Political Facebook Posts Using Ideological Symbols for Media Image Designing of Russia as Enemy

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the using of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts for media image designing of Russia as enemy. The political posts with ideological symbols in the social network Facebook in Russian and English make the material of research. The complex methods of analysis of the ideological symbols for media image designing of Russia as enemy in the modern virtual society are used. The inductive, descriptive and comparative, cognitive and discursive, semantic, definitional, functional and stylistic analysis is carried out. For the complex analysis of political Facebook posts in the modern media discourse, verbal means of ideological symbols influence on the addressee in modern foreign-language and Russian mass media linguacultural, linguapragmatic, discursive approaches are applied. In the article, we realize the aim of the study. We identify the role of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts in the modern society. The ways of analysis are useful for development of communication theory, linguapragmatics, sociolinguistics, cultural linguistics, media linguistics, virtual linguistics. In the article, we establish that in the analysis process of political posts of social network Facebook the negative image of Russia forming feeling of the coming threat, the sensation of fear proceeding from Russia, and, in this regard, fears of Facebook users comes to light.

Introduction

In modern society in the communicative and informative field the role of social networks, which media discourse free or involuntarily exerts impact on each user. In

this regard social networks, and especially Facebook which audience has exceeded 1,71 billion people is willingly used by certain circles for media image designing of Russia as enemy. Relevance of a subject of the research is caused by the anthropocentric principle in modern linguistics where in the center there is a person, society, his ideas of the world reflected in language.

In the research, we consider social network Facebook as the environment of real communicative process in virtual Internet space, with presence of emotive impact on the addressee both latent, and open, with use of cross-cultural stereotypes in a political media discourse. Now it is obviously important to consider the social network Facebook and its virtual media discourse, means of formation of enemy image in the social network and a possibility of suggestive impact on users of network.

Literature Review

Review of publications on the subject of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts showed that works of domestic and foreign linguists in the field of comparative linguistics, sotsio-and psycholinguistics, pragmalinguistics, cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, stylistics, rhetoric, of the theory of journalism, and also the theory of discourse, the theory of influence, the theory of rumors (Le Bon, 1998; Pendleton, 1998; Dmitriyev, Latynov & Khlopyev, 1997; Olshansky, 2001; Knapp, 2004; Miller, 2006; Slyshkin. & Chizh, 2008; Zasursky, 2008; Zheltukhina, 2003; 2010; 2011; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; Busygina & Zheltukhina, 2015; Zheltukhina & Omelchenko, 2008; 2011; Zheltukhina & Razmerova, 2010; Borodina & Zheltukhina, 2013; Borodina & Zheltukhina, 2015a; Borodina & Zheltukhina, 2015b; Slyshkin et al., 2014; Dobronichenko et al., 2012; Zheltukhina et al., 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d; 2016e; Chizh et al., 2016; Zheltukhina & Pavlov, etc.) have formed theoretical base of the research.

Theoretical base of a research for studying and analysis of political posts of social network Facebook in media image designing of Russia as enemy with use of verbal and nonverbal ideological symbols in mass media discourse are the scientific concepts developed by domestic and foreign linguists in the field of discourse theory and text linguistics, functional semantics, theory of speech genres, cultural linguistics, discursive pragmalinguistics and cross-cultural communication, Internet communications, political discourse (Shakhovsky, 1998, Pocheptsov, 2000; Zheltukhina, 2003; Sheygal, 2004; Karasik, 2010; Dobrosklonskaya, 2013; Slyshkin et al., 2014; Zheltukhina et al., 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d, etc.). Such direction of the humanity as political linguistics is engaged in studying of resources of language as means of fight for political domination and manipulations with public consciousness (Budayev & Chudinov, 2006).

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to identify the role of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts in the modern society.

Research questions

The overarching research question of this study was as follows:

How can we identify the role of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts in the modern society?

Method

The aim of the research has defined the choice of methods of the analysis. In work, we apply the following methods: inductive, descriptive and comparative, cognitive and

discursive, semantic, definitional, functional and stylistic analysis. The methodological basis of work is a system approach. According to the principles of system approach, any phenomenon is considered as integrity in unity of all its communications and relations. For the complex analysis of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts in a modern media discourse, verbal means of ideological symbols influence on the addressee in modern foreign-language and Russian mass media linguacultural, linguapragmatic, discursive approaches are used. In the research we have applied the integrated approach in studying of media texts of political posts and comments to of users based on a combination of methods of various disciplines investigating mass media: lexico-semantic, contextual, conceptual, stylistic, quantitative, discursive analyses (Dobrosklonskaya, 2013), allowing to reveal, among other things, features of creation of an enemy image and to establish thematic dominants: names of the famous people of Russia (leaders, artists, confessional figures and politicians).

Results and Discussion

In our research, we prove a hypothesis that the social network Facebook as a sociolinguacultural phenomenon is a subject of political struggle, using the politized discourse for the purpose of media image designing of Russia as enemy.

Object of research are verbal and nonverbal means of media image designing of the enemy with use of ideological symbols. Ideological symbols are the integral attributes of statehood and sovereignty reflecting the social face of the era, cultural and spiritual condition of society, its traditions, outlook, and relation to the power, capable to consolidate society. The coat of arms, the flag and the anthem of the country we carry to the state symbols. It is confidently possible to carry the Ancient Moscow Kremlin, Red Square, Pokrovsky Cathedral (St. Basil's Cathedral), the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, and traditional souvenirs to symbols of Russia: nested dolls, samovars, bears etc. The symbol in itself means nothing, but it defines behavior of people, possesses absolutely concrete impact on reality, is an object or an instrument of influence.

As material of the research, we have the review of more than 200 contents of users in free access and some public groups of social network Facebook, such as "NOVATA has served! Coalition", "Everyday life of hell", "ArtsAgainstAggression", "AntiPutin", "POLITPORNO", blogger "Daniel Rodriguez" and others, forming negative information about Russia.

The reality of social network Facebook in the communicative and informative field expands possibilities of the virtual personality, activates her creative abilities, however, as a result of the conducted research is established that along with it in social network Facebook there is a distribution of negative information for formation of an image of Russia as enemy with use of verbal and nonverbal ideological symbols and forcing of destabilization of a socio-political situation in the world. Within a month from 10/15/2016 to 11/15/2016 we conducted a research and have revealed the relation of electorate of social network Facebook to ideological symbols of Russia, her leaders and media persons of the state. We have carried out the content analysis on the quantitative and high-quality use of chosen often-met culturological units, such as Putin, Medvedev, Other leaders of Russia, Famous people of Russia, Orthodox church and Orthodox clergy, Ideological symbols of Russia.

As a result of the contextual analysis it is revealed that public groups of a social network of Facebook, such as "NOVATA! Coalition", "Everyday life of hell", "ArtsAgainstAggression", "AntiPutin", "POLITPORNO", "Peacekeeper", blogger "Daniel Rodriguez", and others, use the pages for the pragmatic purposes: distortions of reality, demonizing of Russia, promotion of the slogan "Russia – Aggressor", discredit of her

ideological symbols, creation of negative attitude to the head of state and her leaders. Data of researches are consolidated in table 1.

Table 1. Connotation of Language Units by Media Image Designing of Russia as Enemy

Language units of the contextual analysis (verbal and nonverbal means)	Pages and news feeds of users in free access		Public groups created to discredit Russia, e.g.: "NOVATA! Coalition", "Everyday life of hell", "ArtsAgainstAggression", "AntiPutin", "POLITPORNO", "Peacekeeper", Blogger "Daniel Rodriguez"	
	Positive connotation (%)	Negative connotation (%)	Positive connotation (%)	Negative connotation (%)
Putin	15	30	1	70
Medvedev	1	7	-	7
Other leaders of Russia	2	5	-	10
Famous people of Russia	5	1	-	5
Orthodox church and Orthodox clergy	1	2	-	3
Ideological symbols of Russia	20	5	-	65

To our regret, it should be noted that 90% of all political posts with which we have been acquainted during the research and comments to them, belong to the Ukrainian users. Many of posts remain unaddressed independent users, but about 70% have reposts, that is, "the car of impact on electorate" is started. It means that specially created groups bring a negative information "throw" to Facebook network, provided that the semiotics of a political discourse armed with a video series is a powerful tool of manipulation with public consciousness. At the same time, the research has confirmed that unification and a dogmatization of thinking of most of the population increases (Zheltukhina, 2003).

As an example of the fact that in network the slogan "Russia – Aggressor" with discredit of its ideological symbols is actively exaggerated the political post of the news agency "365info.kz", October 17, 2016 (Russia…, 2016) executed in the form of the poster in which the head of the roaring bear with a terrible grin and terrible canines against the background of the Russian flag is represented can be.

The post is followed by information:

Above over a post:

«Blizhajshie dva goda, po mneniyu amerikanskih ehkspertov, stanut reshayushchimi dlya soyuznikov: http://365info.kz/…/kazahstan-pod-ugrozoj-amerikanskie-spe…/» ("The next two years, according to the American experts, will become decisive for allies…)

And below under a post:

«Rossiya stala ugrozoj dlya Kazahstana i Belarusi-SMI - 365info.kz . Ugroza napadeniya Rossii na Belarus' i Kazahstan mozhet okazat'sya odnoj iz krupnejshih

problem dlya... 365info.kz» ("Russia became threat for Kazakhstan and Belarus media - 365info.kz. The threat of attack of Russia on Belarus and Kazakhstan can be one of the largest problems for... 365info.kz")

Having carried out the lexico-semantic analysis it is possible to tell that impact on the addressee is carried out in an open form by autological fragments of the text due to the use of words in their direct sense: *"Russia became threat for Kazakhstan and Belarus".* On 11/15/2016 the post has received 76 reposts and 63 comments from which 27 trust this information.

The categorical statement of the American establishment that Russia, and, specifically its leader V. V. Putin – "the tyrant, the enemy of America and its allies", illustrates a post from pages of the Unofficial Justice (informal justice) group (a repost from the website of news agency "washingtonpost.com") (Unofficial Justice, 2016).

This post includes the photograph of senator McCain made, apparently, at one of meetings.

Over a portrait, there are statements of senator:

'PUTIN - "a former KGB agent who has plunged his country into tyranny, murdered his political opponents, invaded his neighbors, threatened America's allies and attempted to undermine America's elections"'.

Below a portrait inscription:

'A Trump administration thaw with Russia is 'unacceptable', McCain says.

'"The price of another 'reset' would be complicity in Putin and Assad's butchery of the Syrian people," GOP senator says'.

At the time of our last appeal to this post (11/15/2016) it remains no comments.

Metalogical fragments (metaphors) in the speech of senator McCain perform a function of addition, author's thought specification and are recognized to reason the text of a political discourse, and reliability of these arguments of senator McCain does not worry at all.

On Facebook pages we deal with discredit not only leaders of Russia, but famous and significant for Russia people – cultural and art professionals. So, on pages of the public group "Arts Against Aggression" the following subjects are exaggerated: about protests in Boston and New York at Valery Gergiev, Denis Matsuyev, Vladimir Spivakov, Hibla Gerzmava's concerts which have signed the collective letter in support of annexation of the Crimea to Russia. A post from 10/30/2016 Dmitry Smelansky (2016): On a white background, the black fist with the thumb lowered down is represented.

Under a post we can see an inscription: *«V Bostone proshla akciya protesta v stile horror protiv rossiyskogo pianista Macueva». ("In Boston the protest action in style horror has taken place against the Russian pianist Matsuyev").*

Further it is added: *«Gruppa Arts Against Aggression provela u konservatorii, gde vystupal pianist iz Rossii Denis Macuev, installyaciyu Putin & Matsuev house of...» ("At conservatory where the pianist from Russia Denis Matsuyev acted, the Arts Against Aggression group has carried out installation of Putin & Matsuev house of ... ").*

On 11/15/2016 on this post users have put likes: it is "pleasant" – 23, it is "shocking" – 4, "Super" – 1, 3 users left comments: let's provide comments with preservation of spelling and a punctuation: <...>

Katia Shraga Kazhetsya, u nas segodnya benefis :)

Victoria Stepanova Koncovka prosto greet serdce!

Yura Burkovskiy You guys are all over the news...Very impressive!

(Katia Shraga Seems, we have a benefit performance today :)

Victoria Stepanova The Ending just heats heart!

Yura Burkovsky You guys are all over the news... Very impressive!)

The post represents the gesture, known since ancient times. This gesture the Roman emperor sentenced the gladiator to death.

The statement in a post is made loud: "horror" – a genre in cinema and literature, which are urged to frighten the viewer, to install feeling of alarm and fear. Thus, nonverbal and verbal components of the post indicate the negative attitude towards the Russian pianist, even attempts of his intimidation. Metaphoricalness of the text interprets both generation of the text, and generation of the implication making special suggestive impact on the addressee.

"The media discourse in Russian, German and English linguacultures has common features and represents synthesis of everyday and colloquial and abstract language today that is expressed in simple syntactic creation of phrases, sharpness of estimates, use of idiomatic expressions, stylistic reception of personification; ... The addressing the expressional painted lexicon in the media discourse of different linguacultures is caused by specifics of its impact on the addressee, knowledge of his installations and focused on his status intuition" (Zheltukhina, 2014 p. 72).

In case of pragmatical reaction to the post and activity of the specified "activists", Yury Burkovsky's comment is remarkable: *"You guys are all over the news... Very impressive!"*

It should be noted that after arrival to Russia Denis Matsuyev complained that media have got over-excited, and actually nobody in Boston and in New York has even paid attention to "protest" as the small group so-called "activists" didn't try.

In the Russian newspaper RG.RU No. 7117 (249) 11/2/2016 Denis Matsuyev has given an interview with assessment of the Russian media: *«Ya voobsche ne hotel kommentirovat etot absurd, no vtoroy den nablyudayu, chto proishodit v SMI, i prosto porazhen. Sprosite lyubogo cheloveka, kto byl na moem koncerte v Bostone, i on skazhet, chto pered koncertnym zalom stoyali neskolko chelovek, na kotoryh nikto nikakogo vnimaniya ne obraschal. V amerikanskoy presse ni odno izdanie dazhe ne upomyanulo ob etom incidente. Zato nashi SMI razduli etu informaciyu, kopiruyut drug druga, prichem dazhe veduschie izdaniya - budto vse tolko i zhdut etih slov: "boykot", "piket", "protest"»* *("I didn't want to comment on this absurdity at all, but I observe the second day what happens in media, and is simply struck. Ask any person who was at my concert in Boston, and he will tell you that the concert hall was faced by several people to whom nobody any attention paid. In the American press, any edition has even not mentioned this incident. But our media have inflated this information, copy each other, and even the leading editions - as if all only wait for these words: "boycott", "picket", "protest")* (Smelansky, 2016).

In our work results of a research of virtual political discourse, of verbal and nonverbal means of media image designing of the enemy are presented. Therefore, it is revealed that in Facebook network groups are created and there are political posts with use of verbal and nonverbal ideological symbols of Russia which main task is not the message of any important information with an appeal to dialogue or any discussion. The main task of such groups and posts is "throw" of negative, most often the unchecked and far-fetched information causing certain steady actors intensions.

Conclusion

The obtained data as a result of the analysis of political posts on pages of these groups, and also the methods of a research on use of verbal and nonverbal means applied in work for media image designing Russia as enemy (lexico-semantic, contextual, conceptual, stylistic, quantitative analyses), allow to reveal features of creation of an enemy image and to establish that in its formation names of the famous people of Russia are used: its leaders, artists, confessional figures and politicians.

Thus, in the analysis of political posts of social network Facebook, the negative image of Russia forming feeling of the coming threat, the sensation of fear proceeding from Russia, and, in this regard, fears of users of social network Facebook comes to light. Various methods, including use of the quotes taken out of a context, declaration of an obvious lie (and it is unimportant that after a while the return will be proved), rhetorical questions, irony, and stylistic means (epithets, metonymy, metaphors, etc.) are for this purpose used.

As a result of a research it is possible to draw conclusions that on pages of social network Facebook there is a planting of hostility and hatred, caused by stereotypification and dogmatization of communicants thinking. Full discredit of Russia and investment of her leaders with aggression and insidiousness, and citizens with lack of will and servility are carried out. Therefore, we can realize that the main tasks of the western political discourse are obviously looked through in modern pro-American establishment on pages of social network Facebook in political Facebook posts with ideological symbols.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications and recommendations for future studies are as follows. Based on findings of this study we can compare ideological symbols in political Facebook posts in different media cultures. It should be noted that our future study could form integrated communicative space of virtual political rumorology and axiology. It is recommended that linguistic and cultural development of research should include complex methods, which were integrated into research process and should be discussed by experts in their fields. The next step in the development of this research will be the creation of basis of ideological symbols in political Facebook posts in different media cultures.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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