Dynamics of emotivity in the newspaper style (in articles about COVID-19)

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Abstract. The article is devoted to emotionally-colored vocabulary in newspaper articles related to the topic of coronavirus infection. The article defines the goals and objectives of the research, describes the research method, provides examples and explanations and conclusions. The analysis of the emotive vocabulary of the articles is given on the example of two languages: English and Russian. The results of the study indicate the dependence of emotivity on the situation associated with an increase or decrease in the number of patients, on cultural-specific and mental-specific features. The article is devoted to the analysis and identification of the causes and ways of transmitting emotivity in a journalistic text. The aim of the study is to trace the phenomenon of emotivity in the synchronic and diachronic aspects. As a synchronic approach, we considered emotionally-colored vocabulary in the newspaper style—we identified its main features and ways of transmitting it in the text at a certain point in time. The diachronic approach is to study the changes in the selected emotionally colored units over the course of a year. These changes are related to developments during the coronavirus pandemic.

1 Introduction

Today, in a world of rapid innovation, society is characterized by the presence of an emotionally tense climate. In our world—a world of constant changes, transformations and innovations, one of the key issues that concern people is their attitude to the world around them, how a person reacts to external events. People react in different ways—some like what is happening around them, others are completely indignant at what is happening, others are carried away, others are encouraged, others are perplexed, etc. All this happens due to the background of manifestations of various emotions. Therefore, emotion is the object of study for many scientists, in particular linguists [1-4].

Since recently, emotions have been considered the central, core quality of a person. Its emotional trend, index, and intelligence control the choice of language and stylistic means depending on the communication situation. Emotions model not only verbal, but also nonverbal human activity. This is an integral part of any person's behavior. For many years, language scientists have been arguing about the purposefulness and appropriateness of studying emotions from the point of view of language. There were the following major trends in viewing the meaning of emotions for the language,

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Some scientists marked the differentiation of cognition and emotions, and their interaction. P.M. Jacobson believed that emotion is a form of active human attitude to the surrounding world, since during active interaction with the external environment, or its cognition, an individual subjectively experiences his personal attitude to certain objects, facts, and phenomena of the real world [5]. The others highlighted the importance of emotions for personal attitudes. S.L. Rubenstein, for example, considers emotions as one of the manifestations of the subjective expression of personality, the manifestation of his own attitude to himself and to the surrounding reality occurs through the use of emotions [6]. In other words, it is also a subjective reaction to events from the outside, a way of expressing a person's feelings.

Emotions, emotionality, emotivity, emotionality emotional competence emotional intelligence communicants of emotions – all these are terms that have migrated to the linguistic sphere of study, while acquiring a slightly different meaning. To separate the psychological and linguistic phenomena, the term emotivity was introduced, that is the linguistic manifestation of emotionality [2].

Scientists define this term in different ways. Emotivity can be transmitted through various means of language. It can manifest itself in language means that indicate a particular emotional state, and it can also be syntactic or grammatical means that are able to describe the psychological state, the emotional reaction of the subject. All these emotive means activate a person's emotional perception of the relevant realities and transfer various kinds of emotions to events and cause a person to have an emotional idea of the situation and further actions.

Researchers claim that “the whole language is emotive and that there is no emotive-neutral vocabulary” [3]. L. A. Piotrovskaya defines emotivity as a function of language units associated with the expression of the speaker's emotional attitude to objective reality directly or the content of significant language units [1]. Emotionality is presented to us as the emotional sphere of the reader (a psychological phenomenon), and emotivity is a reflection of emotionality in the text (a linguistic phenomenon) [7].

Emotivity is one of the most uncertain qualities of a journalistic text, the main purpose of which is the influence of an author on his reader.

The article is devoted to the analysis and identification of the causes and ways of transmitting emotivity in a journalistic text. The aim of the study is to trace the phenomenon of emotivity in the synchronic and diachronic aspects both in the Russian and English articles on the theme “COVID”.

2 Materials and Methods

As a synchronic approach, we considered emotionally-colored vocabulary in the newspaper style. We identified its main features and ways of transmitting it in the text at a certain point in time. The diachronic approach is to study the changes in the selected emotionally colored units over the course of a year. These changes are related to developments during the coronavirus pandemic. To achieve this goal, a number of tasks were necessary, namely:

- to determine the concept of “emotivity” in the language style,
- to find out what is represented by the emotivity in the newspaper style at a certain stage of language development,
- to trace the dynamics of changes in the emotivity of the newspaper during the development of the situation associated with the spread of coronavirus infection,
- to explain how the emotivity in the newspaper style changes depending on the changes in the situation associated with the pandemic.

At the next step, we used the Corpus data (British National Corpora), which shows the number of occurrences of neologisms for the last year.
At the last stage, the results were compared and interpreted. Observations of various life situations, the components of which are emotional communication situations, show that emotions can be transmitted through language means that help to characterize the general mood of people in a particular situation, which was done in this study.

For the analysis we took articles about COVID-19 from Russian newspapers for the period from March 1, 2020 to the present moment.

The psychological reactions of a reader are the main goal when creating a text in journalistic discourse. Therefore, much attention is paid to the techniques by which the text is created. The object of the author’s reflection is the situation that is described in the articles. The emotive component of the journalistic text focuses not only on the emotive features of the content, which indicates the orientation of publicistic discourse on mental reactions and associative connections in the mind of the individual, but also on the emotive signs of the form, which indicates the orientation of publicistic discourse on the visual perception of the text by the reader. Emotions guide the choice of linguistic and stylistic means in various communicative situations and thus set the tone of communication. This dependence of the choice of language means on emotions is demonstrated daily and repeatedly by the media. Mass media selection of expressive means is often characterized by excessive explication of negative emotions in vocabulary and syntax.

3 Results

In this study, we used the method of scientific observation, the method of linguistic description, and the method of classification of language units. Data collection, systematization, processing and interpretation were carried out using content analysis.

The study was conducted in several stages. At the first stage, Russian articles were analyzed for the presence of emotive-charged vocabulary and neologisms were selected. The articles under study mainly belong to the periodical “Arguments and Facts” (‘Argumenty I Fakty’), which has confidently maintained its leading position in the popularity rating for several years https://top.mail.ru/Rating/MassMedia-Newspapers/Month/Visitors/.

The pandemic has given rise to many neologisms that have appeared in the newspaper discourse. Here are examples of the use of neologisms in newspaper discourse to show expressiveness: “Corona crisis. What awaits the world economy because of the global quarantine” (according to a Russian newspaper ‘Argumenty I Fakty’). In this example, the neologism “corona crisis” is used in the strong position of the newspaper text – the headline – to attract the attention of readers and emphasize expressiveness. “How does a virus infect our language? About coronavts, covigists and quarantikuly” (‘Argumenty I Fakty’). In this example, the title contains the neologisms “coronavts”, “covigists” and “quarantikuly”, which reflect the essence of the article – a story about the appearance of new words in the language in connection with the pandemic. It is obvious that these neologisms entered the newspaper discourse from colloquial speech, which is characterized by language play and word-making. The title is not the only position for neologisms. For example, there are articles explaining the neologism and the situation associated with the appearance of the concept, which is designated by the neologism. “Russians can be seriously affected by COVID-dissidents, doctors say” (Gazeta.ru). (The article is called “Believe in immortality”: what are the dangers of COVID-dissidents”). - The neologism in this article takes on a negative connotation, since it denotes people who are dangerous to others.

Table 1 shows examples of neologisms associated with coronavirus and the number of their appearances on the Internet according to the Yandex search engine:
Table 1. The number of neologisms associated with the type COVID in the Russian language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neologism</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corona crisis</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown issue</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covidiot</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covid-dissident</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen from the table below, the most commonly used neologism is ‘corona crisis’. It denotes a situation that is associated with the tense mood of readers, which in the future, with constant emotional impact, generates the appearance of ‘covididiots’ and ‘covid-dissidents’. The neologisms presented in Table 1 indicate mainly a negative emotional and expressive atmosphere in society associated with the pandemic.

Further, there is a neologism ‘covid-patients’, the articles containing this word have a characteristic tension and caution. People are scared, confused, do not understand how to act and what to do. Such words as ‘covid-disaster’, ‘covid-zone’, ‘herd immunity’, were also often encountered, emphasizing the severity and seriousness of the situation. Such words as ‘social well-being’, ‘unstable optimism’ convey the meaning of globality and the public, ‘covido-skeptics’, ‘lockdown’ and ‘peacetime’ (the period before the coronavirus pandemic) focus on hope and positivism. ‘Telemedicine’, ‘electronic prescriptions’, ‘electronic hospital’ create an impression of optimism, a look into the future and dispel fear.

The neologisms ‘covidiot’, ‘anti-masochniki’ (people who strongly object against wearing masks), ‘udalenka’ (online work), ‘postcovid’, ‘covid-overdose’, virus “Anglichanin” (mutation of the virus first registered in the UK), ‘covid-passport’ also add to the emotions of fear and excitement a note of positivity, faith in the future. Some formerly neutral words became emotionally charged because of the life-important context where they occur: ‘herd immunity’, ‘vaccinated’, ‘anti-vaccinators’, ‘contagious’. If we sum up all the emotions caused by these neologisms, we can say that they, in addition to the emotions of fear, excitement, tension, suspiciousness and anxiety, can also convey the meaning of humor. This reaction of people to a difficult situation is typical only for the Russian context. Perhaps this is a cultural-specific trait that is not observed in other languages.

The emotivity of a journalistic text is created in various ways. This is due to the use of special terms and professionalism, new metaphors and stable expressions related to the topic of “coronavirus”. These include medical metaphors, anthropomorphic metaphors, military metaphors, and fiction metaphors. In addition to metaphors, the newspaper vocabulary contains neologisms, numerals, which are used by the authors to enhance the expressive description, as an emotionally rich component of communication, which becomes connotative when denoting the dynamics of the pandemic.

We studied three main periods – the period of the emergence and development of the pandemic (March-May 2020), the period of initial decline (June-August 2020), the period of hope for improvement (September-December 2020) and the vaccination period (from January 2021).

The first period refers to the beginning of the pandemic: the borders of many European countries – Germany, Great Britain, France are being closed, as well as the United States and Russia. The time of hard trials and weak hopes begins. The authors of the articles use a huge amount of emotional vocabulary, causing readers experience various kinds of emotions: fear, panic, excitement, bewilderment, misunderstanding. Emotive-rich vocabulary is about 4.1 %. Moreover, the total number of articles for this period is 22 articles.

Then came a period of slight decline in infection. This period is also characterized by emotive vocabulary. The figure acts as a connotative unit, showing the number of registered

The next stage in the development of the coronavirus situation in Russia is associated with the autumn-winter exacerbation, for which all doctors and the health care system were preparing. On the one hand, it is characterized by relative calmness associated with the stopping of the growth of diseases; on the other hand, with the threat of a new wave after a period of rest and with the onset of cold spells, which leads to an increase in colds and with an increased risk of contracting coronavirus infection. Another important feature of this time was the increased development, testing and implementation of vaccines against COVID-19. Despite all the events listed above, emotivity in the newspaper style remains almost at the same level – 2.56%. This emotional fund is also created at the expense of neologisms: ‘covid-zone’, ‘covid-patients’, ‘social well-being’, ‘unstable optimism’, ‘covido-skeptics’, ‘lockdown’, ‘peacetime’ (the period before the coronavirus pandemic), ‘telemedicine’, ‘electronic prescriptions’, ‘electronic hospital’, ‘herd immunity’, ‘vaccinated’, ‘covidiot’, ‘anti-masochniki’, ‘udalenka’, ‘postkovidny’; professionals: ‘vaccine’, ‘vaccination’, ‘adenovirus vector’, ‘EpiVacCorone’, ‘epitope vaccine’, ‘peptide antigens’, ‘Coronavirus protein S’, ‘multi-inflammatory syndrome’, ‘broken heart syndrome’, ‘immunogenicity’, ‘T-cell immunity’, ‘phagocytes’, ‘epidprocess’; metaphors: ‘the harvest of covid’ (patients with chronic diseases died from the fact that they could not get to the doctor in time and get the necessary medical care), ‘coronavirus covered the whole world’, ‘the rise of infection’, ‘coronavirus “mows down” people’, ‘the body is able to “burn” COVID-19’, ‘insidious infection’ and set expressions: ‘who is at war, and who is at home’ (airlines operate according to this principle, their prices for flights during the pandemic are inflated to the point of indecency), ‘smashed to smithereens’ by daily statistics.

Since the New Year, mass vaccination against COVID-19 has begun in Russia. The emotional state in society associated with coronavirus infection is gradually stabilizing. The amount of emotional vocabulary is at the same level as during the summer and autumn. The composition itself has changed somewhat. The emotive connotation of the style is carried out by the same means: neologisms (‘covid-overdose’, ‘virus Anglichinian’, ‘anti-vaccinators’, ‘contagious’, ‘covid-passport’), professionalism (‘BioNTech’, ‘Sputnik-V’, ‘side effects’, ‘antigens’, ‘adjuvants’, ‘reactogennost’, ‘autoimmune diseases’, ‘serotypes’, ‘IgG and IdM antibodies’), metaphors (‘Sputnik-V’ went into orbit’, ‘the drug broke into the circle of selected vaccines’, ‘golden vaccine’), numerals and set expressions (‘free cheese is only in a mousetrap’). There is a decrease in the number of articles devoted to the topic of coronavirus infection (there are only 9 of them), and emotivity is created mainly due to emotive vocabulary related to the topic ‘vaccination’, its effects and consequences.

All the research on the Russian corpus was conducted manually, without the use of computer data processing, since the results on the newspaper style of the Russian corpus
have not been updated since 2019. The search for emotive vocabulary, articles dedicated to the topic of coronavirus infection, as well as calculations were performed manually.

The English corpus is presented on the website English-Corpra.org. Here is a huge collection of material taken from periodicals in English from 20 countries. Having studied the English corpus of data on the topic “coronavirus”, we can trace such words that were previously emotive-neutral, but in the era of coronavirus infection received a powerful emotive charge: ‘anti-buddies’, ‘community spread’, ‘herd immunity’, ‘isolation’, ‘pandemic’, ‘physical distancing’, ‘incubation period’, ‘asymptomatic’.

There are new words that do not have the word “coronavirus” or “COVID-19” in the name, but are directly related to the topic of the coronavirus infection and the pandemic: ‘zumped’ (abandon or desert someone via videoconference), “ronavation” (renovation or refurbishment during lockdown), ‘locktail’ (any alcoholic beverage enjoyed during lockdown).

Our interest was the corpus "Coronavirus" with the words “covid”, “coronavirus”, which has 2,629,497 entries. An interesting fact was that the first most common neologisms can be attributed to emotive-neutral vocabulary: COVID-19, COVID, COVID19, POST-COVID, POST-COVID, PRE-COVID (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** The number of neologisms associated with the type COVID in the English language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neologism</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>2,258,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID</td>
<td>257,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID19</td>
<td>13,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-COVID</td>
<td>8,289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This indicates that the topic of coronavirus infection has gradually entered people's daily lives, and, without causing emotional outbursts because people are getting used to living with the "Crown".

In addition to emotionally neutral vocabulary, we can distinguish a group of neologisms with positive-emotional vocabulary and negative-emotional vocabulary.

Negative-emotional vocabulary includes the following: COVID-CAUSING, COVID-LINKED, COVID-PROOF, COVID-AFFECTED, COVIDIOTS, COVID-RELATED, COVID-POSITIVE, COVID-LIKE.


According to the study of the English corpus on the topic “coronavirus”, it was found out that out of the total number of neologisms (100 occurrences), positive-emotional vocabulary makes up a larger percentage in terms of variety, however, in terms of the frequency in contexts, negative-emotive vocabulary prevails. Figure 1 shows the picture of variety of emotional lexis.
Comparing the frequency of use of positive and negative vocabulary, the following results were obtained (see Table 3).

Table 3. Frequency of positive-emotive and negative-emotive lexis in the English language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive-emotional lexis</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Negative-emotional lexis</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NON-COVID</td>
<td>1643</td>
<td>COVID-CAUSING</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-SAFE</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>COVID-LINKED</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-SECURE</td>
<td>1264</td>
<td>COVID-PROOF</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CACOVID</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>COVID-AFFECTED</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTI-COVID-19</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>COVIDIOTS</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID19-FREE</td>
<td>1510</td>
<td>COVID-RELATED</td>
<td>6163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOPCOVID</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>COVID-POSITIV</td>
<td>2427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-NEGATIVE</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>COVID-LIKE</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8133</td>
<td></td>
<td>10111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This reflects the optimistic feature of a human nature. In difficult times, people seem to set themselves up in a positive way, showing emotions of joy, hope, foresight, serenity, readiness, confidence, trust, acceptance, and others. Perhaps this is also due to the physiological state, when the body experiences tension, it mobilizes all its potential and generates so-called pseudo-emotions as a blocker of the development of adverse processes. These pseudo-emotions affect the overall emotional state and the body reacts to negative arousal with the manifestation of positive emotions. On the other hand, negative-colored emotional vocabulary is more numerous – that means that at the verbal level, a person still gives free rein to negative emotions: displeasure, chagrin, anxiety, fear, fright, fear, etc.

Negative-emotive vocabulary prevails in the newspaper style of the English language. This confirms the fact that people are more scared, afraid, distrustful and worried than remain positive and enthusiastic.

4 Discussion

Summing up all of the above mentioned, we can say that during the studied period, the emotive background decreased from 4.1% (in the spring of 2020) to 2.89% (in April 2021).

Fig. 4 displays the fluctuation of percentage of emotive vocabulary in the Russian newspapers in the articles about covid.

![Bar chart showing emotive lexis change in the Russian language.](image)

According to the results of the study, it can be assumed that emotivity associated with tension in society decreases or passes into another form associated with uncertainty or distrust of the results of vaccination. Emotivity is directly related to emotions. And our study confirms it.

When the public’s emotional background is elevated, we see a high percentage of emotivity in articles. This is due to the tense state in the era of the pandemic – people are tormented by doubts, many feel fear, are afraid to go out, use public transport, even wearing a mask and gloves. With a decrease in emotionality in society, the percentage of emotionality in articles decreases. Comparing the newspaper style in Russian and the newspaper style in English, the following picture is obtained (see Fig. 5):
On the one hand, we can say that there are no significant differences between the data in Russian and English newspaper articles. There is a general decrease in emotivity directly associated with a decrease in the number of patients and, conversely, with an increase in the number of infected people, there is an increase in the emotional-expressive background. However, on the other hand, there are some differences, in particular, in Russian articles, the emotion of laughter and humor can be traced, in English articles there are no such emotions. Jokes related to the coronavirus speak of a culturally specific feature of the Russian language.

5 Conclusions

The language always reflects the society and the processes that are happening there [19]. The tremendous changes in the organization of the society under pandemic conditions have brought significant influx of new vocabulary units into all the languages in the countries that faced the disease. Covid has showed itself as a marked concept in human mentality. The corpus-based research has proven to be very informative in theoretical aspect here [20]. The corpora data give a lot of collocations and word combinations with this word. The word ‘Covid’ is emotively marked and is presented both in Russian and in English, for it seems to be an international aspect and it might include international phraseology [21]. ‘Covid’ is supposed to become a concept in all the countries that faced the danger, because its avoidance is connected with life-sense strategies [22].

Researches of the corpora data with neologisms illustrate the prevailing negative attitudes towards the phenomena. Though positive contexts also occur, they naturally concern the methods of avoiding the peril and the situations of recovery. We have witnessed not only neologisms denoting the situation connected with Covid but also the metaphorical usage and transferred meaning. Formal neutral vocabulary acquires emotionally charged connotations.

The results of the study can be supplemented when the data on the Russian corpus is available. Additional information may appear to support or challenge the findings of this study.

Our research shows that texts in both languages are emotionally charged due to neologisms, often they have the word ‘Covid’ in their root. Also, emotivity is created by
words that have acquired emotionality in an emotive context: ‘collective immunity’, ‘vaccination’, etc. - these concepts have become widely discussed in an emotive context – the desire to stop a pandemic, to cope with a difficult situation, to resist and defeat the disease.

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