EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS ONLINE (ARTICLE COMMENTS IN RUSSIAN AND GERMAN PRESS)

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Abstract

The article examines the issue of verbal expression of emotions in the Internet, namely the analysis of emotive means of expressing the recipient's reaction in German and Russian press. Linguists most often talk about how emotions are verbalized and how authors of texts of different genres use them to create expression. Meanwhile, it is no less interesting to study the linguistic means by which the recipient of a text reacts to it. The study was based on Internet comments to articles about the pandemic, controlling it and vaccinations, published in the newspapers Komsomolskaya Pravda and ZEIT ONLINE. The relevance of the proposed study based on the research of comments contents written by mass readers that can give an idea of what linguistic means are publicly available and frequent. The authors draw conclusions about means which are the most popular among native speakers of a particular language (German/Russian). Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the multi-level expressions of emotionality used in Internet comments. The authors focus on the graphical component of these texts as a significant component of online interaction in electronic Russian and German media. The study is novel in the reference to a new communication format (Internet commenting) that will increase the format of emotionality research. The authors are confident that this topic has impressive potential, and that studying will provide a fuller picture of the process of emotion expression.

Keywords: Emotivity, Internet comment, recipient, Russian, German

1. Introduction

Research concerning the linguistic influences associated with the creation of expressiveness in texts (fiction, journalism, rarer, science) has recently begun. Thus, German linguists separate two concepts: "emotionality" and "expressiveness", asserting that the first notion is related to the non-linguistic internal content of a statement, and the second one is to the linguistic external embodiment of what is said not also denying their etymological closeness (Pustka & Goldschmitt, 2014). More and more often in language studies has been said that the influential function of speech becomes possible by the presence of connotative components in the semantics of certain words which have an exclusively subjective character and complement the denotative (basic, objective) content of a linguistic unit (Hoffmann, 2007). There is also an opinion that expression unites and completes emotional evaluation, imagery, intensity, belonging to a certain style, as well as structural and compositional properties of the utterance (Gadzhieva, 2020).

In our case, the description of the structure of connotation and the fundamental dividing of its components is not of great importance. The notion of "emotionality" or "emotiveness" of speech comes first. This functional and semantic category is indicative because of its direct relation to the topic of verbal expression of emotions (linguistic paradigm), and is a marker of psychological state of both individual and society (anthropocentric paradigm) in turn. According to P. Ekman, we need emotions so that we "can react quickly to decisive, life-saving events" without thinking for a long time (as cited in Reichertz, 2013). The need to explore emotions from a social and human nature perspective was also emphasized by Bruce and Bruce (2010): "the language of emotion can be an invaluable window into culture-specific conceptualizations of social life and human nature" (p. 38).

Krasavsky (2001), having studied emotional concepts in Russian and German culture of languages, came to the conclusion that the linguistics of emotions often ignores the specifics of the national mentality. Moreover, linguists have been actively using the term "emotionality" for a long time, talk about the verbalization of emotions, but it has become obvious that this definition, taken from the sphere of psychology, does not quite adequately reflect the linguistic component. So, Fomina (1996) emphasizes the need for a bilateral approach to the category of "emotionality": psychological and linguistic. In the first case, it is directly about the properties of the subject; in the second – about the properties of language to convey emotions. In the works of contemporary linguists, the concept of emotionality comprises a physiological as well as psychological characteristic of a person, and emotivity is defined by scientists as "the linguistic expression of emotionality through various means of language" (Lenko, 2015 p. 86).

It is a fundamental fact that emotionality is mostly pronounced in oral speech. However, we should not forget that written speech, a text or a short statement, is an independent communicative unit by which people both communicate and share their emotions. Thus, Filimonova (2007) and Tokmakova (2013) unanimously express the idea that speech emotivity in a greater degree can be represented exceptionally in the text. The basis of textual emotivity gives linguistic signs possibility to verbalize, to translate emotion, the emotional attitude of the author. So, the centre of study is most often the process of perception and understanding of the transmitted emotions.

Most research papers concerned with the topic of emotivity use the text of fiction as the material to be analysed. Certainly, the verbal fabric of works of fiction provides us with an inexhaustible number of

examples of the verbalization of emotion. However, modern linguists, considering emotivity as a manifestation of the human factor in language, go beyond the fertile field of fiction. Chuprakova and Popovich (2014) consider emotivity in English journalism, emotivity in a political text was considered in her study by Biryukova (2009). Among domestic and foreign linguists there are works examined the emotivity of advertising blocks (Shevchenko, 2004), interviews (Dudkin, 2014), news texts and commentary texts (Hoffmann, 2005). All mentioned above gives us the right to assert that the topic of emotivity in texts of various genres is very relevant. In recent years, an impressive number of works on the topic have been published, written not only by linguists and psychologists, but also by philosophers, sociologists, and representatives of other sciences, which indicates the interdisciplinary nature of this issue and its particular popularity. However, a variety of studies are mainly focused on individual aspects of emotionality or its impact potential. Linguists most often talk about how emotions are verbalized and how the author of a text uses them to create expression. However, it is no less interesting to study the linguistic means by which exactly the recipient reacts to the offered text. We are sure that this topic has an impressive potential, its study will give a fuller picture of the process of expressing emotions. Moreover, turning to the new format of communication (Internet commenting) will undoubtedly increase the format of emotionality research.

2. Problem Statement

In modern linguistics there is a situation when the study of linguistic means of creating emotivity becomes particularly relevant. Despite the fact that this problem has been studied separately both in German and Russian, the analysis of the verbal expression of the recipient's reaction – the reader of a newspaper article – in its comparative aspect is relevant. The process of passing the emotional attitude of the recipient as a representative of the national consciousness, and his or her feedback, is of interest. We can estimate whether the writer or journalist has achieved his/her goal and whether he/she has been able to influence the reader by the assessments made by the reader when commenting on the text of the article online. Therefore, the study of commentary texts written by ordinary readers, who are by no means always masters of the word, can give us an idea of which linguistic means are commonly available and frequent in Russian/German. Later on it can help us to draw conclusions about which means are the most popular with speakers of a particular language.

3. Research Questions

3.1. In what ways are the emotions of the reader of a newspaper article verbalized in an online commentary?

3.2. What linguistic means are used by Russian-speaking readers to express emotions in Internet comments?

3.3. What emotive means are most representative for Internet comments in the German-speaking environment?

4.   Purpose of the Study

We have defined the purpose of this study as description of composition of emotions verbal representation expressed by the readers of Russian and German newspapers by the example of Internet comments in Russian and German press.

5.   Research Methods

Achieving this purpose requires the use of a wide range of research methods. The main scientific methods (observation, comparison, analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction) as well as special linguistic ones (structural-semantic, contextual-interpretive analysis, content analysis) were applied to specify the contexts with an emotive component and to determine the means of expressing the emotions from the texts of Internet comments to the articles in Russian and German.

6.   Findings

For the analysis of the language material we took the comments to 8 articles from the Russian newspaper "Komsomolskaya Pravda" and 8 articles from the German newspaper "ZEIT ONLINE", posted on the website of each edition in the period from February 2 to 9, 2021. This added up to a total of 5826 texts of comments on pandemic, its control and vaccination, because this topic is particularly relevant and causes the most emotional responses.

Website of Komsomolskaya Pravda has wide popularity and is characterized by high traffic: its posts are accompanied by a large number of comments (about 150 on average).

Certainly, writing does not have the opportunity to express emotion as vividly as direct oral communication does. The written text can be more productive in terms of the verbalization of emotion, as the reader has the opportunity to choose the best option out of all the available emotive means of language or, for example, to change or correct what has been written. The impossibility to use intonational emotive means is compensated by graphic and punctuation ones: Нужно все же уважать достижения СВОЕЙ страны, а не глотать слюну в сторону США и Запада [One should respect the achievements of HIS country instead of drooling over the USA and the West]; МОЛОДЦЫ! БРАВО! нам ее и не поставляют. ваши 10 долларов САМИ платите. вам СТО РАЗ СКАЗАЛИ[GOOD FORWARD! BRAVO! they don't even supply us with it. your $10.00 is YOURS to pay. you have been told a HUNDRED TIMES].

An interesting way of expressing emotion is to use brackets to graphically indicate one's own opinion: Ох, как не нравится…:))) [Oh, I don't like it... :)))]; маска выполняет двойную функцию – и от ковида защищает, и подбородки поддерживает!... :)) [The mask has a double function - it protects from covid and supports chins!... :))]; Иногда российский, иногда нет…:-) [Sometimes Russian, sometimes not...:-)].

The morphological level offers a slightly wider arsenal of means to create emotionality than the graphic and punctuation one. For example: Мифы – это то, что в статейке собрано; [Myths are what is collected in the article (literally stateika means in Russian a short article, suffix k is used for word diminutiveness)]; Как-то хитренько про маски написали… [You wrote about masks rather slyly…

(literally khitren'ko means in Russian a little bit cunningly, suffix nk is used for word diminutiveness)];
…ой, секретик раскрыт… [...oops, the secret is revealed (literally sekretik means in Russian a small secret, suffix ik is used for word diminutiveness)]; Вы ссылаетесь на размытые циферки [You refer to fuzzy figures (literally tsiferki means in Russian small figures, suffix k is used for word diminutiveness)]; … перестали обмениваться этими микробами при поцелуйчиках и обнимашках [...stopped exchanging these germs in kissing and hugs (literally potseluichiki and obnimashki means in Russian a perfunctory kisses and sweet hugs, suffixes chik and k are used for words diminutiveness)].

There are interesting examples of word formation: А средством защиты должна быть не фуфло-маска, а респиратор… [And the means of protection should not be a foul-mask, but a respirator (fuflo-mask means in Russian a very bad mask)]; Возглавляет ее ковид-диссидент невролог… Она еще и антипрививочница [Headed by a neuroscientist covid-dissident...She is also anti-vaccinationist]. Interesting are those cases when emotivity is created at the expense of linguistic means of different levels: Так…вакцинка… А они сразу ВАКЦИНА! [So... vaccine... (literally vakcinka means in Russian disrespect to vaccine, suffix k is used for word diminutiveness) And they immediately VACCINE!].

When denoting their emotions readers widely use lexical means, for example, direct denotation of emotion: Это, конечно, отрадно… [This is certainly welcome...]; За Малышеву, признаюсь, стыдно и неудобно [For Malysheva, I confess, I am ashamed and uncomfortable].

At the syntactic level, emotionality is highly realized when a meaning-neutral narrative acquires an exclamatory intonation: Это все неинтересно!!! [This is all uninteresting!!!]; Нужно носить! [You should wear it!]; Аналогично! [Likewise!]; Дойдя до ближайшей урны, я выбросила эту тряпочку и более ее никогда не надевала! [Having reached the nearest bin, I threw the rag away and never wore it again!]; Поддерживаю! [I support this!].

The editorial board of Germany's leading newspaper ZEIT ONLINE allows readers to freely discuss and express their opinions on events published in the newspaper. Comments are placed directly after the article, but only authorised users can comment, who can also mark a text they like with a star and then it goes into the "Leserempfehlungen (Readers' Recommendations)" section. On average there are 600 comments per article.

As in the Russian press, in the German press the recipient firstly indicates his or her position with the choice of a pseudonym (nickname). It should be noted that nicknames with an emotive component are not common in the German press, but there are commentators who already signify an emotion with their name: surprise – werhättedasgedacht (whocouldhavethought); anger - Wutige (Furious), Grimmig18 (Furious18); disgust - ZynikerAusResignation (CynikBythewillofFate).

Graphic as well as punctuation means for expressing and easily reading of emotions are used by every second commentator in the German speaking press: Schnelltests für alle! (Express tests are for everyone! - one can read joy in the sentence and further text of the commentary); "Mit dem Virus sterben" bezog sich - mal wieder - NICHT unbedingt auf SIE ("To die from a virus" did NOT refer directly to YOU - in given words as well as in whole commentary one can feel discontent, irritation of the author); Ist inkludiert :) (turned on :) – we feel the author's approval and desire to dialogue). The given graphic means are found as an independent way of expressing an emotion as well as combined with other means of language at the recipient discretion.

Morphological language means are rarely but successfully used by Internet commentators and we can see it from the positive reactions from other readers who mark the statements they like. For example: Na, n Spaziergang machen mit Bierchen trinken - Spabiergang ;) [Well, to take a walk with a beer – beerwalk;)]. We see here both a play of words Spaziergang - Spabiergang, a graphic means for expressing joy, anticipation, and the use of the diminutive affectionate suffix in relation to the drink - Bierchen. Another example: "Widerlegen" muss man erstmal keine Behauptung - der Behaupter soll darlegen, dass es stimmt (First, no statement should be "denied" - the assertor should present it in such a way that it is true). Especially popular among commentators on coronavirus are words with a component borrowed from English and now in everyday use: No-Covid-Strategie [No-Covid Strategy], Dauerlockdown [Long Lockdown].

On a lexical level the commentators are able to talk about their emotions, which the German public often makes use of. The most frequent appeal is to the feeling fear, that resonates with the mass reading audience, because the instinct for self-preservation, especially heightened in times of pandemic, is proper to of any member of society. Cf.: Corona ist sicher viel stärker als ein Grippe. Und für alte Menschen sehr gefährlich [Covid is clearly much more serious than influenza. And very dangerous for the elderly], Ich fürchte, der Eingangstext muss geändert werden [I fear the article text must be changed]. A number of comments use lexical units expressing joy: Seit Tagen bei JEDEM Artikel über Corona immer den ersten Kommentar mit dem immer gleichen Text ist irgendwie eine lustige Leistung, aber auch irgendwie traurig [Several days in a row for EVERY article about covid the first comment with the same text is somehow fun, but also somehow sad]. In the above example, the emotional plane is reinforced by graphic means, word repetition (immer), the choice of antonymy (lustig–traurig) and parallelism at the syntactic level (irgendwie ..., aber auch irgendwie ...). In another commentary, the emotive component expressing joy is read in the choice of the nickname Positivbeitrag (positive review/post) and then in the text itself: Ich freue mich, dass es gedruckt wurde [I am glad that it was published].

7. Conclusion

Thus, the verbalization of emotions of the recipient – the reader of a newspaper article – in the format of an Internet commentary provides a fairly wide arsenal of different means of language. The author of a journalistic text is trying not only to convey information but also to influence the readers, but in his case, it is quite difficult to openly use emotiveness, that is not provided by the format of the Internet article. The recipient, on the other hand, is free to use linguistic means in the commentary for one purpose – to express his/her attitude to the subject of the speech.

The analysis of the linguistic means demonstrated that to express emotions in the comments of journalistic articles concerning coronavirus in the Russian press, lexical means are used predominantly. It is mainly the formation of new words with a bright emotive colouring on the basis of neutral lexemes already existing in the language. This is logical, because other means of expressing emotions, which are typical for oral speech, are ineffective in a written statement, language means of the lexical level have a bright expression, as they affect in two directions at once: emotional and rational. It can be assumed that the creation of new words, vivid, precise, figurative and often sarcastic, distinguishes native speakers of Russian.

The analysis of the corpus of texts in German speaking space has pointed to the multiple choice of the recipient in favour of graphic and punctuation means, which help to express emotions of different kinds more openly, bring communication closer to direct verbal communication and strengthen the impact potential of lexical means of language and syntactic constructions. In morphological terms, the comments of the readers of ZEIT ONLINE are rich in word-formation models with an English-speaking component, which entered into everyday use during the pandemic, but, unlike the Russian-speaking community, these neologisms have a neutral meaning.

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