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## RISK ZONES IN MODERN CONFLICTOGENIC MEDIA SPACE: LINGUISTIC AND LEGAL ASPECTS

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### *Abstract*

The paper focuses on a conflict-generating media content viewed as a problematic area in a linguistic-legal context. The authors present certain results of comprehensive linguistic (LE) and psycholinguistic (PLE) examination of polycode (creolized) controversial texts. They include, along with traditional linguoexpertology-related examples, some statistical methods designed to follow a frequency hierarchy of verbal constructions and sound-letter complexes, to calculate the number of identical models, to compare the frequency of individual sounds and to contrast normative frequency indicators for certain sounds. The authors use factor, attribute, semantic, and content analyses of the text, as well as the analysis of suggestive potential of a verbal model. The authors also employ an emotional-lexical assessment of verbal and non-verbal models, evaluation of brain rhythmic activity during the perception of the entire text, estimation of rhythmic coherence during the perception of individual parts of the text and their comparison, the techniques for recognizing hidden individual human behavior in professional activity. The paper presents and describes conflictogenes referred to as significant units of conflict-generating media discourse. It highlights a polycode text that consists of verbal and non-verbal parts. The authors specify the versatility and multidimensionality of text analysis, as well as the parameters of a text surface structure and its profound effect on readers. The results of the expertise are determined by the capacity of classical linguistics at large and related branches of knowledge used in a study of a creolized text through PLE-based software products.

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**Keywords:** Suggestive potential, conflictogene, conflict-generating text, polycode verbal model, suggestion.



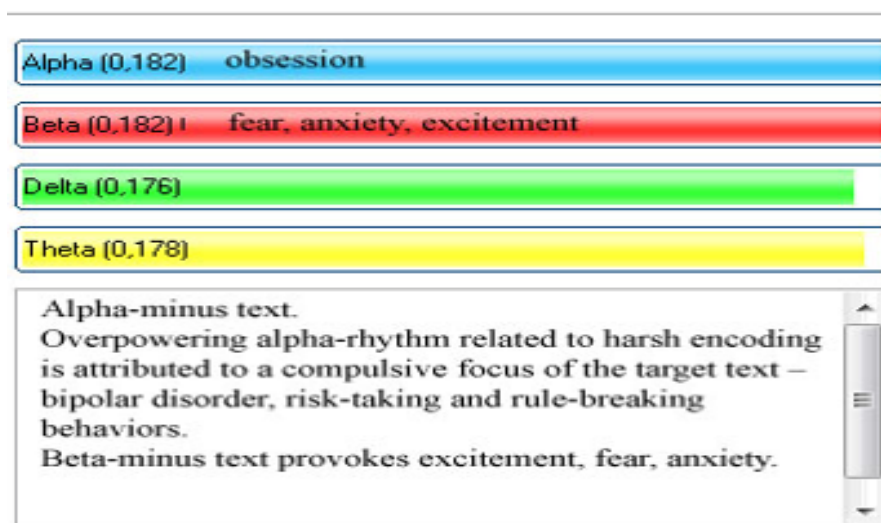
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## 1. Introduction

The authors deal with a modern conflict-generating media space as a fragment of a socio-discursive field, reflecting “verbal battles and punchfests” to take place there. They involve journalists and their guests as agents of a network socio-cultural system, who violate rhetorical norms and subsequently appear as plaintiffs / defendants in the court. The conflict-generating media space is herewith reported as a linguo-ecological public environment, the signs of which are identified by the experts in a controversial text.

A journalist is someone who displays the evolution of society motivated by the market laws, changes in societal attitudes or political expediency and linked to the progress of economic, socio-political relations and innovations. In this respect, the media play a crucial role and can have a significant impact on a particular object of interest, on the attitude of society to this object, on its reputation, etc. This also means that no one is immune from that negative abusive information that can appear in the media. In this type of communication, there are conditions for disseminating information to an indefinite number of people who share some ethical and moral views. Almost any audience response can be interpreted in a different way subject to whether it reflects some individual perception and thus is natural for a certain situation or it is caused by some other reasons (Rogozhnikova & Salikhova, 2019).

Traditionally, linguists describe the text in terms of conflictogenes that constitute its content and genre. They also actuate the ways to determine and express the intentions of the speaker or the writer, the goals of influencing the addressee and latent perception effects. Psycholinguists identify those conflictogenes that make it possible to decode suggestive potential of a linguistic phenomenon (Rogozhnikova, 2017). Linguists and psycholinguists should be able to differentiate communication elements based on a specific goal established to provoke a conflict through separate language elements, so that to allow lawyers to qualify cases of information distortion.



**Figure 01.** Brainwave pattern triggered through the perception of Artist's comments on the cartoon «Kpylly...» – “Shuffling around...”

## 2. Problem Statement

The issue explored in a linguistic and legal context is as follows. The idea of written or oral journalistic texts in the modern media space resides in their multi-code character. Such publications consist of verbal parts and the ones falling within some other sign systems. A person perceiving video or audio information draws attention to other sign (graphic) means indicated by the author, along with literal ones, and interprets them in a way specified by the author. A creolized text, which is the object of expert research, is a cartoon that the authors called «КруЩу...» [kruSCHu] – “Shuffling around...”, and some captions on Facebook and Instagram, in which the Artist expresses his attitude to the situation around the well-known Organization in Bashkiria.

The paper considers one out of six available for the analysis cartoons of the Head of the Organization. In the linguosemiotic and PL scopes, the cartoon of the Head portrayed as someone who skillfully organizes the shell game with three identical walnut shells entitled “Ministry of Internal Affairs”, “Court” and “Prosecutor’s Office” has a tough complex effect on the reader. The image is accompanied by the printed texts «КруЩу, слушай, верЩУ, всех запутать хАЩу!» – “*I am shuffling around, I am winding round, I wish to confuse you!*”. This polycode text, with no signs of a comic effect to be traced (the designators should involve the adjectives *ominous, gloomy, harsh, awesome*), depicts the negative images of not only the Head of the well-known community and its members, but also the denoted institutions manipulated by the main character like a gambler – a street operator. The linguistic synonyms of the concept – a fraudster, a crook, a trickster (EDLGRL, 2007) – leave no doubt that the use of this image in public communication degrades the honor and dignity of a particular person, harms the business reputation of the above institutions, lowers their status, thereby making them the subject of discussion and condemnation by society (Sternin et al., 2013).

Embracing the minimum significant discourse units of media space, linguistic and visual means, commonly known as conflictogenes, act as detonators in the target conflict-generating communication. The origins of the latter indicate some personal behaviors that prompt the author to make them publicly available.

The totality of visual imagery with textual comments made by the participants – Web visitors – forms a syntactic hierarchy that is built upon the characteristics of sign perceptions, the degree of uniqueness and objectivity of interpretation. With this approach, graphic and linguistic symbols are deemed as the organizers of the text space as a whole.

## 3. Research Questions

The cartoon and captions have an impact on the subconscious of those reading and viewing it. A sound side of the captions and comments on the cartoon adds toughness. The variants of pronunciation of the words *кpyЩy* – “*shuffle around*”, *вepЩy* – “*wind round*”, and *xАЩy* – “*wish*” convey an exaggerated interpretation of a Turkic accent inherent in Turkic-speaking Russians living in Bashkiria: *кpyЩy* from a distorted sound image of the verb *кpyчы* “*shuffle around*” – “7. *Colloq.* Ride herd on someone, command” (EDLGRL, 2007); *вepЩy* – from the verb *вepчы* “*wind round*” – “Take control of someone, make one act according to one’s will” (EDLGRL, 2007); and *xАЩy* – from the verb *xoчы*

“wish” – “1. Have a desire, an intention to do something; feel a need for someone/something” (EDLGRL, 2007).

The conclusion as to whether this image had a tough complex effect was double-checked through the analysis of the Artist’s comments made on the social networks. Figure 01 shows brainwave patterns that arose during such “conversation” with various commentators. Excessive alpha-minus rhythm related to coding and hard exposure again speaks for a compulsive focus of the speech product generated by the Artist, which can lead to unnecessary and irregular behavior, including rhetorical breaches, jeopardizing him and those his product targets. High beta-minus rhythm acts as an excitement pusher, always introducing a stressful destabilizing component in communication (Rogozhnikova, 2018; Varela, 1997).

According to the classification of invective vocabulary, the word *fraudster*, which is closely associated with the image of a shell-game player, belongs to the first group of “words and expressions that conceptually denote antisocial, socially (and legally) condemned activity”. The use of such units in public and formalized communication is considered as an insult. It is about such a spirit of the content that could infringe on honor, diminish dignity and harm the reputation of characterized individuals if the facts presented in the rationale for the estimates turn out to be fictitious (Ivanov et al., 2007). Targeted public use of invective vocabulary lowers the social status of a depicted subject, designates him as a socially convicted person, thus making him an offender. It unveils and makes an addressee’s personal hostility publicly known, ... makes a victim a gazing stock, an object of *schadenfreude* (Gorbanevsky, 2002). The information in the comments and descriptions of the situation around the Organization is presented as statements about the actions performed by the person being condemned in his administrative position, which the society disapproves as unlawful and immoral. Such statements are aimed at humiliating the dignity of the person, but they do not have indecent (obscene) forms. Although they can substantively discredit the honor, dignity and business reputation of the particular criticized person. Kara-Murza (2009) clarifies that from a linguistic and legal point of view, defamatory information, firstly, is information exactly about offenses or misconduct of a plaintiff, and not any negative factual information about him. Secondly, it addresses directly a plaintiff. Thirdly, it shall be expressed in the form of a statement.

The interpretation of the cartoon is transparent enough for reader’s perception. The Artist working in this genre is always in a conflict-prone risk zone, since he is involved in a potential insult. The cartoon is specifically aimed at psychological manipulation. It also has a certain number of supporters whose opinion the author entertains. There was an *ad hominem* attack, which means a new type of insult functioning (Ustinov, 2014). This kind of creativity is geared to arouse determination among the opposition, to morally eliminate and humiliate the enemy. An ideological bias of the cartoon possibly relies on a set of values in that social group on whose behalf the Artist acts. The question comes up as per the moral ‘red lines’, which explicates and clarifies the author’s (Artist’s) views of the aesthetics and morality.

A special block fitted in the VAAL application (Shalak & Dymshits, 2005) used for text analysis, including «КрыИИы...», takes into account not only evaluative words, but also adjectives, verbs and nominalizations applicable to describe and evaluate a person. Fifteen factors are used as semantic scales, by which each lexical unit is evaluated. The emotional background is determined by the estimates of the

participants, their expectations and emotional upheavals. By analyzing the material based on emotional assessments, the specialist has the opportunity to establish the main criteria and values. The emotional-lexical assessments are measured by calculating the average values for each of the scales. The perception of this textual material is characterized by extremely high evaluation factors: the Artist's emotional state is assessed as *unfriendly* (62.9), *false* (64.3); there is no *self-control* (20.4) and *independence* of the author (8.2). If self-control is an inherent human ability to control their own behavior, based on the will as the highest mental function responsible for conscious decisions, then the lack of independence indirectly indicates the Artist's bias.

The indicators of *aggressiveness* (6.1) and *ostentation* (10.4) were identified in the analysis. Verbal or visual *aggression* is a form of activity aimed at insulting and/or causing harm to others; *ostentation* is a feature of hysterical personality, manifested in emotionally colored behavior through a desire to be in plain view and a desire to appeal (numerous Artist's comments are eloquently illustrative). This is a type of people prone to deliberate exaggeration in an effort to show off. Through the cartoons being a detailed depiction and deliberate sharpening of certain features, one can see the signs of ostentation viewed as a psychological characteristic of the author.

Excessive theta-minus rhythms when a reader perceives cartoons, including «КрыIIIy...», entails irritation and anger. It is theta waves that are ideal for noncritical acceptance of various external attitudes and beliefs that change the focus towards others and form appropriate behavior. These rhythms are responsible for reducing protective mental mechanisms that allow critical evaluation of information; enable the transforming information to penetrate deep into the subconscious (Cherepanova, 1996).

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

The paper aims to show the capabilities of a comprehensive expert examination carried out on the basis of the achievements of linguistic and expert areas of modern domestic applied linguistics and psycholinguistics. The exemplary fragments that involved the authors are presented as illustrations (with confidentiality undertaking and denoting the subjects as Artist, Organization, and Head of Organization).

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

The objects of research are analyzed without contradicting the methods for performing other types of analysis of language products (logical-grammatical, linguistic-stylistic, textological, pragmalinguistic, lexical-semantic, semantic-syntactic) recommended for practical use (Gorbanevsky, 2004).

LE and PLE as a whole are based on the corresponding scientific and methodological tools and terminological subsystems. Unlike linguistic, psychological-linguistic and psychological types of examinations, PLE relies on the data of experimental linguistics that studies the products of human language activity based on the materials of numerous PL experiments. The successful results to formalize them in a form of computer programs have increased the possibilities of this scientific paradigm in forensic linguistic activity. The Department of Language Communication and Psycholinguistics of Ufa State Aviation Technical University was engaged in the development and piloting of software (including automated word and text analysis). They go with the Russian, English, German, Tatar and Bashkir

languages: 1) BARIN (Registration Certificate No. 2011618299, 2011); 2) BATYR (Registration Certificate No. 2014613238. M., 2013); 3) SCHETOVOD (Registration Certificate No. 2014618598, 2014); 4) PULSE 2015 for processing the rhythm of a prosaic text (Registration Certificate No. 2015614549. M., 2015); 5) BURGER (Registration Certificate No. 2016616320, 2016).

A polymodal text was studied through the methods and analytical techniques based on four special-purpose computer programs. A set of analysis methods included statistical methods to follow the frequency hierarchy of verbal constructions and sound-letter complexes, to count the number of identical models, to compare the frequency of individual sounds and to contrast normative frequency indicators for certain sounds. The authors used lexical, factor, attribute, semantic, phonosemantic, and content analyses of the text, as well as the analysis of suggestive potential of a verbal model. The authors also employed a grammatical analysis, an emotional-lexical assessment of verbal and non-verbal models, assessment of brain rhythmic activity during image perception, assessment of rhythmic coherence in the perception of individual parts of the text, a comparative analysis of the results, a mathematical-statistical method for analyzing the stylistic features of the text, analysis of individual suggestive coefficients to influence individual and mass human consciousness and subconsciousness, and assessment of the impact of the text on an interlocutor.

## 6. Findings

The results of a comprehensive expert examination are as follows. The lexical units contribute to the creation of a negative picture in the mind of the addressee and a corrupt and humble image of the Organization at large and the Head in particular. The words establish a semantic basis for a communicative space on a social network, which is specified through its other components (comments, ratings, etc.). The meaning of the word includes not only a conceptual core that makes it possible to distinguish this subject from a number of others, but also figuratively-sensual representations, and emotional-evaluative and stylistic meanings (Salikhova, 2019). By combining them, certain stylistic effects are created, thereby giving the cartoon one or another sentiment that expresses the author's sarcastic attitude to the subject of the image.

The analysis of the caption showed the importance of grammatical means. The most popular to ensure communicative success are verbs, nouns and their transforms, depending on the degree of infringement of the subject according to the revealed signs. Word-forming models with pragmatic potential are also related to communicative morphological means. The facts of stigmatization (labeling) are obvious when degrammatization of a negative evaluation unit, its sound and letter distortion acts as a label.

The syntactic units are represented by various groups in structure, and purpose of utterance. They interact in different ways, ensuring a dialogics principle of texts. Encouraging offers have the greatest impacting capacity. The statements accompanying the cartoon are full of language game techniques, which is considered as a deliberate violation of verbal rules in order to give the message more expressive power, draw attention to the nationality of the character being portrayed, ridicule his illiteracy, transmit a sharply negative attitude of the cartoonist to the subject of the image.

The analysis of the stylistic means showed the way they assist cartoonists in establishing emotional contact with the audience and contribute to creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding. The analyzed images that keep the signs of insult are based on radically rethought parodies and go before the reader with reinforced negative meaning. The author acts within the framework of a single aesthetic and ideological space that is understandable to the representatives of not only his “side”. However, an artistic insult, according to philologists, does not so much raise the question pertaining to the boundaries between art and reality, and the moral ‘red lines’, as it reveals the gist of the author’s ideas about the possibilities of good and evil, and brings aesthetics and morality face to face.

## 7. Conclusion

The linguist proceeds from some ethical principles of the writer or the painter who in their professional and speech activities are obliged to respect the dignity and honor of a subject or an object of their attention. The artist is always able to adequately, subject to stylistic and ethical standards of a genre, choose from the means available in the language just those that do not discredit a subject of description.

Cartoons, including the target «Крыльи...» cartoon, and captions are of a specific nature. They formally have no indecent form, but are linguosemiotically qualified as going beyond the limits of literary language and speech behaviors considered by society as unacceptable in public use. From the point of view of “conflict-generating risks”, the experts analyze a speech act based on the explicit and hidden content of the text and describe the causes of an utterance and possible responses. Being aware of the laws of speech communication, philologists characterize a specific communicative conflict, while lawyers provide a legal interpretation for the results. Being an objective study, LE and PLE are not just a complex procedure used to identify language crimes in the journalistic communication, but an applied direction that reveals new properties of a conflictogenic media space.

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