Wittgenstein is an author of idea that the boundaries of the world are outlined for a person by his language, the world for person is what he can think and speak in a clear language [Wittgenstein, 1995; Wittgenstein; 1922, Wittgenstein,1971].

According to the concept of the British philosopher B. Russell, the basis of human knowledge is the perception and comprehension of the facts [Russell, 1995, Russell, 1997, Russell, 1948]. These epistemological and cognitive processes are inseparable from the language, as in the preface to the work of L. Wittgenstein "Logic-philosophical treatise" was written by B. Russell: "The boundaries of language define the limits of the world [Russell, 1995, p. 17]. The philosopher in the study of human cognition points out that the facts are determine everything in the universe: «Facts are what makes a statement true or false» [Russell, 1997]. The key concepts of B. Russell regarding the nature and functioning of facts are: the boundaries of language define the limits of the world; defined as a cognition, has two varieties: firstly, the cognition of facts, and secondly, the cognition of the general connection between the facts; facts is what makes a statement correct or false; an act of affirmation about fact is a fact, and if this statement is true, then there is a fact through which it is true, but there is no fact if it is false. In the cognition philosophy of B. Russell objects, phenomena and events of true reality that are beyond the limits of human consciousness are qualified as facts, but the subjective nature of the facts and their affiliation to the consciousness of a person are not considered. The segment of human participation is defined by the cognition of the facts and connections between them and the creation of new knowledge (theories, concepts, hypotheses). Thus, the philosopher pointed to the indissoluble causal-consequential connection of objective reality and statement about it, which may be right or wrong. According to the scientist, the facts are means of confirming or refuting the statement.

In the legal sphere, the phenomenon takes key position as a mean of verifying the assertion of the side of the collision. In law, the legal fact is considered to be certain life circumstances, with which the legal norms relate the appearance, change or termination of legal relationships, rights and responsibilities [Tsvik, 2009]. The structure of real legal facts forms the following categories: events and actions.

The phenomenon of «fact» is studied in the theory of social communication as a component of mass media creativity.

Particularly interesting opinions on the subject of the study were expressed by the Swedish researcher E. Fichtelius, who summarized the experience of reporter's practice and formulated terminology of radio and television journalism. Thus, the essence of the basic term of news journalism – «news» – was correlated with the ability to be new, to have a charm of novelty. This is an actual event, a message (in the press, on the radio, on television) about the actual event. The term «event» was interpreted by the scientist as a change: «An event is a change. Something is changing, the fact of change is news». The scientist highlights the essential properties of the notion «event», which reflect: 1) the internal nature of the event – the suddenness, speed of passing, concreteness, obviousness, visibility, limitation by time; if the change has a long and imperceptible character, then over time the trend becomes so obvious that it becomes an event; 2) the system of connections and relations in which the event operates – «an event is an obvious change on which one can be threaded a story or a plot» [Fichtelius; 2008, Fichtelius; 1997, Fichtelius, 2008a].

The relevant problem of the existence of factual information in the statement, its conformity with the criteria of truth and certainty has been actualized. N.D. Arutyunova correlates the phenomenon of the fact first of all with human consciousness. According to N.D. Arutyunova, fact is an isolated by human consciousness and verified fragment or aspect of reality [Arutyunova, 1999, p. 489]. The main theses of the proposed factual concept are: 1) consideration about reality, that is, about facts, is primary, but reality, the real state of affairs, events – secondary, derivatives: the fact correlates with considerations, but not with the immediate state of affairs in the world; facts do not exist regardless of considerations, facts are created by considerations, but not vice versa; considerations, judgments are preceded by facts; no distinction and verification operations can be performed without considerations; 2) reality is, and there are no facts in it, reality exists independently of a person, and the fact already arises as the result of human thinking; 3) fact reproduces the subjective cognition of a person who during perceiving the world separates from it a certain fragment or aspect, conceptualizes them on a model of consideration, verifies and only then receives a fact; 4) the nature of the notions of «fact» and «event» are different: the fact is projected on the world of knowledge, the event – on the flow of processes in real space and time.

V. V. Rizun argues that the fact, first of all, exists in the mind, not in reality, and is realized in the text. By paying close attention to the peculiarities of the functioning of the fact, the factual information in mass media, in the literary editing, the scientist formulates the following definitions: «The fact is a phenomenon, reflected in the consciousness, about which there is knowledge and which is evaluated in a certain way» [Rizun, 2004, p. 55], «As fact we call the reflections in the

consciousness of the part of reality of different levels of generalization and different subject content» [Rizun, 1996, p. 176].

I. L. Mykhaylyn allows the existence of the fact in the real world, but qualifies its affiliation first of all to human consciousness. According to the scientist, the fact is reliable (that is, identical with the actual state of things in the real world) type of empirical knowledge, which arises [Mykhaylyn, 2009]. The recognition by the scientist of the fact as empirical knowledge relates the investigated phenomenon to the sphere of human consciousness, because empirical knowledge is obtained through the acquisition of experience or observation. According to the Dictionary of the Ukrainian language, the word «knowledge» has the meanings: 1) awareness of something, the presence of information about someone, something; 2) totality of information in any area, acquired in the process of study, research, etc; 3) cognition of reality in its partitive manifestations and in general [*Dictionary...*].

In scientific sources, the definition of the term «fact» is also determined by the lexical meanings of the commonly used meaning of the word «fact», which, in our opinion, unfoundedly extends the significs of the term from the sphere of social communications. V. Zdoroveha considers the substantiated interpretation of the notion of fact in the following meanings: 1) a real event; what really happened; 2) judgment or otherwise fixed real fact. However, such double-meaning, in the opinion of the scientist, makes it possible to affirm about the fact both as a reality and as a reflection of it, which leads to confusion. V. Zdoroveha uses the terms «events and facts», «phenomena and facts», which reveals the indistinction of these notions, for example: «For a long time it was customary to consider information as message about events and facts» [Zdoroveha, 2008]. The scientist emphasizes the necessity of presenting facts in connection with other facts, systematically, taking into account the logical laws, the theoretical principles, through the already existing system of knowledge.

II. Results

In formulating the scientific definition of the term «fact», we consider necessity, first of all, to refer to the basic provisions of the theory of the term concerning the logical and linguistic requirements for the signs and definition of the term. Scientific sources distinguish the following main features of the term: monosemantic (the term tends to be unambiguous, the term is unambiguous within a certain terminology system); accuracy, indifference to the context; stylistic neutrality; systematic; the presence of a clear definition of the term; conciseness; the term should not have synonyms, homonyms within the same terminology; the meaning of the term equals the concept in the amount of the known [Pan'ko, Kochan, Matsyuk, 1994; Symonenko, 1991]. The term

«fact» corresponds to most of the specified requirements, however, attention is drawn to the lack of clarity of positions regarding such features as: the uniqueness achieved by setting the unified ratio «one term – one value»; the presence of a clear definition that as accurately as possible determines the meaning of the term, that is, reflects the essence of the scientific notion.

As the methodological basis of the study of interdependence and mutual conditionality of components of the act of nomination and verbalization of a certain statement: word-symbol (phonetic or graphic); significs (a generalized set of a class of objects features that exists in the mind of the speaker); denotat (a class of homogeneous realities – objects, signs, processes, states, called by word), we adopt the concept of English researchers, the founders of Basic English – the international artificial language on the basis of English – Ch. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards [Sokolov, 2002; Petrilly, 2015]. According to this notion, the word is indicated by denotat only through its significs (Fig. 1).

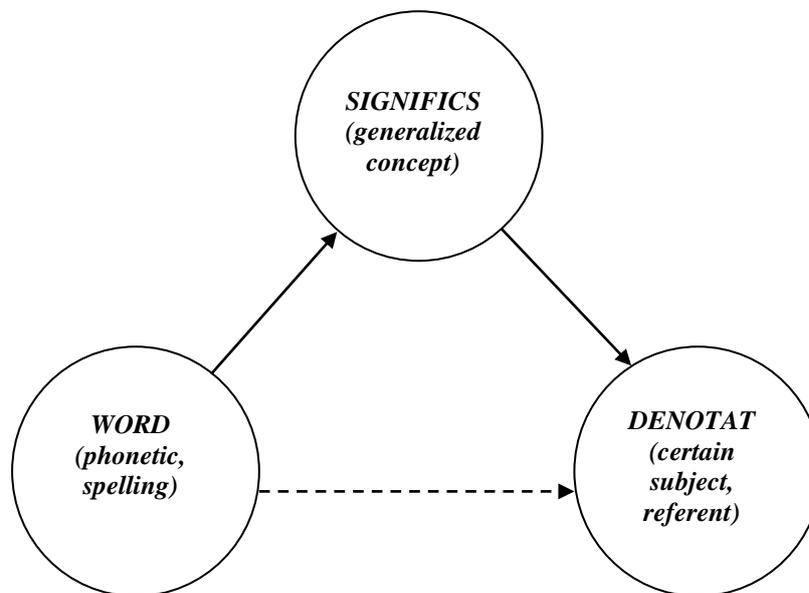


Fig. 1 Semantic Triangle of Ch. Ogden and A. Richards

Establishment of the correspondence of the term with such features as uniqueness, accuracy of the term is optimally achieved by finding out the content, the essence of the notion, its typical features, that is, the establishment of significs of the term «fact». Analyzing the meaning of the word «fact», given in the Dictionary of the Ukrainian language (1. real, not a fictional event, a real phenomenon; what actually happened; 2. reality, actuality; what objectively exists), we emphasize the attention on such features of the term: the authenticity on which the fact is considered in a dichotomous plane: the validity or invalidity of an event; the objectivity on which the fact is that objectively exists, that is, the fact inherent in a global, wide, comprehensive existence in nature, in society. In a commonly used language, the «fact» realizes its polysemy as a result of transferring the

name of one notion to another, which was associated with it in relation to the adjacency association [Komova, 2011]. Polysemy is determined by the movement of the semantics of the lexical unit: the development of meanings promotes to the enrichment of the seminal set of a single word. Polysemy acts as a manifestation of the general-language law, when one sign form can accommodate several meanings.

It is extremely important to define the taxonomic relation of the term «fact», namely: the place of the notion among other notions and the semantic (hierarchical, causal-consequential) relationships between them, realized through the logical system of the notion. The establishment of the essence of the notion of «fact» requires the study of universal properties and relations of forms of objective realization of this phenomenon – the general structures that build the categorical scheme (Fig. 2). Fact as a generic social communicative notion generalizes such categories: phenomena, processes, events.

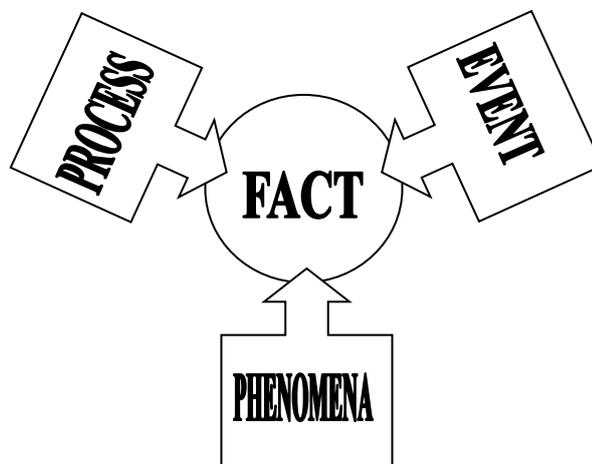


Fig. 2 Categorical Scheme of the Fact

The model of the formulation of the definition of the social communication notion of «fact» determines the need to systematize knowledge about its essence by establishing essential properties, connections and relations, identified in the definitions of the notions – the components of the categorical scheme of the fact, with which the notion of fact is in generic terms: generic notion – a fact, species notions – phenomena, processes, events. We set the semantic structure of these concepts according to the Dictionary of the Ukrainian language:

Event 1. What happened or has happened; a phenomenon, a fact of social or personal life.
2. What violates the established, habitual course of life; anything important, outstanding [Dictionary...].

Event is a change of the properties of the object, the interaction between objects, the formation of a new object or the destruction of an existing object.

Process 1. The sequential change of states or phenomena that occurs in a natural order; the course of development of something. The set of successive actions, means aimed at achieving a certain effect. 2. Active development of the disease (medical). 3. Consideration of the court case; the court case itself (juridical) [*Dictionary...*].

Process is a sequential change of the objects and phenomena that occurs in a regular order. The totality of a series of sequential actions aims at achieving a certain result.

Phenomenon 1. Any manifestation of changes, reactions, transformations, etc. occurring in the natural environment. Symptom, a sign of a disease (medical). Appearance of the essence of objects, processes; direct reflection of things in sensory perception (philosophy). 2. Event, fact. Property, feature of someone, something. Sphere, industry. Unusual, outstanding person. Rare, exceptional animal [*Dictionary...*].

It is obvious that the semantic structure of all three terms is branched out. Having neglected those meanings that can not be relevant for the definition of the social communicative notion of «fact», we distinguish the following seems: an **event** – a change in the properties of the object; **process** – sequential change of objects and phenomena; **phenomenon** – any manifestation of changes, reactions, transformations. Thus, all three categories represent the meaning of «change of a particular object». This change is the factor of the cognitive process, and its presentation by means of social communications to the consumer of information may be a component of the knowledge management system, because it has programmed character.

It is also reasonable to compare the semantic structure of the «fact» notion with the semantic structure of causally related notions. The social communicative notion of «fact» is in close causal relations with the notion of «information»: the fact is the root cause of information creation in a variety of interpretative versions. The delineation and comparison of the semantic structures of the terms «fact» and «information» in the presence of causal relations between them will clarify the semantic set of lexemes «fact», which operates in the social communication terminology.

At the stage of the birth of informatics as a science, N. Wiener articulated the definition of information as a sign of content received from the outside world in the process of our adaptation to it and adapting to it our feelings [Wiener, 1958, Wiener, 1983, p.31; Wiener, 1948]. N. Wiener identified the following seems in the semantic structure of the term «information»: the meaning, that is, the static essence produced by the outside world; subjects who receive this content when adapting to the outside world.

The Ukrainian scientist M. M. Amosov, studying the modeling of information processes, interpreted information as a change in the physical influence (or system parameter) in space and time, taken separately from its physical medium. According to him, the phenomenon of information

is peculiar to any object, body, system, ranging from elementary particles and ending with space systems [Amosov, 1965, p. 15]. M. Amosov identified the following seems in the semantic structure of the term «information»: a change in physical influence, that is, a dynamic entity that develops in space and time; immaterial nature of this essence. That is, the information appears as a consequence of changes in space and time, which is reproduced by the sign equivalents of a particular sign system.

According to the given above definitions and taking into account the causal relations between the notions of «fact» and «information», we believe that it is important to adhere to the semantics logical chain of these notions.

For the area of social communication, we consider the following scientific definition to be justified: the fact is an obvious change in objective reality in space and time, which is objectified and interpreted for human cognitive activity by the social communication system. Thus, the fact is regarded as a complex, systemic phenomenon, which is realized in space and time, and is manifested in the triad of interconnected and interdependent signs having epistemological, dialectical, social communication aspects.

Epistemological aspect. Cognitive human activity is the primary basis for obtaining knowledge, skills that correspond to the real, actual state of things. Given the correspondence of knowledge and reality, there are such categories as reliability, truth, truthfulness. These categories are important for setting the essence of the social communication notion «fact» and requirements to it. The results of the cognitive process are consolidated by the dialectic, which establishes the logical system of mutual dependence, conditionality, additionality of notions, judgments, inferences, concepts, theories. It provides epistemology with methodological means for further deepening and improvement [Petrushenko, 2011].

Dialectical aspect. The use of such a feature as «change of objective reality» in the «fact» definition is based on the dialectical theory of interconnections and development. This theory describes the meaningful characteristics of being of the things, processes, phenomena and connections between them. The world is constantly changing. In the framework of the dialectical approach we consider questions about definitions categories, which include different types of facts. There is no doubt about belonging to the notional boundaries of the facts of such categories: an event, a process, a phenomenon. These categories are clearly correlated with the time of realization in real space. Thus, satisfy the a priori statement that the fact is only in the past. Objective existence in the world of realities belonging to the categories «objects», «person» and «properties» does not necessitate the compulsory characterization of their qualifications as facts. Realities of objective actuality, which can be classified in the categories listed above, acquire the features and properties

of facts, provided that they become predicative, that is, provided that they are related to the action or state. For example, the reality of the «document» that belongs to the category of subjects is not a fact. When the same reality can be considered in the context of predecessor relationships, it acquires all the features and properties of the fact – «the document testifies».

The interpretation of «fact» as a change in objective reality lies at the heart of the dialectical picture of the world, which is based on the main concepts of the theory of development: the doctrine of progress, in which the progress, forward movement is accompanied by increasing complexity, ordering and structuring the object; the doctrine of regression, by which degradation, the collapse of the object ends with its disappearance; the doctrine of the relation between the existence of the interconnection of things and phenomena, separated in their existential being by the spatial and temporal boundaries [Petrushenko, 2011]. The laws of dialectics (the law of unity and struggle of contradictions, the law of the mutual transition of quantitative and qualitative changes, the law of denial of negation) logically express the essence of the development process – the movement, the change of all things. The logic of dialectical thinking models reality. It is therefore natural to consider the fact as a change of realities, which in the spatial-temporal dimension manifests itself as a complete process, event, phenomenon.

Social communication aspect. The requirement of authenticity is based on the philosophical understanding the fact as empirical knowledge, the elementary statement about an event or phenomenon that can be verified. Such an approach involves a communication component, since the declaration of a statement, that is, an affirmation (true or false), is a communication act and covers the key elements of the communication scheme.

In the course of communication interaction that is realized with the help of the mass media, the fact fulfills its main system function – to confirm (refute) changes or evolutions in the elementary, biological and social sphere, which is caused by the universal character of objects of representation in mass media practice. The fact as a notion that functions in social communication can not be regarded as something abstract, something that has happened (somewhere, once). The emphasis on the communication aspects of the functioning of the notion of fact, namely, on their objectification (inventing) by the system of social communication, is actualized in view of the fact that the object of public discourse is only those facts (objective real events, processes, phenomena), which came in circulation in various forms (micro, macro communication) and at different levels (interpersonal, group, mass) of social communication. The question of the accuracy or falsity of published facts is largely offset by their interpretive properties.

III. Conclusions

In the mass media system, the fact and its interpretations have a basic status, since it is the core of the messages in all the genres of news, informational and analytical journalism. The application of the factual principle of information presentation becomes particularly relevant in today's conditions of global use of the information space as a field of confrontation between different models of civilization development. The definition of the sociological and communication term «fact» is modeled by establishing its taxonomic relations: the place of the notion among other notions and semantic (hierarchical, causal-consequential) relationships between them, which exist due to the logical system of the notion. The fact is considered as a complex, systemic phenomenon, which is realized in space and time, and is manifested in the triad of interconnected and interconnected features that have epistemological, dialectical, social communication aspects.

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