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## Post mass media in the modern informational society "Journalistic text in a new technological environment: achievements and problems"

### CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL REALITY IN DISCOURSE PRACTICE OF NETWORK MEDIA CONTENT COMMENTARY

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#### *Abstract*

The article is devoted to the analysis of the discursive practice of commenting on the content of Internet media. In the information society, a commentary becomes a component of social practice, implemented in the Internet discourse, the language way of constructing social reality. The study is based on the analysis of communicative behavior of commentators, as well as the features of visualization in the text of comments as manifestations of linguistic consciousness of interpreters - consumers of digital media text. Inevitable subjectivity of the author of journalistic material is superimposed on the subjectivity of the commentator, which starts the process of world modeling, upholding or finding his point of view. The discursive actions of commentators are drawn up by linguistic means, implemented in communication tactics. The article objectifies and studies communicative strategies and tactics, identifies language means of interpretation and persuasion, addressed both to the emotional and to the rational sphere of a person. The study of online comments from the standpoint of mediallynguistics, namely in the aspect of the theory of speech impact and manipulation of particular interest. For the studied discursive practice, it is natural to use social and political myths, image of an enemy, opposition "we-they", demagoguery, operating with ideological phantoms, the use of paralogical techniques and other destructive manipulative means. Particular attention is paid to the means of interdiscourse pressure in the texts of comments, language reflection of commentators, as well as the principles of self-organization and metatext components of this discursive practice.

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## 1. Introduction

In order to construct a social world, people must interact, and today it is possible to study sociocultural mechanisms of this interaction in the newest discursive network practices, in particular, in the practice of commenting on the content of Internet media by its subscribers. Mechanisms for creating social reality with the help of words are the mechanisms of discourse, since the discourse as a social practice provides scenarios for interpretation of facts and phenomena, the possibility of realizing one's goals and fighting for one's interests. The role of a commentary in this process is great: the question of what largely determines the reader's interpretation of network media content — the content itself or its comments, the social situation itself or its image, the vision of the participants in the discussion — remains open. In any case, discursive practice of commentary is the means of knowing reality through the interpretation of facts, a means of world-modeling and adjusting the world's picture of interlocutors, and therefore the means of changing reality, is primarily social.

## 2. Problem Statement

Linguistic construction of social reality is understood as “specific ability of discourse not to reflect social reality, but to actively recreate it” (Kozhemyakin, 2006, p.29). In communication based on the discourse of "new media" there are two different information streams: one is about events, the other about understanding and reacting to these events. One stream is purely informational, the other is interpretative (Pocheptsov, 2015). Comments on digital media content, which are part of the interpretative stream, are designed to satisfy a person's need for explaining the events around him so that he is not “in a meaningless world” (Kalinkin, 2016, p.183). Socially significant knowledge is constructed. In this interpretation stream facts can acquire different meanings, can be filled with the meaning depending on the picture of the world of their interpreters, they can have alternative interpretations and even illustrate different points of view. Moreover, digital technologies and “newest media” are changing our communication practices (Kozhemyakin, 2016). Discursive practices that are emerging in the digital environment and demonstrate particular mediology are being explored today in various aspects. The essence of mediology is the tendency to intuitively follow the audience's expectations, the desire of authors to get support, and the basic principle of mediology is recognized as “... “pressure” of the very fact of communication publicity on the choice of means and ways of expressing one's thoughts and emotions” (Zagidullina, 2018, para. 3). The analysis of various discursive practices that design and model the social world in the format of computer-mediated communication is relevant in the context of discourse analysis. The functions of a commentary on various communicative social networking platforms attract researcher's attention too (Karpoyan, 2015; Vezhnovets, 2016).

The analysis of the discursive practice of commenting on social networks, undertaken within the framework of this article, is being implemented in line with the currently relevant research of communicative strategies and tactics. However, it should be noted still there is a problem the identification of communicative strategies, as well as the distinction between strategies and tactics in the analysis of real discursive practices. We adhere to the position of some researchers, which is to recognize impossibility of a clear and unambiguous identification of communicative strategies and tactics, since it seems to be

“somewhat artificial and cumbersome” (Tsurikova, 2007, p. 101). Also, it seems to us that the statement of the need for direct observation of emerging and constantly changing discursive practices is very important. “The study of these practice usually consists of certain techniques of surface analysis that reduces a priori constructions to a minimum” (Issers, 2011, p. 231).

### **3. Research Questions**

#### **3.1. Online comment status in the information society**

In modern communication theory and discourse analysis, discourse is understood not as a set of thematically related statements, texts or speech situations, but as a social practice (Kozhemyakin, 2016). In the situation of mass text-making in the digital environment, the status of the commentary, which is not traditional, explanatory notes or explanatory and critical reasoning, changes. In the network it is now a genre of public discussion, the sociocultural mechanism for the formation of public opinion, as well as the means of language construction of social reality and reproduction of social order, social practices, polycode, multimodal and multimedia digital phenomenon. Participation in the discursive practice of commentary is participation in social life, while participation in controlling discourse, which is possible for any commentator, is access to production of discourse and, consequently, its content, style, and ultimately to public consciousness (Van Dijk, 2015).

Internet commentary on media content is a kind of continuation of a journalistic text as a text fundamentally incomplete, as a message is waiting for a feedback and by means of interaction and commenting virtual reality is created and informational power is exercised as the power of the media.

For example, the fact “30 years ago the Afghan war ended” is accompanied, firstly, by quotes and interpretations used thirty years ago, such as “high international duty”, “to take away the sword brought over the Afghan revolution”, and secondly, the modern opinion of journalists of state TV channels: “We did not lose the war in Afghanistan”, “conclusion from the Afghan war — not to leave Syria”, thirdly, the journalistic assessment in Meduza: “this war is a crime” and, finally, an immediate response in the comments: rethink and ge roic entry of troops into Czechoslovakia "; “30 years has ended and 5 years has begun! On February 20, 2014, Russia attacked the territory of Ukraine without a declaration of war.”

The value of the fact, its authenticity and certainty in this case turns out to be insignificant in comparison with the significance and strength of the impact of its assessments, interpretations, insights, and active discursive actions in the network to promote the ideas and beliefs of commentators, whose social attitudes, values and ideas of what is right or wrong, become obvious become obvious and forbidden deliberately demonstrated ones.

#### **3.2. Discursive strategies and tactics in the genre of online commentary**

Examination of the texts of Meduza’s community of subscribers on Facebook social network allows us objectify the communicative strategies implemented in them, demonstrating that the commentary is an interpretative act in relation to the text, on the one hand, and a means of correcting the model of the world, changing the opinions of those who disagree with this interpretation of the post content on the other hands. Communicators introduce their own interpretations into the conversation, wishing to make them common (Issers, 2017). The discourse practice of commentary is, therefore, primarily a social practice of fighting

for one's interests, upholding one's ("right") convictions, modeling a "right", acceptable to the commentator safe social world, and associating with like-minded people. Ideology and axiology, particularly and tendentiousness are the main signs of the discursive practice of commentary on the online content of the liberal-opposition source Meduza.

As our research shows, the main ways of implementing interpretative and influential communication strategies in the discursive commentary practice are, firstly, suggestive and rhetorical tactics of emotional impact and speech aggression in order to induce one's point of view, subordinate one's position; secondly, rational tactics of mental influence using methods of scientific knowledge and appeal to common sense and logic, and thirdly, tactics of manipulative and rhetorical influence using paralogical techniques, using myths, the image of the enemy, the opposition of "friend or foe", demagoguery and all sorts of "verbal balancing act".

Expression of negative attitude such as condemnation, rejection, indignation, various kinds of negative evaluation in this discursive practice prevails over the expression of other emotions and interpretations, which is natural, as dictated by the main intention of commentators - to restore a shaky world order broken by unacceptable to the commentator, contrary to his interest, goals, ideas and beliefs. This is how control over existence and protection against disorder threatening the "right" world order is exercised.

The emotionally affecting methods of expressing negative evaluation and discrediting include conscription, verbal aggression: depreciation, ridicule, irony, transition to personalities, negative evaluation without arguments, insult, humiliation, ridicule through mockery of speech, sarcasm; threat; suggestive techniques (repetition, blinking, breaking patterns of perception), bringing to the point of absurdity (exaggeration), provocation, appeal to authority, hint, word-play, didacticism, categorical, labeling and under. The ultimate goal of the use of the above techniques is to elicit feelings and emotions (usually negative) such as outrage, resentment, contempt, rejection, anger, aggression, or, for example, pleasure from understanding a hint, etc. We illustrate the use of the strategy of symbolic destruction of the unacceptable, the "bad", its denial, defamation through ridicule, depreciation, humiliation, insult, etc. (in the examples, the title of the commented text is first given, then the text of the comments with the number of comments (k.) and the number of likes (l.)).

"In the streets of Moscow. Cameras with face recognition system will be installed. Sobyenin explained why it would be cool. "The criminals will stay away from Moscow. They won't be able to hide there any longer" 113 k., 392 l. - "And criminals in Moscow do not hide. They occupy the positions of mayor, for example, etc." 252 l. (mock, sarcasm, decoded hint); "The head of the Magadan region believes that in Russia they never destroyed dissidents. Quotation - Meduza: "We never, even in the times of Tsarist Russia, destroyed people for dissent". Here negative attitude is shown in commentaries, where offensive nicknames such as "fool", "undead", "creatures from behind the mirror", "fairy idiot", "losers", "alien" are given to the governor. "Do you support Putin's policies or not?" Right? The game "Medusa" 149 k., 248 likes. - "A good attempt, comrade Major" 80 l. (sarcasm, hint); "Putin approved the definition of the Russian nation. Only 84% of Russians belong to it. Check yourself" 145 k., 568 l. "... this is a banal fascist manifesto without euphemisms. This is ordinary fascism, with which I congratulate everyone." 67 l. (using ideologems with negative connotation, labeling, categorical and didactic as methods of emotional pressure);

“Nicolas Maduro takes over the presidency of Venezuela for the second time. But the results of the first term (terrible) "127k., 1 thousand l. - “Venezuelan Stumpy-shit! He scratches them about sovereignty, clamps and getting up from his knees, and buying patriotic people to buy toilet paper for coupons!” (Using the “home” name serves to discredit claims, serves as evidence of non-recognition of status (Issers, 2017).

Tactics and rhetorical influence, which are the application of “science to persuade”, but not exclusively addressed to emotions, but mimic the argumentative, built according to the laws of logic, suggesting the validity of each judgment, include the classical techniques of speech influence, manipulative and destructive in essence : lexical means, for example, anthosynonyms and euphemisms (Labutina, 2017), paralogical techniques, the principle of antithesis and the use of various kinds of binary oppositions, mythogenic words, ideas environmental phantoms (Skovorodnikov & Kopnina, 2012), political and ideological myths, stereotypes and images as schematic standard representations of a political phenomenon, distinguished by stability and emotional coloring — first of all, the image of Russia (we) and the image of the rest of the “civilized” world (they ).

In the discursive practice of commenting on Meduza posts by its subscribers, there is a nontrivial “balance of power” in the opposition “we” - “they” (where usually “we” are “good” and “they” are “bad”). The myth-image of Russia includes, for example, the following negative characteristics: “wild country”; “The typical dictatorial regime, which writes off its failures to external enemies, in Russia, too, are similar characters in power”; “Our destiny like as Venezuela is not far off”; “The principled Russian state policy is not to resolve the issue, but to prove the insignificance of an individual”; ““ The state owes you nothing ”is already a trend”; “I have not lived in this country for a long time and obviously not in vain. It is not recommended to people with a weak nervous system and a heightened sense of justice to live there ”; “... implanted since childhood at a subconscious level, trust in the state and the government ... We didn’t have this, don’t have it and never will”; “Well, Russia is understandable. Build a gulag ”(on the intended purpose of the flight to the moon); “I am, of course, moved by the fact that these half-educated actresses, sportswomen, singers and those who haven’t been recruited by the Duma, believe that they have the right to prohibit something and the right to indicate what to watch, read, listen, and what not”; “Here is a Russian hell, here it smells of Rus”. Such comments demonstrate a high degree of ideology of the studied discursive practice, undisguised prejudice and prejudice of participants and a peculiar precondition of assessments, their predictability, presence of binary value oppositions (acceptable - unacceptable, normal - abnormal) as the basic categories of speech influence. Manipulative techniques are an indispensable tool in the struggle for values against anti-values, the struggle for reorganization of the social world order in accordance with their values.

In the discursive struggle, where the main rhetorical rule is to win the dispute, to convince the opponent, manipulative rhetorical techniques are used as an acceptable means to achieve the goal. Paralogical, demagogic methods of speech influence include: illegal generalization, illegal analogies, acceptance of programming nomination, implied causality - imaginary following, generalization of supporters of the speaker’s point of view (generalization of assessment), implicatory information, introduction of unnecessary information (violation of the laws of a sufficient basis, identity and contradiction), including erosion of concepts, desementization, substitution of the topic. For example:

“In the pavilion of the history of Russia at the Exhibition of Economic Achievements, the dates connected with “Kursk”, “Nord-Ost” and Beslan” were pasted. 143 r., 1.7 thousand l. - “And raising the retirement age? Russia ranked 96th out of 149 possible in the world social welfare ranking. Located between Kenya and Rwanda, our country was at the level of the poorest countries in Asia and Africa, the worst situation with basic human rights. But we have Putin, but they do not. And do not rock the boat here, because the main thing is not like it is in Paris! ”73 l. (theme substitution); "Putin flew to Magnitogorsk after a gas explosion in a residential building" 170k., 236 l. - “Well, we were engaged in the rescue of people, now they will be engaged in Putin’s arrival” 236 l. (imaginary following), “Whatever he does and whatever is guided, everything will look false and insincere. I'm sick of”133 l. (unjustified generalization).

Note that in the discursive community of Meduza commentators, the rhetorical use of case texts and names, hints, references and other intertextual phenomena is especially popular, which demonstrates the commenters' possession of a common cultural code that acts as a kind of password that holds the community together. For example:

“A Chelyabinsk activist was summoned to the prosecutor’s office because of the lecture“ How to like mems and not go to jail ”36, 301 l. - “Yurfak them by Pavlik Morozov ”72 l., “The Ministry of Truth works” 34 l. ; "Stalin did not disappear in the past, he was dissolved in the future "de Gaulle" 21 l. ; “As Dvlatov said: someone wrote 4 million denunciations. Why should it be different now?” 24 l; “Jaroslav Hasek would be delighted with the present time. 100 years have passed, and nothing has changed» 16 l;

"This is a new anthem of Russia." Semyon Slepakov recorded a song about a difficult year. ”138 k, 4.3 thousand liters. - "This is the second time!" The first was Bortko in "Dog's Heart" with the song "Severe Years Go ..." 110 l.

Conventionally argumentative tactics of mental influence include “constructive”, logic-based methods of persuasion: clarification, argument, proof, refutation, etc., for example:

“Let two supporters of the flat Earth call each other from different longitudes and will explain why one of them can see day and other can see night ”(Convincing argument); “Do not lump together the enemies of the people and dissenters — this is the legal concept of the enemy of people from the 1936 Constitution, Article 131. ..” (explanation); “The man who once came to Moscow from Switzerland was very surprised that Moscow is called a typically European city. The lined center is not a comfortable European city. The main features of it are urban transport, cleanliness and order, not only in the city center, but also in remote areas, culture on the roads and much more” (appeal to authoritative opinion, clarification); “Here, gentlemen, it is good, everything is explicable! The BlaBlaCar service hinders someone” (explanation); "I do not believe. It is known that we are judging, but it is not known who?" (Indicating the absence of logic).

The purpose of the speakers in the case of using the described tactics is to find the truth, find out the real state of affairs, rationally comprehend the essence of the situation.

Note that for the Meduza commentators, the use of such tactics is not typical, which is explained by their weakened rhetorical power in comparison with other communicative techniques.

### **3.3. Discursive strategies and tactics in the genre of online commentary**

Both in the journalistic text and in the commentary text, visualization increases the emotional load of a message (Simakova, 2017). The expressiveness and impact of the commentary is enhanced by the use of graphics capabilities - emoticons, emoji, CAPS LOCK and other means of visual communication, for

example: "WSJ: Apple plans to launch an iPhone with three cameras" - "NEEDS BIGGER. CAMERAS !!!".

Sometimes, with the help of interdiscursive means (for example, the "rights reserved" badge) a so-called "smile of augurs" is shown, a sign of belonging to a closed community of initiates who can understand what is quoted, for example: "I tell you truly: on May 4, 1925, the Earth will fly on heavenly axis! © ". In this case, the reader familiar with the text of M. Bulgakov's novel "The Heart of a Dog" receives additional intellectual pleasure from understanding the "encrypted" - source of quotation.

### **3.4. Principles of self-organization discursive commentary practice**

Linguistic reflection of commentators as a way of self-organizing an unstable discursive environment and regulating communicative behavior in it, manifests itself primarily in metatext remarks and direct appeals to other commentators or to the Meduza editorial board, with the "unwritten" rules, according to which the discursive community should live. Discursive instructions may look like comments on the length of the text, for example: "Has anyone read this text completely? 2019, you need to write 2-3 paragraphs" 159 l.; stating the need to adhere to grammatical and other language norms, for example: "What products cannot be imported from Ukraine" - "From" 59 l.; a call to restrain negative emotions, for example: "Idiotic comments they really make me. Aren't green with anger yet?".

Of particular interest are cases of demands for adjustments of the agenda, addressed to the editors of Meduza, protests about the topic of the post, for example: "How to make real borscht? Three recipes - with meat, vegetarian and modernized" - "What's next? How to learn Ukrainian? How to hold an election? You are standing on a slippery track Medusa" 140 l. or rejection of the journalistic interpretation of a particular event or fact, for example: "In the Far East, Putin's New Year's address was shown. It does not mention the explosion in Magnitogorsk" - "Guys, to be honest, delete the news. Appeal is recorded in advance, do not become bastards" 127 l.; "New Year's appeal is recorded in advance. What nonsense, Medusa? Given that I was a liberal before I considered you the only more or less adequate media. But now, you are becoming more and more stupid» 76l.

The principles of self-organization of discursive practice of commenting and influencing the policy of the publication include the "voting" of subscribers for the relevance of the topic, expressed in the number of comments and likes. We have conducted a special study of the relevance of the topics of discussions for the month, which resulted in a kind of popularity rating for the topics of posts. Here are the most popular topics (descending): banning the comedy "The Death of Stalin" 473 k., 1.9 thousand l.; harassment, sex scandal 445k., 170 l.; the death of a woman at the hands of a fellow traveler according to BlaBlacar 417 r., 1,3 thousand l.; Meduza game about prison torture and interrogation after an unlawful prosecution 417 k., 1,3 thousand liters; the end of the epoch of Zemfira and Mumiy Troll 217, 1.1 thousand liters; the granting of independence to the Ukrainian church by the patriarch of Constantinople 204 k., 530 l., consequences of the "quarrel" of Belarus and Russia 194 k, 388 l. As you can see, this choice can characterize the network media audience: Meduza readers prefer to discuss pressing political and socially significant issues in general.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to consider ways of linguistic design of social reality in the genre of Internet commentary of network media content and the principles of self-organization of this discursive practice.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The study is based on an analysis of the discursive practice of the comments of the Meduza News and Media subscribers community (351,097 people as of February 16, 201) on Facebook using critical discourse analysis, which is based on the idea of language not as an ordinary communication tool, but as about the method of ordering social reality and the space of creating and changing meanings (Kozhemyakin, 2006). The empirical base is made up of user comment texts with a gradation of their popularity (number of likes), collected both by the continuous sampling method for a certain period (the end of 2018 - the beginning of 2019; with an average number of comments per day 1800, about 26000 comments were viewed) controlled selection of commentary texts on a single topic. In finding the most relevant topics for commentators for the month, a quantitative analysis method was used.

#### **6. Findings**

**6.1.** The discursive practice of commentary is part of social practice, with the goal of constantly re-creating, modeling, constructing a social world in accordance with the community convention “bad” - “good”. Commentary discourse is an evaluative and appellative discourse aimed at obtaining community support and approval. The commentary performs the regulatory function of reproducing social order, restoring equilibrium in social reality in accordance with the schemes of interpretation of events, facts and phenomena adopted in this community, with the values and beliefs of commentators, with their picture of the world and the interests that they are ready to defend in order to live in acceptable morally, ethically and ideologically social world. The fulfillment of this function determines the ideology, axiology, partiality and tendentiousness inherent in the discursive practice under study.

**6.2.** Commentators use various interpretative and communicative strategies, often manipulative and speculative, giving meaning to a message about a certain event, inscribing it into the reader’s commentator’s world picture, which either enters the “narrative prison” (Pocheptsov, 2015) or tries to put it in the interlocutor, becoming a co-author of media events, and in the conditions of the information war, comments by users of media content in online communities take predictable and routine forms. As the results of the research show, this process can be accompanied by expressisation and increased value of the text, verbal aggression, verbal manifestations of intolerance, ideological bias, and the use of the rich potential of the means of speech influence.

**6.3.** The study of the world-modeling function of modern Internet commentary as one of the methods of self-organization of an unstable discursive environment in a situation of growing virtualization of social life makes it possible to demonstrate a high degree of linguistic conditioning of social reality and trace the origins of the formation of various communities, including those based on ideological preferences. The



analysis of comments allows to characterize the network structures of the audience of a certain online media, and in this sense, the discursive commentary practices in online communities are “big constructs that ... ensure the allocation of speaking subjects according to different types of discourses, on the one hand, and the assignment of discourses to certain categories of subjects - on the other hand”, in the understanding of Foucault (1996, p.74) and with the various means of a creolized text realize the need of persons entering into discussion to have an acceptable world order, above all social, or seeking to change it.

## 7. Conclusion

As illustrated by our research, the social world is not described in the discursive commentary practice but is formed and controlled: social relations are regulated and normalized, conventions about acceptable and unacceptable are discussed and established, everything that becomes a subject of commenting is evaluated. Thus, in the discourse, including the one considered in this article, the struggle for power in society takes place. “Struggle for the minds”, for the world outlook. At the same time, commenting is an instrument of cognition, interpretation, and self-expression that ensures and creates this world outlook.

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