

Communicative Strategies of Social Media Discourse

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Abstract. We have attempted to analyse the features of communicative strategies of a media discourse. The paper describes the notions of “discourse”, “media discourse”, “social media discourse”, and “communicative strategies”. The research is performed using the social media texts collected by the authors. Up to date no linguistic investigations of communicative strategies used in social media discourse have been conducted. We have focused on news texts from information, news, educational, and entertaining platforms, in social networks. The most important thing is to identify the ways of communicative strategies generation and the methods of their association in a social media discourse. The article shows some typical features of a social media discourse. The subject of the research is a set of communicative strategies used during implementation of the communicative functions of texts. The purpose of the paper is to identify and organise communicative strategies, the characteristics of their use depending on the social text topic, and to review the impact of such a text. The main aim of the research is to study the social media discourse as one type of an institutional media discourse; to identify and describe the factors impacting its formation.

1 Introduction

New media resources, online platforms are a primary source of information for consumers both at work and at home. The time used for browsing, searching and transfer of information has been lengthening, especially during the pandemic. Media images comprising the modern society and forming the modern culture are constantly transforming. The information and technological process as well as global changes in the modern society speed up the process of information exchange; methods of social impact are reforming.

Modern mobile devices allow accessing any information in any form and in any infrastructure. The cognition pattern is becoming networking. Network structures are being modified depending on the purposes of communication.

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The study of mechanisms of the total media influence and interaction of various communication channels when forming a single image, subject, object, scene, event, phenomenon, or situation is a burning interdisciplinary issue [1,2,3,4,5].

1.1 Discourse and media discourse

A review of media discourse researches demonstrated that there are several interpretation of the terms “discourse”, “media discourse”. Research papers describe various approaches to interpretation; up to date the academic discussion is still open.[2].

The term “discourse” is used quite widely: some researchers identify discourse with a coherent text, some think it is an oral, spoken or dialogue text; but a discourse is a piece of speech, irrespective of the form of its presentation. A discourse is a type of a social speech behaviour, a sort of cultural, social and ideological practises, a generator of new conceptual streams [3], a “form of real-time use of the language, which correlates with a certain type of social activity of an individual; it is created in order to construct a special world (image) with the help of its detailed linguistic description, and is a part of the process of communication between individuals, defined by communication parties, conditions and aims” [4].

A discourse models its own world view and is a kind of an algorithm of discursive formulae combination; it is a dynamic and arranged body of knowledge, a “communicative event” [5]. When exploring the reality, the society organises its own communicative sphere, giving rise to various genres of discourses. “Each genre... is a complex system of means and ways to consciously master the reality” [6], “over hundreds of years of their history, genres are accumulating the forms of appreciation and interpretation of some aspects of the universe” [7].

As the need for information underlines all other individual’s needs, information is a driving force of the society [8]. A key discourse to implement the process of production, exchange, selective actualisation, management of information, depiction of the social, cultural, political, ideological, and economic reality, a means of social influence is media discourse.

1.2 Communicative strategies

The purpose of social and communicative interaction between individuals is exchange of information and sense. The form of interaction depends on the motives and objectives, time, nature of social roles, mindset, and culture. The process of communication is structured and follows certain schemes and scenarios depending on the social experience of communication parties.

A model of sustainable communication includes various ways to escalate the meaning, communicative strategies, i.e. strategies for meaning generation, using both verbal and non-verbal communication channels.

A strategy is a “more or less exact action plan (including discursive actions) with more or less intention aimed at achievement of a specific social, political, psychological, or linguistic objective” [9].

According to Jan van Dijk, a strategy is a characteristic of “a cognitive communication plan, which controls the optimal solution of a system of tasks using a flexible and locally controlled way amidst the lack of information on certain (subsequent) actions by other communication parties, on local context limitations of own (subsequent) actions” [10].

A communicative strategy is an optimal plan of communicative tactics to achieve the aims of communication.

Tactics is a “certain stage in communicative strategy implementation depending on the intention of the speaker, explicit set of methods that define the use of linguistic means”.

There are lots of approaches to define the notion “communicative strategy”. We are of the opinion that the most comprehensive one is presented by O. I. Issers. From the functional perspective, there are “main (semantic, cognitive) and auxiliary strategies”. The main is a strategy which is the most meaningful in terms of motive hierarchy and the aim of communication. Main strategies are related to influence on the listener: his/her physical and intellectual behaviour, system of values, universe model. Auxiliary communication strategies help to efficiently organise dialogue interactions. In terms of presence or absence of the attitude to cooperation, there are cooperative (approval, reassurance, persuasion) and confronting (discredit, arguments) communication strategies. Depending on the objective of communication, communication strategies can be general (to achieve general social aims) and specific [11].

2 Methods and Approach

As stated above, in this paper we are discussing communicative strategies typical of a social media discourse. We focus on texts from the web site of Russia-Culture TV channel. In order to identify the ways and methods to influence the audience and to see the regularities and key trends in social media discourse organisation, we have conducted a content analysis of news blocks, a discourse analysis of news texts; we have identified and systematised verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal means of communicative interaction, used during social media discourse modelling. As a result, we have created a model of a representative discourse on the basis of 500 texts.

Besides, we have conducted an experimental research and questionnaire with participation of students of 18 years old. The test group included 150 individuals. The experiment was conducted in two stages. Stage 1 (questionnaire): we identified recipients’ preferences in the use of various media platforms depending on certain objectives and types of activities. Stage 2: we used statistical analysis to find out generation-related preferences in media recourse selection. Stage 3: subjects were proposed to choose most interesting social and cultural news blocks from Russia-Culture portal.

3 Results

3.1 Experimental research stages

Each social-demographic cohort has its own values, motives and forms of interaction. During experiment preparation, we designed an online survey to identify youth’s preferences in the use of media resources for certain aims. The most popular Internet news platform was MEDUZA, followed by RIA_NEWS, RBC_NEWS, TASS, Yandex, and Lenta (fig.1).

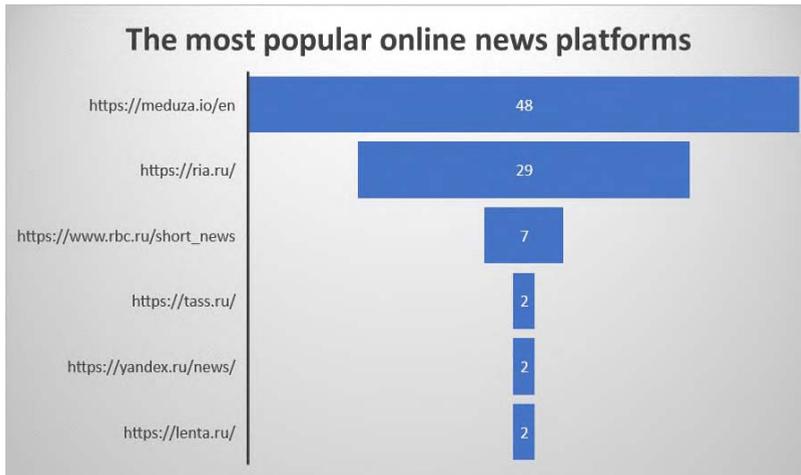


Fig. 1. Online survey results to identify the most popular online news platforms among students

To communicate with their friends, students use VK, Twitter. To browse for entertaining content, exchange and distribute pictures and video – TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, to search for educational materials – Wikipedia, Google, Yandex, to go shopping – AliExpress, Ozon, Wildberries.

Empiric experiments helped in identifying the most popular media resources in 18+ generation (tab.1).

Table 1. Most popular media resources in 18+ generation

Media resource type	Preferences
News web sites	Meduza,
Automated news processing services (news aggregators)	Google News, Yandex News
Social networks	Facebook, VK, Instagram, Twitter
Messenger	WhatsApp, WeChat, Telegram, Viber, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts.
Blogs	
Educational portals (open and subscription-based educational resources)	Coursera, Lectorium, Universarium, Single window
Open libraries	Google scholar, eLIBRARY
Digital cultural and educational platforms	Artefact, Google Arts & Culture, Culture RF
Intellectual property storages	WIPO, Pinterest
Creative picture and video storages	YouTube, TikTok, Instagram
Music web sites	Apple music, Yandex music, Spotify
Shared web sites	Wikipedia, Studopedia
Virtual worlds	FPS, EverQuest, World of warcraft, Mobile Legends
Commercial platforms	AliExpress, Wildberries, Lamoda, Blablacar
Podcast	Arzamas, Zavtracast.ru, Budet sdelano, Norm

Therefore, this review will allow for a more thorough typology of modern media resources. This age category of recipients was chosen purposefully, because this digital generation are the most active Internet communication users. Their feature is deep involvement with digital technologies and active use of information and communication devices [12-13].

That is why the choice and use of modern communicative strategies is directly dependent on the target audience. Proceeding from the purpose of the information producer, his/her manipulative objectives, an act of communication should be easily perceivable. Functionally complete communication fragments (texts of social media discourse) should be clear for the listener.

As stated above, during the final stage of the experiment, subjects were proposed to choose most interesting social and cultural news blocks from Russia-Culture portal.

Analysis results were used to prepare a catalogue of texts with the most influence on students (tab.2)

Table 2. Media texts which students found most interesting

No.	Title	Most appealing features	
1	Victory Parade and a concert on Mamaev Kurgan — live on Russia TV channel	Concepts: war, victory, Victory Parade	Picture: Parade in the Red Square
2	Dear Comrades by Konchalovsky is shortlisted for the main competition of Venice Festival	Concepts: Venice, festival	Picture: a film frame
3	Hideo Kojima is a jury member of Venice Film Festival	Name: Kojima	Picture: a picture of a well-known Japanese video game designer Hideo Kojima.
4	Alexander Suvorov: from the individuality to the image, a new exhibition in the Russian State Library	Name: Alexander Suvorov	Picture: a black-and-white film frame
5	A concert in Liseu Opera Theatre was dedicated to plants	Concept: COVID-2019, Spain	Picture: houseplants as an audience

We cannot publish the entire catalogue of media texts due to space limitations.

3.2 Conceptualisation and interpretation

A certain conceptual system makes utterances meaningful. Processes of conceptualisation, categorisation and interpretation are individual and focus on certain spheres or human life. Systems of concepts of different generations [14-16], social groups “differ in the composition of concepts and categories, in the nature of interconceptual and intercategory connections [17].

As shown in tab.2, main concepts of media texts representing the reality distinctly demonstrate associative dependences:

1. Pandemic - trips - countries - cities
2. War - Victory Day - parade
3. Personalia - historical, social, cultural events.

3.3 Communicative strategies

The main communicative strategies influencing the ways the model of the universe is structured are pragmatic and rhetorical. Having analysed linguistic material generated during the study, we have identified the strategy which can influence the young people's perception. Assessment and forecast strategies are used to create positive representations.

Assessment strategy is implemented through explicit indication of positive characteristics. "Victory Parade and a concert on Mamaev Kurgan — live on Russia TV channel" used positive semantics: "A solemn concert will be organised at the bottom of the main symbol of the national act of heroism — the world's known monument The Motherland Calls which will be opened on 24th June after renovation. The concert of Victory on Mamaev Kurgan will host artists and musicians".

Forecast strategy is implemented through explicit indication of positive future changes: "The State Historical Museum will welcome its visitors from 1st July"; "There, and in some other schools of the regions, Yandex.Luceium is already in operation. There will be more such training centres in the region; some schools will have a programming course of IT forms."

4 Conclusions

Exchange of information is a kind of a standard, a set of typical subjects, rules determining the nature of information content, ways of information transfer, acceptance and processing, coding and de-coding, verbal and non-verbal signs.

Mass communication is a new social reality. The Internet is a technical means of mass communication, and information and communication channel which can change the transferred information depending on the media resource type. The aim of a media resource is to form a common pool of knowledge and ideas, targeted intellectual and emotional interaction.

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