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

LINGUOSEMIOTIC FEATURES OF TWITTER
MICROBLOGGING

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Abstract

Virtual reality has changed our perception of communication dramatically. Virtual communication creates a special reality with the presence effect. The text becomes a multidimensional concept produced by the language personality of the collective author. Virtual communication is characterised by a variety of genres. Microblogging is a combination of blogging and instant messaging that allows users to create short messages to be posted and shared with an audience online. Social platforms like Twitter have become extremely popular forms of this new type of blogging, especially on the mobile web – making it much more convenient to communicate with people. Our research is devoted to the study of Twitter microblogging as one of the leading genres of virtual communication and to the analysis of the linguistic and semiotic peculiarities of the microblog's language. The main discursive practices of microblogging are: information segmentation, compression, in-text polytextuality, hypertextuality, creolization, the use of multimedia. Currently the blog format has changed significantly. From being personality-oriented it is being transformed into semi-thematic columns comprising new types, thus the focus shifts to an impersonal interlocutor. The most striking feature of Twitter is the speed of communication which requires quick and spontaneous feedbacks and concise and succinct nature of messages. These factors spark the prevalence of the main discursive practice of compression. Compression takes place on all the linguistic levels. Semiotic variation shows that elements of different sign systems simultaneously exist in the discourse of microblogging.

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Keywords: Virtual communication, Internet genres, blog, conversion.



1. Introduction

In our digital age communication via computer has established a new form of interaction – communication. This linguistic blend serves to denote a mode of communication that includes the use of technology - audio and video to communicate with people who are not physically present in front of us. Virtual reality has changed our perception of communication dramatically. It is not only about the way we get and use the information, exchange our messages with unknown people from faraway places and participate in international polls and conferences online. This phenomenon implies a wide range of unprecedented options of communication tools available like instant messaging, email, chat rooms, online forums, social network services.

Virtual communication creates a special reality with the presence effect. It is a different form of personality representation, where information, communication, and action are mediated by new information technologies, with the contents, intentions, or actors being nonexistent, distorted, replaced, or created intentionally or unintentionally. Although, technically, virtual communication is the sending and receiving of messages via information technologies such as online advertising, video conferencing or text messaging, the result of such interaction is the text. And the text reveals the sphere of communication, information distribution, interlocutors with their intentions, life experience and value systems, the time and the place, emotions and feelings of the participants. The text becomes a multidimensional concept produced by the language personality of the collective author, it becomes “evidence of your individual being” (Kochetkova & Tubalova, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

Considering the diversity of the material and the need for a versatile analysis in the view of the novelty of the topic, we propose to analyse the problem of the genre definition in the context of the communicative space of the Internet and differentiate the concept of “Internet-genre”. The Internet-genre is defined as a polycode type of Internet communication, in which the use of the language is determined by technical characteristics. It contains dated records of textual and multimedia character with comments located in a reverse chronological order. We point out the following microblogging features: tagging, limited number of characters, users have access to private information and correspondence, a high degree of integration into other services. It performs the following functions: informative (providing information, monitoring users' communicative actions, sharing news, opinions and beliefs), contact-establishing, consolidating (establishing new groups and communities), socializing (interacting with other people) and presentational (promoting one`s image).

3. Research Questions

This study is premised on the following research questions:

- What are the main forms and structural features of Twitter microblogs?
- How does Twitter microblog work?
- What functions does Twitter microblog perform?
- What linguistic and semiotic peculiarities is Twitter microblog characterized by?

4. Purpose of the Study

- 4.1. The object of the research is Twitter microblog which is characterised by a number of characteristic features and discourse markers. The subject of the study is the linguistic and semiotic characteristics of Twitter microblog.
- 4.2. Hence, the purpose of this thesis is to identify the linguistic and semiotic characteristics of Twitter microblog, as well as to study the ways of information compression.

5. Research Methods

In accordance with the goals and objectives of the study, the following set of methods was used: comparison method, descriptive-analytical, content analysis method, contextual analysis method, lexical-stylistic, interpretative and statistical.

6. Findings

Virtual communication is characterised by a variety of genres. The problems of genre diversity and the criteria used to specify them in a new communicative environment have been raised by such linguists as Dementiev (2015), Sidorova (2014), Mitiagina & Sidorova (2016), Galichkina (2009). The Internet-genre is defined as a polycode type of Internet communication, in which the use of the language is determined by technical characteristics. Blog as a genre has been under consideration of the following scientists: Kirillov (2016), Koshel (2014), Shchipitsina (2010). Blog as a genre constitutes a special discourse in the structure of Internet communication combining many separate blogs into a single community. It contains dated records of textual and multimedia character with comments located in a reverse chronological order. Often blog is interpreted as "a personal online diary" (Shchipitsina, 2009). Currently the blog format has changed significantly. From being personality-oriented it is being transformed into semi-thematic columns comprising such types as news blog, blog article, blog review, blog comment, blog essay, blog note, blog report, blog rating. The focus shifts to an impersonal interlocutor: the blogger addresses not a particular person that he knows, but many readers who are strangers to him. This detached communication sparks the emergence of the phenomenon of "public intimacy" (Zaliznyak, 2010). A blog is written as if exclusively for oneself, but at the same time it turns out to be interesting to others where a blogger shares his thoughts and feelings with an unlimited number of people.

Such form of presentation enables the Internet user to apply discursive practices to the text. He quickly understands the structure of Internet communication, sees their main and secondary parts and classifies the text easily. Users understand the sign language of the Internet, recognize its elements in any contexts, and understand what actions they need to perform. Information segmentation implies its fragmentation, the presentation of significant parts of the text in independent blocks. All online media are built on this premise, in which information is given in the form of headings, subheadings, announcements, columns, etc. Segmentation facilitates visual perception of information on a page, provides a clearer understanding of the content.

Another discursive practice of computer-mediated communication is compression. Compression of information is a means associated with segmentation, since it accompanies the fragmentation of parts of the text, allowing the blogger to compress the information to the form of a link. Hyperlink elements are related to text compression. We divide the group of hyperlinks into two parts: textual and graphic (pictorial). The word “multimedia” appeared in the 1990s as the material implementation of the idea of media complex, i.e. the combination of all information channels - periodicals, broadcasting, television and the Internet - into one whole. Bloggers use multimedia quite extensively to express the content such as text, animation, video, graphic designing, etc.

In-text polytextuality means the connection of semantic blocks on the web, the interaction of sub-discourses in the global hypertext. The Internet discourse has a complex structure, in which many subdiscourses function simultaneously. All subdiscourses function through hyperlinks, each opening in its own window, located not on the same plane, but each on its own, thus showing a complex network structure.

All these features characterise the text when it is produced in virtual communication environment.

We define Twitter as a microblogging tool which combines features of SMS text messages and blogs. It allows users to send very short messages (known as “tweets”) to each other that are also readable by the rest of the web. Twitter is a one-to-many form of communication that takes advantage of online connection through mobile devices.

As the conversations are public, users all follow each other. Following is the twitter equivalent of subscribing to someone’s blog. In many ways, twitter is like a discussion forum, but the messages are too short to have titles (although they can have tags). Tweets can be both read and written using the twitter.com website, a computer-based client. Twitter conversations have a reputation for being fast moving and very much about the current moment (what we are doing or what we are thinking about right now). It can be thought of an online conference where people talk about everyday topics.

Various news media, such as the BBC and The New York Times, also use Twitter to post the new headlines with a link to the full story and even the politics discovered Twitter. Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton used currently their accounts during the election campaign to keep their followers updated.

Goroshko indicates the following microblogging features (and in particular twittering): tagging in microblogs is done using hashtags (English name hash tag comes from the English name of the symbol "hash mark" - «#»); there is a limit to the amount of information transmitted (up to 140 characters); users have access to private information and correspondence; there is a high degree of integration into other services (Goroshko & Poliakova, 2015). After Karpoyan (2015), Kirillov (2017), Shchurina (2016), Sherstoboeva & Pavlenko (2015), defining the main genre-forming Twitter characteristics, we treat it as a combined secondary genre which performs the following functions: informative (providing information, monitoring users' communicative actions, sharing news, opinions and beliefs), contact-establishing, consolidating (establishing new groups and communities), socializing (interacting with other people) and presentational (promoting one’s image). The most striking features of Twitter are the speed of communication which requires quick and spontaneous feedbacks and concise and succinct nature of messages. These factors spark the prevalence of the main discursive practice of compression. Compression takes place on all the linguistic levels.

The emergence of Internet discourse in general and the language of microblogging, in particular, has led to the spread of new language units. This is due to the formation of new, previously unknown and not often used concepts for which it was necessary to coin new terms. Due to Twitter's blogosphere, a large number of common words have been formed. So, from the name of the Twitter system, the word "tweet" appeared, which means a message in the microblog:

Obviously Selena is CONSTANTLY in your tweets.

Happy Sunday Twitter friends hope y'all have a great day

The verb is formed from the noun by conversion.

Also this word has many derivatives:

*If you don't follow me how do you know what I'm **tweeting** about....*

*I feel awkward favoriting and **retweeting** all I haileys stuff but she's the only one on my tl rn.*

Along with the word "twitter", the word "follow" is often converted, for example, subscribers to the pages of users are called "followers":

You'll have 2 seconds more, so here's #RETWEET this & FOLLOWS @Minions_lol to live forever: D.

In some contexts the verb can take a negative meaning:

remember when i thought ariana hated me, because she unfollowed me

A common occurrence in microblogs is the merging of two adjacent words into one:

besides their mom and their gramma

It is worth mentioning that for English, and especially American English, which is fully used in the Twitter system, the use of abbreviations and acronyms is very characteristic. This feature significantly distinguishes a microblog from a blog. In a standard blog, when posting or publishing news or an article the blogger tries to stick to lexical, morphological, syntactic, punctuation norms. The writer hopes to impress the reader, to make his piece of writing compelling and inspiring. Otherwise the readers wouldn't subscribe to him or would ignore his literary works. As for the microblog, most of them are short, straightforward, clear-cut coming as an immediate reaction to a post. Followers use colloquial speech which imitates a friends' chat. Abbreviations and informal expressions help to save time, stay connected in the community.

First of all, there are popular abbreviations like "ok", "r", "u", "pp1" meaning "okey", "are", "you", "people" respectively. "You" also has the common abbreviations "yah" and "ya",

*@ caseadilla9 takin a snooze right now, talk to u later I'm back and STRONGER THEN YESTERDAY W * U*

The most numerous abbreviations on Twitter are those related to computer mediated communication like "dm" (direct message) and "rt" (retweet):

@JustlovePeazer np im sleepy ill dm. you in the morn. Night love ya & congrats #PrayForJustlovePeazer

Abbreviations can make words, phrases or even full sentences.

ICYMI: "In case you missed it" generally follows something you're tweeting again, POTUS: President of the United States, TMB: Tweet Me Back, NSFW – Not Safe For Work .

ronaldo.grc I love twitter so much. I spend a lot on twitter than insta now. But please check your dm on insta now. I can't dm you on twitter . I am asking you something. Its important.@twitter

On the morphological level bloggers tend to omit the auxiliary words, means of communication between the subject and the predicate, between other parts of the sentence, combine two adjacent words into one and coin new forms of words by blending or conversion.

Welp. Studio. Again. Gonna be an interesting summer ya know

Byron York Bad scene in Oval Office. May 17, 2017. Sessions, Hunt meeting with Trump when news comes Rosenstein appointed Mueller special counsel. Sessions blindsided. 'He was so embarrassed. And the president said [to Sessions] how could you not know?'

Putting together materials for @victory_pints tomorrow night. Bringing stuff for Deadball AND Comrades, plus probably have a copy of WESTSIDE to shove in people's faces.

The syntactic level is characterised by the abundance of questions and exclamatory sentences, introductory words, elliptical sentences and use of parcellation. It creates the involvement into a lively discussion which centres on you.

Neojudd @taracvetkovicsipic no... sidney had yours. Mine are leather and don't have the strappy part at the top.

Hi new/old friends, most of you know but im eva, i have 1 dimple, i love calum hood and i hate school

Graphic means are very expressive, they add the mood and emotions to a discussion. The most frequently used means are capitalisation (full or partial), multiplication of letters, absence of punctuation marks and emoticons.

oh23dynane DO U EAT FIG Mark 11:12–11:20

fam__blog @fam__blog

tekkkaus Twitter is killing it

bosch_tehran_ir 🌹🌹🌹

twitter @tekkkaus 🍷

Semiotic variation shows that elements of different sign systems simultaneously exist in the Internet discourse. We see mathematical signs, punctuation marks, text, video series, audio files, any images, animation. Signs of different semiotic nature can be used in one message in different proportions, in different combinations. It should be noted that text messages prevail but multimedia and communication tools complement and feature language personality of the combined author.

The sign @ is extensively used to separate the name of the user from the domain name. If it is removed the addressed user might miss the post.

harri3t.j @neojudd yes I miss my girlfriend

Another symbol “#” provides reference to all the mentioned topics, websites and names. It enables the bloggers to reconstruct the whole picture of the discussion.

Aubameyang_every_day Feeling good 🙌 Soon Arsenal go again in the league. 🔥
_#Premierleague #every #day #football#soccer #2019 #goals #highlights#celebration #follow4follow #follow#followforfollowbacks#psg #manchesterunited #championsleague#aubameyang #kolasinac #arsenal #arsenalntv#arsenal

7. Conclusion

During our analysis we came to the following conclusions. First of all, Twitter microblogging is a one-to-many form of communication that takes advantage of online connection through mobile devices. Secondly, we point out the following microblogging features: tagging, limited number of characters, users have access to private information and correspondence, a high degree of integration into other services. We treat it as a combined secondary genre which performs the following functions: informative (providing information, monitoring users' communicative actions, sharing news, opinions and beliefs), contact-establishing, consolidating (establishing new groups and communities), socializing (interacting with other people) and presentational (promoting one's image). Thirdly, the most striking features of Twitter are the speed of communication which requires quick and spontaneous feedbacks and concise and succinct nature of messages. These factors spark the prevalence of the main discursive practice of compression. Compression takes place on all the linguistic levels.

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