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FUNCTIONAL AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF HYPERTEXT LINKS IN ONLINE INFORMATIONAL NEWSPAPER TEXTS

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Abstract

The semantic and functional features of intertextual hyperlinks in news and informational and analytical articles of online newspapers are considered in this article. The relevance of the research is due to the insufficient study of the features of semantic relations between the content of hypertext link sources and texts acting as link objects, as well as the functioning of hyperlinks in this type of text. The purpose of the study is to identify the role of hypertext links in shaping the semantic structure of a text based on the potential possibility of developing a particular semantic perspective, as well as to analyze the functional load of hypertext links in terms of implementing the main functions of texts belonging to the genre under consideration. As a result of the analysis, the equivalent and partitive semantic types of hypertext links are identified, the role of partitive hypertext links in the development of the semantic perspective of the source text is revealed; the role of hypertext links in the implementation of the main functions of newspaper texts of the informational type is distinguished. The informational and persuasive messages of this type of texts are produced under the influence of the following functions in hypertext links: the function of delivering additional information, the constructive function, the expressive function, the function of reducing epistemic responsibility, the function of multimedialization. The functional features of hypertext links also include their polyfunctionality and correlation with some functions of newspaper intertextual inclusions.

1. Introduction

To study the functioning of language in the media sector of the Internet environment is one of the leading tasks of modern linguistics. This is due to two stable trends that have been observed over the past decades: the strengthening of the role of mass media in contemporary society, as well as the intensive informatization of all spheres of life. A newspaper text is traditionally considered as one of the leading objects of research in the field of media linguistics. As a result of the active interaction of the mass media with the Internet environment, there observed an intensive expansion of the information space accompanied by the appearance of new types of media – Internet media, which include web versions of newspapers.

At the same time, there is a change in the structural, functional, linguistic and speech features of newspaper texts in the network environment, which is due to the alterations in the traditional format. In the Internet environment, the newspaper text acquires properties that are characteristic of the network media discourse, as well as Internet discourse in general: hypertextuality, interactivity, multimediality, convergence, prevalence of the spoken language (Kalmykov & Kokhanova, 2005), interaction and interpenetration of offline and online environments (Bolander & Locher, 2020), collective authorship, strengthening the role of the reader in creating content, which ultimately leads to the co-authorship of the journalist and the reader (Chua & Westlund, 2019; Garcia-Orosa et al., 2020; Winter et al., 2017). The hyperlink navigation has become an important component of the network text structure. At the same time, hypertext links serve not only to implement the key network properties of the text in the Internet environment, but also become a new means of implementing the properties and characteristics of traditionally distinguished genres, including newspaper texts, which determines the relevance of their study.

2. Problem Statement

The concept of hypertextuality, which is a key property of Internet discourse and consists in the non-linearity of information representation in the network, goes back to the theory of intertextuality developed by Kristeva (1967), which pushes the boundaries of the traditional verbal text and includes extralinguistic realities in it. Kristeva's idea of intertextuality was based, in turn, on the concept of dialogism by Bakhtin (1975), according to which the author of the text is in a continuous dialogue with the surrounding reality, the reader and other literary texts. In a broad sense, intertext is the inclusion in the text of either whole other texts with a different subject of speech, or fragments of other people's texts in the form of quotations, reminiscences and allusions (Arnol'd, 1996, p. 8).

Network hypertext, which is a nonlinear electronic text structure, where links are functioning by means of hyperlink set of options, which makes it possible to create variations of the text, design it with the active involvement of the reader following different trajectories of reading the text thanks to the network navigation system, is, in fact, the implementation of intertextuality using modern computer technologies. At the same time, a hyperlink being a key category of the Internet, is not active in itself in terms of meaning. It only gives the reader the opportunity to make a choice of a semantic trajectory, to emphasize a certain semantic direction of the text, becoming a semantic node of the text that opens to the

reader in the form of embodied multiplicity only if the reader uses this link to establish certain intratextual, intertextual, as well as extratextual links (Krasnoyarova, 2012, p. 56). Unlike intertextual inclusions, the link is always explicit and interactive, and the text that is the object of a hypertext link belongs to another formal text space and is not an obligatory component of the compositional structure of the source text. If the intertextuality of a text, as a rule, depends on the perception of a particular recipient, the hypertext is always potentially intertextual.

The main functions of newspaper texts of the informational type, including news and informational and analytical materials, are the delivering of information, its interpretation and persuasion. Despite the fact that the persuasion function is traditionally more pronounced in information analytics, due to the increasing role of the media in the life of society, its strengthening is also observed in articles belonging to genres with a predominance of information intention, which is observed, for example, in the tendency to emotionalize Internet news discourse (Teneva, 2021). In the era of information wars, an important problem of information journalism is increasing the reader's confidence in published materials, which is facilitated by the reportative and evidential modalization of the utterance as an important component of influence and persuasion (Cavaliere, 2018; Chepurnaya, 2020), which manifests itself in the author's demonstration of a certain degree of evidential and epistemic responsibility – from a high level of epistemic responsibility to avoiding epistemic responsibility at all, when the author publishes the source of information in various ways.

The information potential and the persuasion impact on the reader of online newspaper materials is significantly higher due to the availability, openness, polycode, multimedia presentation and rapid spread of information, which is also achieved using a hyperlink navigation.

Despite the fact that modern research attempts have been made to classify hyperlinks according to their semantic and functional orientation, questions about the identification of semantic types of hypertext links, as well their functional features in online newspaper texts of an informational type, including the participation of hypertext links in the implementation of the main functions of texts of this media genre, remain poorly studied.

3. Research Questions

Based on the above, the main questions that are raised in the framework of this study can be formulated as follows:

3.1. How do hypertext links and link texts correlate in terms of semantics in the informational text of an online newspaper?

3.2. What are the functions of hypertext links in the type of texts under consideration? How do these functions relate to the main functions of the texts of the media genre under study?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to study the role of hypertext links in creating the semantic structure of a text based on the possibility of developing a particular semantic perspective. In addition, the

author sets the task to analyze the functioning of hyperlinks in an online newspaper text of an informational type in terms of implementing the key functions of texts of this genre.

5. Research Methods

The research material was the English-language articles of the web versions of the newspaper editions of The Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Telegraph, The USA Today, The New York Times, published on the following websites: www.thetimes.co.uk, www.guardian.co.uk, www.telegraph.co.uk, www.independent.co.uk, www.usatoday.com, www.nytimes.com. In the course of the research, the methods of theoretical analysis of scientific literature, linguistic observation and description were used. When selecting empirical material, the continuous sampling method was used.

6. Findings

When analyzing the semantic relations between hyperlinks and the content of the hypertext links in news and informational and analytical articles, the results of a study by Utyashev (2014) were used, who distinguishes three types of hyperlinks by the nature of the semantic relationships of the electronic headliner (the source of the hypertext link to the page with the full text of the article) and the actual title and text of the article. They are: equivalent, partitive and contradictory. These types are distinguished by the degree of semantic correlation between the content of the headliner and the text. The semantic specificity of these hypertext links contributes to the creation of intrigue, attracts potential readers and, thus, leads to more article views.

Despite the fact that intratextual hyperlinks have a different functional load compared to the headlines of articles (providing additional information on the problems of the article), they can also be differentiated by full or partial semantic correlation with the content of the link text (equivalence/partitivity). At the same time, semantic contradiction is excluded, since it generally contradicts the author's intention when using intratextual hyperlinks. It should also be noted that the equivalence and partitivity of intratextual hyperlinks differs somewhat from the semantics of hypertext links between the headliner and the text. So, in the latter case, the semantic vector is directed from the headliner to the text, so equivalence and partitivity are considered as a semantic characteristic of the headliner. In the case of hyperlinks in the text of the article, on the contrary, the semantic vector leads from the link text, as an addition to the source text of the material, to the content of the hyperlink. Therefore, the equivalence and partitivity that characterize the semantic relationship of the link and the link object rather refers to the link text.

The equivalence/partitivity of the content of hyperlinks and link texts can be demonstrated by the example of the following fragments of newspaper articles. So, in the excerpt (1) But with the deal damaging British exporters as well as contributing to *tensions in Northern Ireland* [...] many pro-Europeans are looking for Labour to lead a push for a better deal short of rejoining the bloc (Helm & Savage, 2021), a hyperlink highlighting a particular event refers to an article describing the growing tension in the region due to changes in the country's political sphere, which in general, corresponds to the content of the hyperlink and indicates the equivalence of the content of the link text and the link source.

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In excerpt (2) [...] Luke Cooper [...] argues that the trade deal badly needs revisiting to protect jobs, workers' rights and the economy and restore membership of EU projects such as the *Erasmus student exchange program* (Helm & Savage, 2021), a hyperlink creates an opportunity to go to an article that, in addition to describing the program, provides information about the difficulties with its implementation in the conditions of Brexit. Thus, the semantic correlation of the hyperlink and the link text is characterized by partitivity. Link texts, especially in the case of partitivity, are usually broader in content, represent excessive reading, since they also include information that does not correspond to the content of the source text, and the reader has to select significant blocks of information. However, in some cases, the semantic perspective is narrowed due to the fact that the link text contains a description of a particular aspect of the hyperlink content: (3) It is *an aggressive government*, perhaps the most aggressive we have ever had [...] (Beckett, 2021). In this case, the link text is devoted to the description of one of the elements of the government's aggressiveness - the manifestation of nationalism in regard with the new law on the national flag.

Speaking about the functional load of intratextual hyperlinks in informational newspaper texts, it should be emphasized that they are an important means of implementing the main function of this type of texts - delivering information, since the link texts contain additional information explaining, clarifying, detailing the content of the fragment of the original article highlighted as a hyperlink. Despite the fact that hyperlinks perform the function of delivering additional information, they can play an important role in the semantic structure of the text when it does not contain information about the semantic component formed by a hyperlink, and the reader may have difficulties understanding the events and facts described in the article without activating the hypertext link. Journalists often resort to using a hyperlink navigation in a limited virtual space, not including individual content elements, but referring the audience to them. In this case, the functioning of hyperlinks correlates with the constructive function of intertextual inclusion in a newspaper text, when it "plays an exclusive, text-generating role in transmitting the main idea of the work" (Ryabukha & Troshina, 2018, p. 138). So, in example (1), the hypertext link performs a constructive function, since the source text does not contain information about the fragment of the described event highlighted as a hyperlink, it is reported in the link text.

The participation of the intratextual hyperlink navigation in the implementation of another key function of the informational text - persuasion, is carried out when the hypertext link performs an expressive function, which also brings it closer to the expressive newspaper intexts (Ryabukha & Troshina, 2018). So, in example (3), the link text strengthens the interpretative and evaluative tone of the hyperlink, provides "evidence" of the author's position, makes it more convincing. In addition, hyperlinks make it possible to present the information and the position of the author as objectively and responsibly as possible, pointing to the source of information, which can be presented as an author's journalistic material, as well as a document, an organization's website, an official statement of an official, etc. In this case, hypertext links are evidential and epistemic markers involved in the implementation of the author's strategy of avoiding epistemic responsibility. One of the features of implementation of epistemic responsibility reduction with the help of hyperlinks is the preservation of the original form of the information source statement. If the object of the link is video, audio, photo material or infographics, the activation of the hypertext link leads to the multimedialization of the source text, and the hyperlink thus

performs the function of multimedia. The use of various formats for presenting information, giving the reader the freedom to choose these formats also contributes to the effective implementation of the persuasion function.

7. Conclusion

As a result of the conducted research, the heterogeneity of semantic relations between intertextual hyperlinks in newspaper texts of informational type and texts acting as objects of hypertext links was revealed. According to the degree of semantic correlation of the content of hypertext links and link texts, equivalent and partitive hypertext link types are distinguished. Partitive hyperlinks contribute to the expansion/narrowing of the semantic perspective of the source text.

Hyperlinks play an important role in terms of implementing the main functions of the text type under consideration – informing (the function of delivering additional information, the constructive function of hyperlinks) and persuasion (the expressive function, the functions of reducing epistemic responsibility and multimedialization). At the same time, the peculiarity of hyperlinks is their polyfunctionality: the main functions of delivering additional information and reducing epistemic responsibility can be combined with other highlighted functions. The constructive and expressive functions of hyperlinks correlate with the corresponding functions of newspaper intexts. However, unlike the latter, the mentioned hyperlink functions are subordinate in relation to their main functional load.

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