

ONLINE NEWS COMMENTS OF THE E-DISCOURSE: A FRAME-SEMANTIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted as part of a new scientific paradigm: Internet-linguistics. Virtual or digital discourse (e-discourse), online comments on the news in particular, is a prime focus of the study. Presumably, online comments reflect the national peculiarities of the world perception. There has been used a method of frame-semantic modelling of the utterances to give scientific credence to the above-mentioned hypothesis. The concepts of frame-scenario and its constituents – subframes and slots – are extensively analyzed. Special attention is given to logical-semantic interrelatedness of the structural elements of the frame-scenario, known as frame-logic correlation of the frame model of the utterance. Objectification of the obtained data is also achieved by means of a comparative parametric method. The comparison of the French and Russian online comments allows for identifying the eloquence index which is logically consistent with the frame-scenario subframe. The ratio of the indices in French and Russian languages reveals allomorphic and isomorphic traits in commenting on the events, which is instrumental in determining the influence of cultural-historical, socio-economic or political factors on the national consciousness. The research results make a significant contribution to the development of Internet-linguistics, and can also be useful for foreign language teaching in order to expand students' background knowledge and help them master their socio-cultural competence.

Keywords: linguistics, language, e-discourse, comments, frame, subframe, logical relations, national identity

INTRODUCTION

At the present stage of philological research is witnessing establishment of a new independent field of linguistic studies: the Internet-linguistics, which is understood as an area of linguistic research dealing with the study of peculiarities of functioning and development of a natural language in the World Wide Web, studying linguistic behavior of the e-linguistic persona in the course of communication by means of natural language in the electronic (digital) environment. Foreign linguistics recognize the formation of a new paradigm which is evidenced by the works of D. Crystal (2006), A.O. AbuSa'aleek (2015), A. Overbeck (2016). The scholars define the subject of Internet-linguistics' research as the concepts of: 'computer mediated communication (CMC)' (Murray, 1997; Palacio & Gustilo, 2016; Hanh, 2017), also referred to as 'e-discourse' (Davis & Brewer, 1997; Panckhurst, 2006), that 'Internet language', 'cyberspeak', 'netling' (Thurlow, 2001), 'netspeak' (Thurlow, 2001; Crystal, 2006), and 'virtual language' (Pop, 2008). As part of this research we will adhere to the concept of 'e-discourse', by which we mean the communicative interaction of users having different cultural level and level of knowledge in the World Wide Web, i.e. the functioning of a language in the Internet and the linguistic component of Internet communication and texts created in the Internet.

In recent years, among the diverse e-discourse genres the preference is given to the analysis of online comments (Hennoste et al., 2010; Koit, 2015; Oster, Gilad, & Feigel, 2015; Ageeva, Abdullina & Latypov, 2016), which, as noted by Abdullina et al. (2014, p. 357): "have similar and differentiating features with the traditional forms of the comments and modern Internet genres depending on the intentions of the participants of the communicative act". Native speakers representing a particular culture, while perceiving

information, understand and assess it through some subliminal mental norms, and every individual has a certain "knowledge base", the contents of which depends on a number of personal and sociocultural factors.

The foregoing suggests that online comments can reflect national characteristics of the culture and history of the speaker or user representing particular nation, language and life environment. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to identify the national and cultural specificity of the online comments on news articles through a comparative analysis of the French and Russian comments through applying the method of frame modeling.

The concept of "frame" is widely accepted and discussed in cognitology research, in linguistics, semasiology, sociology, and psychology (Frame & Biber, 2013; Duan, 2015; Antia & Ianna, 2016). Frame means a structured unit of knowledge which has specific components and relationships between them; it is a cognitive model that transfers knowledge and opinions about a specific, often recurring situations. According to the researchers, the structural organization of the frame includes subframes (Ogneva, 2013), which, in turn, consist of slots (Li & Abe, 1999), also referred to as frame elements (Ogneva, 2013).

Comments on the article represent e-discourse, when linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge of the conversational situation are synthesized and objectified in the consciousness of communicants in the form of contextual frames that act as core of a frame structure of the utterances. Contextual frames are identical, in our view, to a frame-scenario, which represents, according to M. Minski (1979), the typical pattern or model of some action, events, concepts, etc, including the characteristic elements of this action, events, concepts. A. N. Baranov and D. O. Dobrowolski (1997) note that "frame-scenario is a series of procedures that are typical for the object functioning or for some particular actions appropriate for a particular situation". A frame-scenario includes a set of subframes – levels representing a number of thematically unified features. The subframes are a set of slots corresponding to their nominative field within the frame-scenario. Within the bounds of frame-scenario, the features either actualize its meaning or are predicated by the lexical items inside the frame or subframe, thus, being a component of the "semantic structure of the corresponding utterance". These processes are based on the logical-semantic relations between the concepts, in particular, between the subframes and the frame-scenario, between the slots and the subframes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We use a comparative-parametric method for objectification of the study results. As it was noted by M.A. Sternina (2015), "the essence of this method is to use the formal parameters for description of the national specificity of languages for selected indicators. The description of a particular linguistic or cognitive phenomenon as part of the corresponding parameter is expressed as an index, presented in percentage terms, and a correlation of similar indexes in different languages allows for the conclusion about the presence or absence of national specificity in this parameter, and the extent of its manifestation." A comprehensive analysis of the current correlation parameters allowed us to identify the index of subframe eloquence, logically consistent with the frame-scenario: the ratio between the number of lexical items the meaning of which are foregrounded within the subframe as a structural unit of a frame-scenario against a total number of lexical items semantically-related to the given frame-scenario.

Comments on the articles about the terrorist attacks on July 14, 2016, that happened in Nice, reported by the leading French (lefigaro.fr, lemonde.fr, liberation.fr) and Russian (gazeta.ru, mk.ru) news websites served as the data for the current study. Theme-related selection of the commented articles is attributable to the fact that the described event caused a massive public outcry all over the world, particularly in the Russian society. The comparison of the response of the French society, distressed by the tragedy, with the response of the Russian society, observing the situation from the sidelines, will highlight most clearly the national specifics of the worldview, as the perception of reality and its interpretation in the minds of different languages' speakers are not identical.

The study analyzed 110 comments in each language (in the original edition) taken from the above-mentioned Russian - and French-speaking websites.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data for study allowed to distinguish the "Attentat à Nice / Теракт в Ницце (the Attack in nice)" frame-scenario, naturally corresponding to the articles theme. The frame-scenario structure of the two languages has "Politics", "Terrorism", and "France" subframes consistent with the key frame-scenario:

1. Subframe "Terrorism". Following examples serve as its illustration:

In the Russian language: *Надо бы хорошенько прошерстить контакты этого террориста. Вероятность того, что в контактах найдется агент моосад или спецслужб Франции очень высока (It would be good to thoroughly comb the contacts of the terrorist. There is a very high probability that we might find a Mossad agent or the intelligence services of France among his cronies).*

In the French language: *Le dénominateur commun de ces attaques terroristes est une haine profonde du monde Occidental, de ses valeurs, de son histoire, ces actes sont commis par des vipères... (The common denominator of these terrorist attacks is a profound hatred of the Western world, its values, its history, these acts are committed by vipers).*

The eloquence index of "Terrorism" subframe, logically consistent with the frame-scenario, for comments in the Russian language amounted to 73% compared to 49% in French. Allomorphy, in particular, is manifested in the representation of slots in the subframe: along with common for both languages slots like "Attack", "Terrorists", "Islam", "Middle East", Russian language comments include such slots as "ISIS", "NATO", "Charlie". Multiple references to the ISIL terrorist organization in the comments are quite natural, because Russia has actively sent military démarches to it, as it is reported in the news daily along with the reference to NATO, whose activities should be aimed at safeguarding of peace and security in Europe. Aggressive comments about Charlie speak for the well-remembered cartoons published in the newspaper after the crash of the Russian airliner in Egypt in 2015, which had come under fire of strong criticism from the Russian government.

2. Subframe "France". Let us consider the following examples:

In the Russian language: *Почему Франция, имеющая все-таки некоторое влияние в «западном» мире, не предпримет каких-нибудь мер к тому, чтобы усилить работу по антитеррористической коалиции? (Why France, still enjoying some influence in the "Western" world, does not take any measures to strengthen its efforts in the anti-terrorist coalition?)*

In the French language: *La France est à la fois l'Occident antimusulman mais aussi le lieu où le désir de réussir peut s'incarner (France is both the anti-Muslim western country but also it is the place where the desire to succeed can be incarnated).*

The eloquence index of subframe "France", logically consistent with frame-scenario, does not show any allomorphy (it is 49% in the French language, in Russian – 55%). It is logical and predictable that the subframe (associated with the geographical name of the incident location) present in equal portions in the verbal and cognitive activity of the communicants. The only difference is the structure of this subframe: along with the two slots of "French" and "West", prevailing in both languages, there is "France-Russia" slot dominating the Russian comments. It is based on the relation or attitude of Russia being opposed to the West, and France in particular. Excessive sanctions, as a consequence of aggravated relations between the West and Russia because of the situation in Ukraine, crippled diplomatic efforts aimed at bilateral understanding and cooperation. The impediments the country has to deal with have strengthened the patriotic spirit of the Russians.

3. Subframe "Politics". Following examples illustrate it:

In the Russian language: *Жалко людей, они платят за ошибки политиков* (Sorry for the people, they pay for the mistakes of the politicians).

In the French language: *Hollande qui a échoué dans tous les domaines: chômage, CGT, sécurité, prospérité... doit démissionner* (Holland (government) which has failed in all areas: unemployment, CGT, security, prosperity ... must resign).

The eloquence index of "Politics" subframe, logically consistent with frame-scenario, reached 57 % in the French comments against 33% in the Russian. The dynamics of this index depends on the degree of development of national political mentality: France for many years, has been constructing for many years a coherent ideology that allows the society to educate and bring up competent citizens and to facilitate high level of their participation in political life of the country. Greater awareness of the French people on the politics increases the level of political consciousness of an individual and predetermines his or her political attitudes. The system of values of the Russian society after the collapse of the Communist ideology is experiencing loss of confidence in liberal democratic values among the citizens.

DISCUSSION

As a result, paternalism has established itself as a true value and basic approach in the Russian political mentality. The isomorphism is seen in the presence of "Politics" and "President Hollande" slots in the structure of both languages' subframe. However, the French comments have remarkably significant dominance of ironic references to the personality of the mayor of Nice. Now the first Deputy Mayor Christian Estrosi, who recently surrendered his powers of the mayor of nice to little-known Philippe Pradal, has attracted considerable interest among the readers, as he was the one who announced the introduction of CCTV in the city after the terrorist attack that happened in Paris in January 2015. This fact allows us to identify "the Mayor of Nice" slot in the structure of the "Politics" subframe in the French comments. We have not found any references to his personality in the Russian comments: the Russian media does not broadcast and did not describe the speeches made by all French politicians about the attack. It is logical since the main mission of a journalist is to cover the world's key events and get the obtained information across to the society along with the dominant viewpoint on the incidents in his native country.

Having regard to the above, apparently there is an interaction of subframes within a given frame-scenario. Zone of the three subframes intersection has the core of their logical-semantic continuity that is the "terrorist attack in Nice" frame-scenario because it contains the object covered by the contents of every subframe. The concepts that defines the terrorist attack in France, characterize it from different perspectives. On the one hand, there is Nice in the zone of subframes intersection geographically related to France. Outside the intersection zone there are other cities of France. On the other hand, the zone of intersection has the terrorist attack which took place in Nice as one of the types of terrorist activities (financing and technical support, recruiting, propaganda ...). Finally, "Terrorism" subframe gravitate into its orbit such adjacent area as a politics, since many terrorist acts are predetermined by specific political objectives. "Terrorism is, in its broadest sense, the use of intentionally indiscriminate violence as a means to create terror or fear, in order to achieve a political, religious, or ideological aim (Fortna, 2015). Outside the zone of intersection of "Politics" subframe there is still the activity of public authorities in relation to certain events of public life.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the concepts that pervade the frame-scenario at its various structural levels (the subframes and slots) enter into logical relations, making it possible to define and justify the name of the frame-scenario. This process is called frame-logical correlation, by which we mean the logical-semantic interaction of concepts within the structural units of the frame model of the utterances.

This comparative study allows us to conclude that the application of the frame modeling method along with comparative parametric method is instrumental in revealing the peculiarities of the way a particular nation interpret various events and facts, which is attributable to their culture, history, mentality as a whole; there established conditions for understanding the importance of certain events in the life of a society through provision of core and peripheral elements within a frame-scenario.

The results obtained can be useful and have wide application in teaching foreign language because the frame modeling of news comments allows to deepen knowledge of students of foreign culture and mentality, contributes to the formation and development of social and cultural competence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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