WUT 2020
10th International Conference "Word, Utterance, Text: Cognitive, Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects"

FEATURES OF ENGLISH INFORMATIONAL POSTS AS A FORM OF INSTAGRAM FOLKLORE

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Abstract

Problem Statement. The article reveals the problem of studying linguistic and stylistic features of informational Instagram posts as the form of English network folklore. Having studied the works on network folklore of Russian and foreign scholars, such as T.A. Hohryakova, A.V. Kolistratova, E.A. Yukhmina, N.V. Obvintseva, M.V. Zagidullina, O.V. Alekseeva, Zh.Denysyuk, N. Chandler, Trevor J. Blank, F. Oinas & S. Soudakoff, N. Pogrebnyak and others, the authors suggest a detailed classification of informational posts and analyse them in terms of their linguistic and stylistic features. The communicative aim of informational posts is to provide the required information for Instagram subscribers. These posts provide useful information at various levels: from academic knowledge to daily life hacks. In the authors' classification informational posts are represented by two main structural subtypes: educational and event posts. Educational posts are further subdivided into teaching posts, life hack posts and art posts. Event posts are represented by personal and public posts. Each of these subtypes has its own peculiarities not only in terms of content, but also in terms of their linguistic features and stylistic colouring. Results. There are determined linguistic and stylistic features of informational posts and there is presented a classification of informational posts. Conclusions. Having analysed the informational posts from functional, structural and semantic points of view, the authors came to the conclusion that informational posts have their own peculiar characteristics, but at the same time follow general rules of the posts formation accepted on Instagram.

Keywords: Instagram posts, network folklore, communication, informational posts, functions, functional and structural analysis.

1. Introduction

Nowadays the speed of information exchange is increasing and the means of its transference are changing. New devices providing virtual communication are being developed or already existing ones are being upgraded constantly. Due to the large amount of incoming information its processing has become a challenging task. Therefore, it leads to the increasing demand for the information visualization. The latter often replaces or supports the textual form of representation allowing users to receive more information in a shorter time with less effort. This explains the emergence of such social network as Instagram which stands out among other networks by its newer formats of the information presentation and vaster communication opportunities. Our research is based on the informational posts from Instagram which is one of the most fast developing modern interaction platforms. Instagram-communication is carried out at an incredible speed. Any Instagram user needs just a few seconds to scroll the content of his page, to become aware of the latest events in the lives of his friends and subscribers, to have a look at a number of interesting photos, video materials, to read posts, to give comments or to express an opinion on a particular issue. Instagram communication has no boundaries. Any person has an opportunity to create an Instagram account and become its user. The participants of the communication act might live in different countries, but exchange photos, videos, life-messages, share comments in the blink of an eye. Accordingly, new approaches to the presentation of the text material and its visualization are being created and new patterns of the speech behaviour are being formed.

Analysing Instagram posts from the perspective of their communicative aim and formation mechanisms three key types of posts such as advertising, informational and interactive have been distinguished functioning in the network folklore (Figure 01) (Yukhmina & Obvintseva, 2019). The profound linguistic analysis has shown that the most commonly spread and branched type of posts is informational. Informational posts are subdivided into two subtypes: educational and event posts which have certain functional, formal and linguo-stylistic peculiarities. Therefore, the study of their distinctive features is becoming an important task of modern linguistics which determines the relevance of this study.

2. Problem Statement

Instagram posts, following the principles of visualization, are usually accompanied by a photo or video content. At a lexical level, the post may either consist of a single concise word or comprise several sentences in the mini-text. The genre and stylistic diversity of posts is determined by the goals pursued by users. Posts may differ significantly from each other by the language used. In some cases, the author of a post uses a lot of slang, various special signs, and in others he employs extremely correct, stylistically neutral or even scientific words. So the problem stated in this study is to discover distinguishing features of the informational posts and analyse them in terms of their linguistic and stylistic peculiarities. These features can be helpful in a further classification of the informational posts and their detailed description

3.   Research Questions

This study addresses the following questions: What linguistic and stylistic features do the informational posts have? What linguistic techniques are used by the authors of the informational posts to create the required communicative aim? What are the distinguishing features of this type of posts?

3.1. Linguistic and stylistic features

Linguistic and stylistic features are features that form emotional-figurative and content components of the informational posts. The language of Instagram posts mostly performs two key communicative functions informative and convincing. But there are also a number of other functions such as educating, aesthetic, cognitive, descriptive and others. All these functions are revealed in the informational posts and illustrated below. It means that the language of posts should be literate, logical and understandable in order to convey the desired effect. One of the important features is its brevity. We can rarely meet long posts on Instagram. Originality and uniqueness constitute the artistic component of the informational posts.

3.2. Linguistic techniques

The influence on a person through speech is actively studied by the scientific community. Linguistic techniques used to stimulate an action are especially important for advertising purposes. For example, the stimulation can be achieved not only by means of the direct imperative constructions but there are a number of other means that are investigated in the given research.

4.   Purpose of the Study

Instagram posts are fascinating, exciting and creative. The scientific novelty of this study lies within the fact that informational posts are investigated from the point of view of linguo-structural and linguo-semantic approaches for the first time. The purpose of our study is to investigate Instagram informational posts, as well as their systematization and classification. For this purpose, the following tasks were set: to consider styles and types of informational posts; to conduct their linguistic and structural analyses; to identify the categories of informational Instagram posts and the criteria for their classification.

5.   Research Methods

In this study the authors refer to the works on network folklore of the Russian and foreign scientists such as Alekseeva (2018), Chandler (2015), Hohryakova (2017), Blank (2009), Oinas and Soudakoff (2019), Yukhmina and Obvintseva (2019) Pogrebnyak (2019), Zagidullina (2016a,b) Denysyuk (2017), Bespalova (2017) and others.

The network folklore is studied by the researchers from different angles. Studying how internet folklore functions (Chandler, 2015) some linguists mention a number of peculiar characteristics of the Internet folklore that distinguish it from the traditional one (Zagidullina, 2016a). The first feature is its

availability (Alekseeva, 2018). It means that any user can have access to the works of the network folklore anytime anywhere. The second feature is its entertaining character: network folklore is extremely simple and emotionally expressive (Zagidullina, 2016b). The third feature is its replicability. It means that any post of internet folklore can be easily reposted or retwitted, i.e. any user can copy and post it on his personal page or account. The fourth feature is the passivity of perception: the network folklore requires no intellectual or emotional effort for perception (Hohryakova, 2017). The fifth feature is its commercial nature. Most posts are aimed at advertising products or services and perform advertising function (Clark, 2018). The sixth feature of Internet folklore is its high mobility (Blank, 2009). Internet folklore responds quickly to various events (Oinas & Soundakoff, 2019). There appear new works of network folklore that reflect the attitude of the anonymous author to what is happening within a few hours. And immediately after the publication of the message or post online the internet community starts spreading it worldwide. So it turns into the expression of public opinion and creates new trends. One more feature is its precedent character. Instagram posts often contain precedent phenomena. They can be understood as culturally loaded signs, known to a significant part of the representatives of the national-cultural community (Pogrebnyak, 2019). They have reference to some historical or political events, well-known books or films. Another characteristic feature of internet folklore is the variability or plasticity of information. Each communicator has an opportunity to interpret the folklore texts creatively through the prism of his own experience and personal viewpoint (Bespalova, 2017).

Speaking about the factors influencing the formation of network folklore it is the technological and socio-cultural factors whose role is really significant in the creation of network texts as a part of media culture (Denysyuk, 2017).

So our study of online folklore is based on a random selection of informational posts in the English Social network Instagram (2020). Having analyzed the works of the mentioned authors we have conducted our own profound research applying both general methods of scientific research such as observation and description, and specific linguistic methods such as structural-semantic, functional and interpretative analyses.

6. Findings

Instagram texts function in the form of posts of different types and different registers. They all have a number of folklore characteristics as variability, collectivity of the authorship, traditionalism, oral form of existence, expressiveness (Mamonova & Yukhmina, 2018). In virtual communication there prevails conversational (informal) style specific features of which depend mostly on a spoken language. Kolistratova (2011) notes that the Internet environment is a cultural phenomenon and completely reflects tendencies of the social conscience dominating at a given period of time. Due to their interaction Instagram posts are spreading fast and are easy to remember. Sometimes a post authorship can be easily lost. In some respect Instagram posts are similar to the traditional folklore texts, as they reflect people's consciousness along with their national characteristics. Instagram posts meet the needs of modern people for immediate communication and information processing. It is worth mentioning that the average age of 61% of Instagram users varies from 18 to 34 years, 31% of users are from 18 to 24 years old, 30% of users are from 25 to 34. The age of the users is rather an important feature. The majority of users are of

the age from 18 to 34 (Instagram). By this age the development of the linguistic personality completes. It means that network texts reflect the formed linguistic ability of the communication participants.

The purpose of informational posts is to provide useful data on different topics for the Instagram subscribers. These posts give information at various levels: from academic knowledge to daily life hacks (Figure 01). Informational posts are represented by two main structural subtypes: educational posts and event-posts. Teaching, life-hack and art posts constitute the subtype of educational posts (Yukhmina & Obvintseva, 2019).
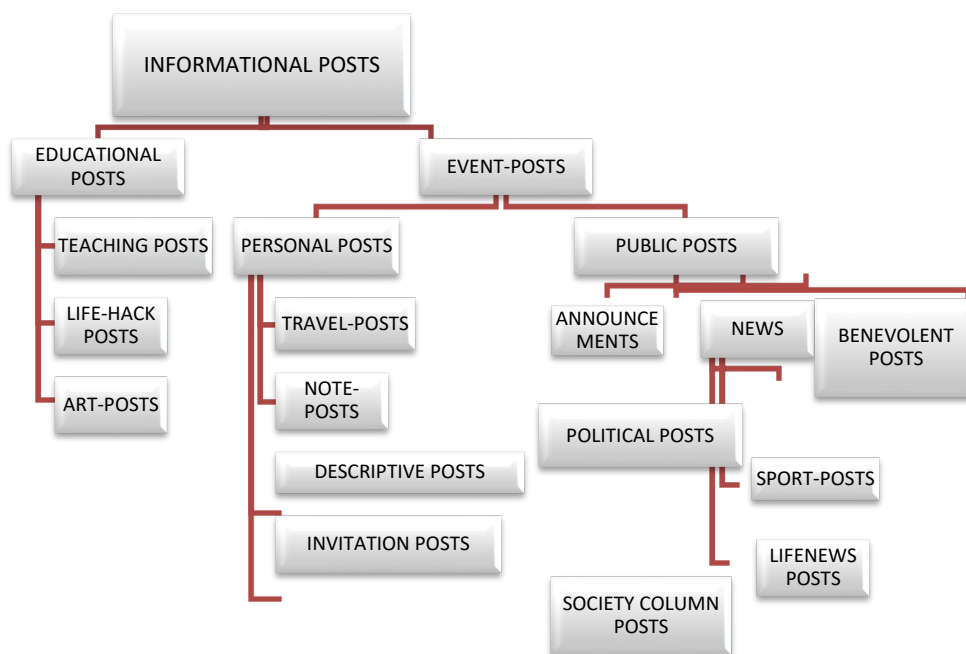
Figure 01. Classification of informational posts

6.1. Educational Posts

Educational posts, e.g.: *Friends! This post is about the Friedman equation. I tried to interpret the Friedman space, which requires very serious knowledge in tensor mathematics. Tij is an energy momentum tensor for a uniform mass distribution with a certain density and pressure. (1) the energy equation (2) is the equation of motion (3) continuity equation.*

These posts perform an educational function, i.e. they aimed at obtaining new knowledge in various fields and at forming certain skills and abilities. An educational post can be written in the form of a discussion, a description of popular science facts, a life story or a mini-study. It gives an interpretation of some concepts and theories; provides an explanation of physical and mathematical laws; a description of the research experience or creative activity. The style of presentation is either scientific or artistic. The vocabulary is academic and neutral, scientific terms and notions are often used in this type of Instagram posts.

Life-hack posts, e.g.: *You can buy gift cards at up to 35% off their value from CardCash.com. Get something in your eye? Using your fingertips, hold your eyelashes and pull down your eyelid. Blink rapidly several times to get rid of the foreign object.* Life hack-posts perform a cognitive function. They

provide advice and practical knowledge on dealing with a problem quickly and conveniently as well as saving time, money and effort at the same time. In the Instagram folklore they are encountered in the form of different tips, recommendations, video reviews, etc. Also they are full of clichéd phrases, proverbs, phraseological units and idiomatic expressions. In other words, life hack-posts reflect practical wisdom. The style of presentation is mostly conversational.

Art posts, e.g.: *I feel like this picture is pretty illustrative of my art making ethic. It is dark and cold outside, I'm too into the painting to move the kid's Legos, just need to make art sometimes #art #artwork #mixedmedia #abstractart #abstractpainting #drawing*. Their function is aesthetic. These posts are really inspiring and allow subscribers to plunge into a different reality. They give an opportunity for aesthetic pleasure. The authors of art posts usually encourage their subscribers to discuss the work of art. Therefore, these posts quite often contain questions asking to express users' opinion in the comments to the post. The presentation style of these posts is either journalistic or conversational.

6.2. Event Posts

Personal Posts

Travel posts, e.g.: *Night in Paris.Paris in spring. Rajasthan desert sunset. Rwandan Beauty. Nathdwara - a place where you want to come again and again but don't wanna leave. The above still is of spectacular railway station of Nathdwara where people come and go but this railway station does leave its imprints on people's minds.* Travel posts have a developmental function. They expand the horizons of readers, describe the beauty of various places on the planet, stimulate the imagination, bring positive emotions and arise a desire to visit these places. In the Internet folklore travel posts function in the form of detailed reviews, funny stories, brief emotional exclamations etc. They are full of colourful epithets, metaphors and comparisons. Contracted forms of verbs are commonly used in travel posts. The style of presentation is journalistic, often conversational.

Descriptive posts have a descriptive function. They introduce readers to current events in the life of the posts' authors. They are routine descriptions of some daily events, short stories and jokes. The presentation style is mainly conversational, the vocabulary is neutral, e.g. *So excited to celebrate Amazon's Head of Media & Entertainment USA getting awarded the honorary "40 under Forty" award. My Uber ride suddenly turned into pumpkin.*

Note-posts have a stating function, i.e. they are made in the form of messages that affirm some facts, describe events, give weather forecast, wish a good day, express gratitude etc. The style of presentation is conversational. The main forms are brief emotional exclamations or vice versa detailed descriptions. Colloquial words and repetitions are often used in these posts, e.g. *Traffic jam in Provence. That's what it feels like for a bird. Perfect reflection. Lavender fields…blooming in July. Dancing with Flamingos. Thank you 2019, you've found ways to trick and treat me. Between coffee and wine.*

Invitation posts perform an appellative function. Their goal is to invite guests for some important event, i.e. to result in action. The style of presentation depends on the target audience of the invitation. It can be either journalistic or official and business. The style sometimes can be conversational aiming to invite close friends to a party or birthday. Imperative constructions, elliptical sentences and passive voice can be used to emphasize the importance of an event, e.g.: *Hey, guys! Come to my Birthday party tonight!*

New 2020 year is here! New goals are set!!! Let's start with smiles…Booking March! Please join us for the celebration on Sat. Nov 9, 2019. Save our date! Emma and Spencer.05 SEPT 20. Together with their families ANT and HARRIET invite to their wedding on Saturday 17th March 2020 at HAYNE BAR Zeal Monachorum, Devon, Ex 17 6DT. Please RSVP by 1 February 2020.

Public Posts

Announcements fulfil an informative function. Their purpose is to inform about an important social or personal event. The style of presentation is official and business, journalistic, sometimes conversational. Compound nominal predicates are often used: *to be excited, to be available* etc. Announcements can also perform an advertising function when they are used to attract new loyal customers or keep the existing ones. Adjectives and nouns with positive connotations are used to create the desired image: *My first single "Black Garden" will be available Monday. Official Music Video out 9th September at 4pm. We are SO excited to announce Baby Bowman number 3 will be joining us in January!*

I'm very excited to announce I'm opening a Yoga & Pilates Studio on the 28th of July!!! I chose the name 'Santosha' as I resonated with the meanings behind it; contentment, inner joy, happiness in the small things, acceptance and satisfaction. A call to action is hidden in this post. Nouns and adjective with positive connotations create the desired effect and make the readers want to join the new yoga studio. So the direct imperative constructions are not used here but the influence on the volitional sphere of the reader is rather high and effective. The hidden message of a post author can be deciphered like "*If you want to feel happy and satisfied, join my new yoga studio with a nice name*".

Benevolent posts, e.g.: *For every 100 likes this post gets, we will donate $1 to @redcrossaubto fight the fire that's currently rummaging across Australia, affecting millions of families and wildlife ❤- They need our help! Donate today by liking, commenting, reposting and sharing this post with your friends! Make sure to tag us in your stories and posts for a repost- Let's get this to 100k ❤Donations will be made in ~1 week on IG live.* As a subtype of informational posts benevolent posts aim to inform users. But information about a particular charity event always has the purpose to encourage people to be active in giving donation or in actions related to it. So benevolent posts have the following identifying features:

✓ The use of the imperative mood for direct appealing for action;

✓ The use of first-person plural pronouns (we, our, us). The use of these pronouns is intended to include the reader in the community of "concerned" as well as to create a psychological feeling that the reader is united with the posts' authors giving a hint of having lots of followers (plural);

✓ Exclamation and emphatic constructions as well as non-verbal means (❤) are used to attract attention. The style of presentation is conversational.

Sports posts, e.g.: *BREAKING NEWS/ There are advanced negotiations about @erling.haaland. The situation is the following: There is a bid from @manchesterunited @juventus @dierotenbullen @bvb09 He will decide together with his manager Mino Raiola and his family. The key of his next movie is that he wants to play as a starter in his new club #haaland #raiola #transfermarket #bvb #juventus #rbleipzig #manchesterunited #fcsalzburg.* Educational and analytical functions are the main ones of sports posts. Sports posts are publications about the latest events and achievements in the world of sports.

The style of presentation can be official and business or journalistic. They can be presented in the form of analytics of upcoming sports events, interviews with famous athletes, predictions about the outcome of matches or simply news publications. Their goal is to promote sports among the population, attract the attention of fans, maintain their interest, support the desire to win and create an appropriate image of the country.

Political posts, e.g.: *NEWS! President Trump has named Ivanka & Jared to the official White House delegation to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It will take place January 20-24th. Miriam Williamson, who is a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, has laid off her entire campaign staff, multiple sources with knowledge of her campaign confirmed to USA TODAY on Thursday. The scaling back of the campaign staff leaves open the question of whether Williamson intends to suspend her presidential bid.* Political posts perform an informational and analytical function. They inform the public about upcoming political events, form public opinion on a particular event and provide the basis for political awareness. Subscribers express their opinion and attitude to the described event and actively interact with the authorities in comments to the political posts. That is why many politicians create Instagram accounts that cover their public meetings, arrangements or political events. The style of presentation is official-business or news-writing.

Life news provide up-to-date information about the lives of ordinary people. Their functions are informational and analytical as well. Both active and passive structures are used: *A man was rescued after powerful waves swept him into the ocean at Bonny Doon Beach in Santa Cruz County.* The style of presentation is journalistic and news-writing.

Society column posts are distinguished by the sensational content and expressive means of covering meaningful social events, parties and meetings etc. They are presented in the form of breaking news concerning famous and popular people. Their function is attention drawing and promoting, e.g. *Breaking news "Larry! Larry! Larry!" is coming back for another season #GMAZ #AZFamily.* The style of presentation is journalistic and news-writing. A lot of exclamations and elliptical sentences are encountered in such posts and different linguistic and paralinguistic expressive means of presentation.

7. Conclusion

So each type of posts performs its own function in the modern Instagram folklore. The language of posts is characterized by simplicity, ease of perception and narration, profound expressiveness, colourfulness and sometimes subjectivity. The conversational style of presentation prevails in the majority of posts, but still it depends on the authorship. The accounts of large companies do not create posts that can be attributed to folklore, since they tend more to a written formal speech rather than to a conversational one. These are academic descriptions with a sustained business style and a specific author.

In conclusion it should be underlined that all subtypes of informational Instagram posts have one common function, which is an information transfer, while each subtype has its own specific functions and its own linguistic and stylistic means of representation. Not all Instagram informational posts can be attributed to folklore texts, however, folklore features can be distinguished in almost each subtype. The classification of informational posts and description of their linguistic and stylistic features allows us to present another form of computer-mediated communication more structurally and visually.

Acknowledgments

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