

MARKING THE SEMIOTIC BORDER “OUR WORLD” AND “THE ALIEN WORLD” AS THE MEANS OF
DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF AN INDIVIDUAL’S IDENTITY

Research article

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Abstract

The article deals with the study of processes of individual and group identification design. The research is based on the commentaries in social networking. The signs of political differentiation in the society are analyzed: the discursive practices reflecting different ideological views, linguistic means marking semiotic border “our world” and “the alien world”, various oppositions in intercultural and intracultural fields. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of slang used by different ideological groups, mythological and stereotype structures, language semantic processes which produce new axiological values. Productive word-formation models, describe the mechanisms of paronymic attraction, phoneme and graphic variations and other means of ironic evaluation and sarcasm are revealed.

Keywords: social networking, political self-identification, identity markers, discursive behavior, semiotic opposition, code phrase, word label, slang, face-threatening acts.

МАРКИРОВАНИЕ СЕМИОТИЧЕСКОЙ ГРАНИЦЫ «СВОЙ-ЧУЖОЙ» КАК СРЕДСТВО ДИСКУРСИВНОГО
КОНСТРУИРОВАНИЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ СУБЪЕКТА

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена изучению процессов индивидуальной и групповой идентичности. Материалом исследования послужили комментарии, размещенные в социальных сетях. Авторы анализируют маркеры политической идентичности в обществе: дискурсивные практики, отражающие различные политические взгляды, лингвистические средства, разграничивающие семиотическую границу «свой-чужой», оппозиции в межкультурном и внутрикультурном пространстве. Особое внимание уделяется анализу сленга, используемому различными идеологическими группами, мифологемам и стереотипам, а также языковым процессам, благодаря которым создаются новые оценочные значения. В процессе исследования авторы выявляют продуктивные словообразовательные модели, механизмы паронимической аттракции, фонетические и графические особенности и другие средства иронической оценки и сарказма.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, политическая самоидентификация, маркеры идентичности, дискурсивное поведение, семиотическая оппозиция, кодовая фраза, словесный ярлык, сленг, ликоугрожающие акты.

Introduction

The research of social aspects of informal speech communication is most important in the time of info and psychological as well as mental warfare. Studying communication on topics of social importance in every-day interaction, in media discourse or the Internet discourse including social networking allows a scientist to get the information about the society’s state of mind, its psychological status and the level of identity maturity.

Lately linguists have stated that the discursive and consequently the social designs, which are closely interconnected, are constructed in the process of speech communication. The representatives of the critical discourse analysis [7], [9], [10] highlight the most important role that the society plays in community construction. The idea of discursive identity is closely connected with CDA. Discursive identity is not purely represented by the language means but is constructed by different thematic identifications, thus its key characteristics are dynamism, multiplicity and situationality [1].

Considering different types of identity (such as ethnical, professional, gender, age-related) the ideological one, which consists of civil, political and cultural identities, is most dynamic and inconsistent.

Research methods and principles

The present research based on publications on the Internet platforms Zen and Youtube is aimed at the analysis of the linguistic means used by people having different political orientations to mark their ideological position. The analysis units are figurative and expressive nominations and utterances functioning as linguistics markers of identity in the process of interaction on the social and political topics. The methods applied are: classification method, linguo-stylistic interpretation, discourse and semiotic analysis.

Main results

Linguistic identity markers are neological evaluation nominations and autonominations, topical for the contemporary society, specifying individual’s affiliation to a certain social group. Among the features of linguistic identity markers we can state:

- 1) repetition,
- 2) identifying function,
- 3) markedness,
- 4) evaluative connotation,
- 5) word-formation and text potential function,
- 6) low style,
- 7) emotional ambivalence or enantiosemy.

The discourse of Russian social media is the sphere of ideological polarization. It is the place of comparing and contrasting different axiological orientations, creating national ideology and identification as well as self-identification of a large social group versus individuals having different political identity. Any discourse activity, especially in the sphere of topical social problems, is simultaneously the process of expressing and forming the individual's identity.

The detection of linguistic means used to mark social groups having different ideological orientations may be fulfilled vertically: authorities – community, the rich – the poor; and horizontally: liberals – democrats, the old – the young (fathers – sons), the Western values oriented – patriots, and so on. As the present research deals with social media, the narration of the upper class is not represented and the horizontal aspect of social group marking is on the fore.

According to E. Erikson, "...we deal with a process "located" in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities" [8] and consequently identity necessarily includes attitude towards "the alien world". Self-identification is associating oneself with large and small social groups and distancing from the other groups on the basis "our world" – "the alien world". According to the Russian semiotician Yu. Stepanov, the opposition "our world" – "the alien world" penetrates all aspects of culture and is one of the key concepts of any collective world view [4].

There are two types of discourse according to the way ideological self-identification is revealed: identity discourse (solidarity with one's group) and alienation discourse (distancing from the others) [5]. As a rule, they are realized simultaneously, in the same texts, though this or that behaviour type dominating. Polarization of the types can be seen in creating positive or negative image of political leaders, in the usage of mythologemes, evaluative means, cliché, and so on.

An example of identity discourse is given in the work by an ethnographer and sociologist T. Shhepanskaya [6], who analyzed the youths subculture in Leningrad in 1980s. As the subculture was closed, the communication was fulfilled with the help of verbal and non-verbal signs helping to identify those belonging to it. Groups in social media are not closed, but mixed; and the alienation discourse prevails. That is self-identification is fulfilled mainly by the way of distancing and confrontation from the individuals bearing the alien ideology and political views.

We distinguish two main groups of identity markers: code phrases and word labels. Code phrases are either direct nominations (*I / we Furgal*) or phrases demonstrating affiliation to the definite ideological group. Some other examples of code phrases are phraseological nonce words, showing opposing attitude towards the present economic and political system (*this country, it's time to get out of here*) or on the contrary, negative attitude towards opposition and the USA (*people with good faces, City upon the Hill*). The peculiarity of these speech units is their correlation with the typical situation which characterizes the behavior of one group members. For example, the code phrase "*это другое*" (*it's not the same*) reflects the situation of double standards and is the marker of people using it. Except the correlation with the typical situation, code phrases have some other permanent features: semantic nondecomposition, metaphorical character and markedness. In many cases markedness of such speech units is so high that connotation goes to the fore, denotative meaning being driven away and suppressed.

The second type of identity markers is word labels which help to reify and delegitimize opponents. They are such speech units as stereotype nicknames, people's characteristics which are usually far from reality and usually express highly negative evaluation. The danger of such nominations is that they automatically model the "enemy image" in the recipients' consciousness. As denotative meaning of these speech units is not the primary one, they form synonymic chains according to the connotative and emotional meanings (spelling and punctuation is preserved here and in the following examples):

- *Наверняка каждый из тех, кто начинал с ними спорт, тут же получал наклейку на лоб: "кремлебот", "запутинец", "едрос", "лахтинский", "ольгинский", "пригожинский" и следом вопросы: "сколько тебе заплатили?", "продался за 30 серебрянников?", "зомбоящика посмотрелся?", "соловьёва послушался?", и тому подобные (For sure, anyone who started to argue with him got a nickname "Kremlebot", "zaputinec" (Putin's supporter), "edros" (derived from the name of the leading party «Edinaya Rossiya»)... and the questions "How much have you been paid?", "Are you bought for 30 pieces of silver?", "Did you overwatch zombievision?" (zombie + television).*

- *Я не знаю никакой другой страны, кроме России, где бы внешняя и внутренняя либерда с таким остервенением поливала бы свою страну грязью. (I don't know any other country but Russia where outside and inside liberda (liberals) would dirt its own country with such rage).*

Linguistic identity markers used in political discursive practices make paradigmatic relationships and form a sign system, lexical-semantic groups, synonymic chains and oppositions in intercultural and intracultural fields.

The main opposition in the intercultural field is contrast "Russia / West", and the typical identity markers are the word labels with the meaning of alienness from the countries which are geopolitical opponents of Russia and its citizens. The words Russia and Russians as non-marked members are opposed to the marked members: *Gayrope* (from *Gay* and *Europe*), *amerikany* (Amerikaner), *banderovcy* (followers of Bandera), *kastryulegolovye* (with a pot on his head) as well as stylistically low *Rashka* (instead of Russia):

- *Ты живёшь в гейропе, какое тебе дело до России? (You live in Gayrope, what do you care about Russia?)*

- *То есть в 2014 году ты уезжал из так называемой «Рашики»? – Именно. Из «Рашики» в светлую Америку. (So, you left so called «Rashka» in 2014? – Exactly, from «Rashka» to blessed America).*

The most succinct opposition is the example of антонимы on the preposition level в *Украине* (*in Ukraine*) and на *Украине* (*on Ukraine*), which in some comments is neutralized as *вна Украине* (*in / on Ukraine*).

E. Kishina states that in the Soviet period “our world” referred to the Soviet Union while “the alien world” was used in relation to the other capitalist countries. In the contemporary political communication the opposition is also viewed inside the country: Moscow / periphery [2] inside MCAD / out of MCAD. The toponym *Moscow* may have graphical mark features, such as being written with deliberate mistakes:

- Я работала не в МАСкве, а на Севере. (And I didn't work in MAscow, but in the North);

- Очень запомнился один комментарий дальневосточника в фейсбуке: "Масквичи совсем оборзели! Электричку отменили у нас!..." (I well remember a comment by one Far East resident on Facebook: "Mascovites are out of line! They canceled our train.);

- ...бывает "москва" и с маленькой буквы! Девушка писала именно про эту москву... (...sometimes there is moscow with a small letter. The girl wrote about this moscow).

The next opposition is used only in the comments to the texts about the government actions. These comments oppose «government supporters» and «liberals»:

- Пора в этом курятнике рыночном наводить порядок (It's time to restore order in this market chicken coop).

- Как вычистить всех этих "рукопожатных" с тех позиций, с которых они могут влиять на общество? (How should we clear out all those "handshakers" from the positions of authority they take and influence the society?).

The opposition “Putin’s supporters / Putin’s critics” is characterized by a large number of neologisms and nonce words with pejorative evaluation, which are formed from the names of famous people *putinist*, *putinoid*, *zaputinec*, *naval'nyata*, *furgalyata*, *sorosyata*:

- Никчёмный блогер такому только в путляндии бред нести (A worthless blogger can only talk nonsense in Putinland);

- Маячат в питевизоре 24 часа в сутки. (They loom in putivision (Putin + television) 24 hours a day).

Productive word-formation patterns here are derivatives with suffixes – *ist*: *putinist*, *krymnashist(ka)*; –*un*: *borcun*, *protestun*; –*izm / ism*: *putinizm*, *naval'nizm*, *delo v propagandonizme*, –*oid*: *zapadloid*, *putinoid*, *liberoid*; –*ast*: *liberast*; –*ets*: *zaputinets*, *onok-* / –*yonok*: *dityonok-naval'nyonok*, *borcunyonok*; –*yat*: *naval'nyata*, *furgalyata*, *sorosyata*.

Negative attitude towards the government’s propaganda is witnessed in the opposition “television / the Internet”, where the linguistic markers referring to television dominate:

- Телевидение ... ага, для тех, у кого вместо головы телевизор; затюканные лживым телеящиком; Как будто статью Киселев писал. (Television ... yeah, for those who have a TV instead of a head; intimidated by a lying tele-speaker; As if Kiselyov wrote the article).

One of the most popular oppositions is “optimists / pessimists”. Optimists are the authorities’ supporters, while pessimists are usually pensioners who have nostalgia for the USSR or the young people who want to live like the Western people live:

- Проснулись после "зимней спячки" и "запели" старую песню: "всёпропало, всёхреново" и т.д.; ну вот плакальщики заньки. (They woke up after the "winter hibernation" and started "singing" an old song: "it's all gone, it's all fucked up" etc.; well, the weepers).

Nonce words *диванные эксперты* (*sofa experts*), *плакальщики* (*weepers*), *всепропальщики* (*everything-is-losters*) express the negative attitude towards people who don’t see positive changes and achievements in contemporary Russia.

An interesting example of the usage of a new word *нытинг* (*moaning*) as a synonym to “a meeting” is a following dialogue:

- Мой сын в позапрошлом году у одного такого борцуненка на нытинге спросил: "А сколько налогов ты лично заплатил?" - Татьяна, "нытинг"! Шикарно! Надо запомнить. - Это я у Армена Сумбатыча подслушала. (My son the year before asked one such wrestler at a moaning: "And how much taxes have you personally paid?" - Tatiana, "moaning"! Gorgeous! I have to memorize. - I overheard this from Armen Sumbatyach).

As we can see, the communicators liked the word as it reflects the attitude towards the people who go to meetings and see only the negative in the Russian reality.

The contemporary social media are the source of linguistic innovations and new derivational models, the sphere of language game and creative processes which fulfill expressive, axiological and language creating functions. One of the most productive noun-formation models is the negative prefix *ne-* and its variant *nedo-*, meaning something which is not ready or not very well done. Frequency of these prefixes reflects processes of separation in society: *небратья* (*not-brothers*), *недострана* (*undercountry*), *недогосударство* (*undergovernment*), *недоСМИ* (*undermedia*).

- Ждем, когда у этого недоСМИ отберут лицензию.. (We are anticipating this undermedia licence revoked).

Topicality and great significance of some social events can be witnessed in formation of word families, the core of which are lexemes reflecting the most acute notions and realities of our life. The example of such derivation activity is witnessed with the core word “friend”:

- Саша, я так считаю. Но расфрендяться не умею! Старость, наверно...; Придётся пойти зафрендиться. Чтобы потом расфрендиться. Не поленюсь)); А в итоге, музыкант выводит на жестокий и бескомпромиссный расстрел френдоцида всех, кто считает правильным тюремный срок для афериста и мошенника Алексея Навального. (- Sasha, I think so. But I can't unfriend! Possibly, getting older, ... I'll have to become friends to unfriend later. I'll take the trouble; As a result, the musician takes to friendocide shooting everyone who approves the prison sentence given to a speculator and swindler Aleksei Navalni).

The neologism «unfriend» has appeared as a synonym to the word “unfollow”, that is to delete someone on Facebook or another social network. The metaphors of war and conflict reflects the feeling of tragedy from the confrontation inside the society.

One of the typical semantic processes of identity marker functioning is axiological recoding, when the feature attributed to one object is transferred to the other object. The process of recoding can be witnessed on the word “ёршики” (*toilet brushes*):

- Как сделать символ посмешищем и спустить протест в унитаз. Показывает Навальный ёршик, которым унитазы чистят, называет его цену - она запредельна. Производит впечатление. Люди выходят на митинг, берут с собой ёршик, торжественно держат его в руках. И становятся посмешищем. Ёршики. Так их и назовём...(How to

transfer a symbol into a laughing stock and to flush the protest down the toilet. Navalni shows a toilet brush and names its price. It's horrendously high. The act makes an impression. People go to the meetings with toilet brushes in their hands and become laughing stocks. TOILET BRUSHES. Let's give them this name).

When the words referring to discursive practices of one ideological group start to be used by the group having the opposite political views, the negative connotation, though remaining, is shifted to people who initially used them. A new additional ironic shade of meaning appears. Recoding is possible due to the mechanism of intertextuality, in particular the mechanism of quotation of lexical markers of the different ideological sign system. Identity lexical markers often develop the ideological polysemy or emotional and evaluation enantiosemy, as they may express the opposite evaluation being marked members of the opposition and used ironically. For instance, a word label "понаехавшие/brand-new-arrivals", used by "the aliens" in relation to themselves, acquire additional ironic shade of meaning:

- ...ой да, в Москве жизнь, это я, понаехавшая, точно знаю; Это мы совки, жили в загнивающем социализме; Я ваш любимый кремлебот; Я с гордостью могу к себе примерить как бы обзывательство - "путиноид". (...oh, yes, there is life in Moscow, I, a brand-new-arrival, know for sure; We are scoops, we lived in decaying socialism; I am your favorite kremlbot; I can proudly try on a kind of nickname - "putinoid").

Metaphorical epithets "light and dark" are often recoded. The metaphor "light" was first used by the authorities' critics either for self-nomination or for positive evaluation of the Western values. Later this metaphor started to be used in reference to opposition itself: люди с хорошими / светлыми лицами (people with good faces), светлый град на холме (City upon the Hill). The similar change in meaning is seen in the epithet Темнейший / the Darkest. It appeared as an antonym to the word Светлолицый / Light-faced, which is ironically used to refer to Putin by opposition. Later the word Темнейший started to be used by Putin's supporters mocking the attempts to discredit the President.

The signals of recoding are quotations by the other group, usage of word labels with the I / we pronoun (Это мы совки, жили в загнивающем социализме (we are the scoops who lived in decaying socialism), usage of toponyms in the plural form (Не нравится - валите из страны в ваши "благословенные" европы (If you don't like it, get out of the country and go to your "blessed" europes), deliberate spelling mistakes being graphically shown, quotation marks as irony signals, exaggeration. For example, the word-marker of the oppositional view *rezhim* (regime) is misspelt *rezhym*, *rezYm*.

-... и все это (замечу) я нашла не в блоге «профессионального борцуна с кровавым режЫмом», а в блоге известного музыканта! (It was not in the blog of "a professional protagonist with the bloody regYme" I found all that, but in the famous musician's blog!)

The epithet *bloody* is used to strengthen sarcasm, especially when it is used with precedent phenomena, allusions to the fantasy fiction:

- В массе-то своей народ грезит о "спасителе", призывает того, кто освободит его из-под ига кровавого Мордора, расплавит в жерле кольцо Всевластия! (For the most part, the people dream of a "savior", they call on the one who will free them from the yoke of bloody Mordor and melt the ring of Omnipotence in the mouth of the volcano.)

Social media is the place with wide possibilities for word experimenting and a play on words to mark ideological views. The most characteristic stylistic devices used for this purpose are contamination and paranomasia.

Contamination, which is combination of morphological elements of different lexemes, serves to create expressive neologisms and nonce words with low style: *liberda* (*liberaly* + *beliberda*), which means liberals + nonsense, *liberoid* (*liberal* + *reptiloid*), *putinoid* (*Putin* + *reptiloid*), *gayrope* (*gay* + *Europe*); *putevizor* (*Putin* + *televizor*).

Paranomasia, which is the deliberate usage of similar in sound but semantically not connected with each other words [3], serves to discredit opponents and delegitimize the behavior stereotypes: *ziyayushchij grad* (from *shine* and *yawn*), *patrioty i putrioty* (*patriots* and *putriots*), *ALLIgarhi* (from *oligarch* and *alligator*) and so on.

The next example gives the whole list of nonce synonyms which are derived from the words "protest" and "opposition" and are associated with obscene words:

- Правильнее говорить - протестуты (ну и протестутки, соответственно).

- Правильно говорить - протестутки или пиндосранцы для "она" и "он".

- Там много синонимов - протесторасты, протездуны, протестомесы / протестососы и т.д. и т.п...

- проституты...

- верное замечание, а ещё не оппозиция, а попозиция))

- ещё один попозиционер, кроме оскорблений и фейков больше нечего сказать.

(It is more correct to say-protestut (well, protestutki, respectively).

- It is correct to say-prostitutes or pindos for "she" and "he".

- There are many synonyms-protestorasts, protezduns, etc...

- prostitut...

- a true remark, and besides, not the opposition, but the poposition))

- another popositionist, there is nothing more to say except insults and fakes.)

Paranomasia, besides fulfilling the function of the play on words, helps the speakers avoid using obscene language and being accused of violating politeness maxims.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we state that the discursive reality, which is formed on the Internet, reflects and transforms the social reality and consequently advance the processes of individual and social group self-identification. Social media is the source of appearance and structuring of new world view framework and values, which form collective identity and reflect the society world view. Moreover, social media is also the field of productive language forming activity. We witness the appearance of slang which is used by social groups bearing opposite ideological views. The analysis of slang usage, word borrowings from one group of slang to the other help researchers identify social processes in the community.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

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Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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