

Categorization of key semantic components in conflictogenic polycode texts

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to the calculation of significant semantic components contained in conflictogenic polycode texts (demotivators) dedicated to movements and subcultures of a destructive nature. The identified frequently updated concepts, the semantic component of which is reflected in the selected research material, are divided into the appropriate categories (Natural object, Locus, Mechanism, Process, Ideal phenomenon, Characteristic, Substance, Construction, Agent, Situation, Material, Instrument), which allows determining the degree representativeness of each category. In the course of the analysis, the categories of semantic components characteristic of conflictogenic demotivators dedicated to movements and subcultures of a destructive nature are identified, a number of frequency language units representing semantic components) are indicated. The number of such categories, correlated with frequently updated concepts, the semantic component of which is observed in the analyzed polycode texts verbally and non-verbally, includes: the Agent category (representatives of groups, organizations, their leaders, persons in need of protection, persons who need to be destroyed), Characteristics (signs correlated with subjects, objects, actions presented in demotivators), Ideal phenomenon (images, symbols, signs, nominations of regimes and ideologies, slogans, abstract phenomena) and Process (represented actions), and Object and Locus categories (objects and places of commission actions). The concepts of the Situation (conditions for performing actions) and Substance (natural substances) categories are reflected in the analyzed material, but are present in small quantities. The Mechanism, Construction, Material and Instrument categories are recognized as non-representative. The volume of the semantic components of each category within the total sample size, as well as the percentage of frequency semantic components of the content within each category is calculated in the paper.

Keywords: polycode text, demotivator, semantic component, conflictogenity, verbal part, iconic part

1 Introduction

Extremist activity, the forms of which are racism, nationalism, chauvinism, fascism, separatism, and ethnophobia, all types of discrimination and intolerance towards a person, depending on his racial, national, religious, linguistic or social affiliation, are primarily aimed at violating the state integrity, undermining the country security, seizing and appropriating power, creating illegal armed groups, and carrying out terrorist activities.

The impact degree and the coverage speed of an audience susceptible to agitation to commit extremist actions increase as materials of the corresponding content become available and depend on the form in which these materials are provided to recipients. The Internet as a communicative environment with globality, public accessibility, anonymity, in this case, is “favorable” for the mass distribution of such content. Information in the network can be transmitted in the form of a verbal message, an iconic message, a complex formation, represented simultaneously by linguistic and

non-linguistic means. In this regard, semiotically complicated polycode texts are becoming an integral part of virtual communication in the Internet environment [1–4]. A text consisting of “several heterogeneous units, which are functionally and semantically related, and initially represent one structurally indivisible whole (one component), the perception and interpretation of which depend on all constituent elements equally”, is called a “creolized text” [5]. Creolized or polycode [6] text appears to be a complex formation, which is usually understood as a complicated text formation, in which verbal and non-verbal elements form one visual, structural, semantic and functional whole, aimed at a comprehensive impact on the addressee [7], and are often of ironical nature [8, 9].

2 Problem Statement

The works of domestic and foreign scientists are devoted to determining the genre characteristics of a polycode text (demotivator) in the Internet discourse, the functions of a demotivator, and the stylistic features of its verbal

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components (in particular, p [9–13]. One of the priority functions of a polycode text in the virtual world (along with the communicative, cognitive, emotional-expressive, metalinguistic, ideological, aesthetic, axiological, reality-forming functions) is the voluntarily function, which consists in the application of a demotivator as a “means of agitation and propaganda” [10]. The possibility of implementing this function is largely conditioned by the complicated two-part structure of the polycode text. The indivisible information potential of the complex formation, created by its linguistic and non-linguistic means, designates the overall pragmatic effect of the entire structure [9, 13, 14]. Meanwhile, the non-verbal component (iconic part) can be a carrier of information that repeats or coordinates with the verbal component, provide additional information to the verbal component, or have no direct connection with the verbal component [1]. The combination of verbal and non-verbal influences present in each of the listed cases and, as a result, the high efficiency of polycode texts determine the popularity of applying demotivators in communication, in particular, in the virtual world. The process of double information decoding embedded in the polycode text (extraction of the image concept – “overlay” of the verbal text on the concept – interaction of two concepts – creation of a single common concept of the polycode text [1, 15] requires of the recipient a thorough procedure for interpreting and reconstructing the meaning set forth in verbal and iconic parts. Speaking about the requirements necessary for communication participants to create/perceive paralinguistically active texts, a special group of which are polycode texts, E. E. Anisimova lists the following: synthetic perception of the text, the ability to encode/decode information transmitted by verbal and non-verbal signs, the presence of aesthetic taste [1]. Only having a similar communicative, social, and cultural experience, the addressee is able to perceive the meaning laid down by the author. Accordingly, in order to provide the desired pragmatic effect on a significant amount of the audience, different in age, professional training, gender, and education, the polycode text is to contain verbal and visual components decipherable by the majority of recipients.

3 Research Questions

The study material comprises more than 1350 Russian-language static polycode texts (demotivators) dedicated to movements and subcultures of a destructive nature and selected by continuous sampling from the social network VKontakte, as well as from those freely available on the Yandex.Pictures service and other entertainment sites and Internet portals. In the course of the study, the following objectives are solved: to determine the frequently updated concepts, the semantic component of which is reflected in the selected polycode texts verbally and non-verbally; distribute the designated concepts into the appropriate categories [16–21], which are Natural object, Locus, Mechanism, Process, Ideal phenomenon, Characteristic, Substance, Construction,

Agent, Situation, Material, and Instrument [22]; based on the volume of frequency semantic components presented in each of the listed categories, identify the representativeness degree of the categories and draw a conclusion about the categories of semantic components characteristic of extremist demotivators.

4 Purpose of the Study

Demonstration of racial, national, religious, linguistic or social discrimination, agitation to commit illegal acts are reflected in numerous polycode texts distributed on the Internet. Semantic components, which are concepts often represented in these texts, are characterized by various categorical affiliation.

The paper is devoted to the calculation of significant semantic components contained in static creolized (polycode) texts (demotivators) of a conflictogenic nature, which, in essence, are agitation for the implementation of extremist activities, as well as the distribution of frequently updated concepts into relevant categories and determination of the representativeness degree of each category.

5 Research Methods

The above mentioned objectives are solved with the application of the content analysis and semiotic analysis, which allow decomposing polycode texts into constituent components and isolating essential semantic components, using the method of systematizing frequently updated concepts in terms of their categorical affiliation and the statistical analysis method of the obtained data.

6 Findings

The conducted analysis has revealed four categories of concepts: Mechanism (lexical units that name “objects of an artificial nature complicated in structure, obtained as a result of human activity” and representing complex devices, apparatuses, and biological structures [22], Construction (“covers the concepts of artificially created structures, places in space” [22], Material (“combines the concepts of consumables, as well as substances obtained artificially and used in the course of human production activities” [22], Instrument (“units that verbalize the concepts of referents created by a person and being a means to achieve a specific goal with his direct participation”, that is, discovered as a result of human cognitive activity in a particular area [22], presented in the analyzed material – demotivators dedicated to movements and subcultures of a destructive nature with the minimum volume of concepts (as a rule, “House”, “Temple”, “Weapon”) – 0.4 % of the total sample, which implies the unrepresentativeness of these categories. The exponentiality of the remaining categories is confirmed by the volume of frequently updated semantic components, which makes it possible to build the obtained data according to the degree of representativeness.

Within the framework of the material under study, the largest volume of semantic components belongs to the **Agent** category – “agent concepts about subjects involved in the implementation of tasks in a particular area” [22] (**28.7 %** of the total sample). Note that the semantic components (both verbal and non-verbal) belonging to the Agent category are differentiated owing to the extremism aspect, which is expressed by the demotivator. Particularly, for polycode texts expressing approval of national socialist, fascist, and other totalitarian regimes, the most frequent semantic components of the content are the “leader” (ideologies/movements) (represented by language units: Hitler, Adolf Hitler, Adolf – 16.4 % of the total volume of the Agent category; Stalin, Joseph Stalin, J.V. Stalin – 1.6 % of the total volume of the Agent category; Benito Mussolini, Mussolini – 0.9 % of the total volume of the Agent category); “an ideology follower”/“a group representative” (Fig. 1) (submitted by language units: Fascist, Nazi, Racist – 16.2 % of the total volume of the Agent category; Klansman – 8 % of the total volume of the Agent category).

Demotivators aimed at demonstrating the superiority of persons of a certain nationality, race, religion, social attribution in relation to others, contain the frequent semantic component “enemy” (represented by language units indicating the names of discredited nationalities/races/religions: Negro, Niger, Black (Fig. 3) – 4 % of the total volume of the Agent category; Caucasian, Churban, Khach, Churka – 16.4 % of the total volume of the Agent category; Jew, Yid – 9.3 % of the total Agent category), frequency semantic component “object of protection” (represented by language units: Slavyanka, Slavs – 6.1 % of the total volume of the Agent category; Child, Children – 7.2 % of the total volume of the Agent category; People, Crowd – 4 % of the total volume of the Agent category), frequency semantic component “defender” (represented by language units: Bogatyr, Viking, Soldier, Army, Hero, Warrior – 9.9 % of the total volume of the Agent category). The “defender” semantic component in the sample under consideration, as a rule, is reflected in the non-verbal part of the demotivator.

The second most representative category is the **Characteristics** category (covers “notions about the properties and features of referents” [22], about their essential and conceivable qualities, specific distinguishing features and criteria), reflecting the signs correlated with the subjects, objects, and actions presented in demotivators (18.4 % of the total sample). It should be noted that the characteristics observed in the study sample, as well as the agents, are differentiated due to the extremism aspect, which is expressed by the demotivator, but in the general count of the iconic part they demonstrate the external appearance, racial trait, internal state of a person, and in the verbal part they are represented by adjectives: Whitey, Slavic, Light, Aryan – 27.2 % of the total volume of the Characteristics category; Happy, Cheerful, Smiling, Laughing – 11.9 % of the total volume of the Characteristics category; Strong, Fearless, Brave, Invincible, Almighty – 18.5 % of the total volume of the Characteristics category; Dead,

Roasted, Destroyed, Killed, Hanged – 14.8 % of the total volume of the Characteristics category; nouns: Loyalty – 14.2 %; Honor – 13.4 % of the total volume of the Characteristics category.

The **Ideal phenomenon** category (“abstract entities that are the result of human mental activity” [22], that is, intangible conceivable images derived on the basis of inference) is slightly inferior to the Characteristics category and, in terms of the represented concepts’ volume, is **18 %** of the total volume samples. The Ideal phenomenon category includes non-verbal components demonstrating images, symbols, and signs (Fig. 5) (14/88, “Kolovrat” sign, “Swastika” sign, “Celtic cross” sign, “Black Sun” sign, “Rune Odal”, Black-yellow-white flag, “Rune Algiz” sign, “Adam’s head” sign), as well as language units that are nominations of regimes, ideologies (Nazism, Neo-nationalism, Fascism), being slogans (White pride worldwide, Our honor – loyalty, Good night antifa scum, For Rus’), and abstract phenomena (Patriotism, Memory, Consciousness, Freedom, Death).

Besides, the category **Process** is significant in terms of the number of updated semantic components (it includes lexemes that verbalize a specific activity carried out both by the referent and in relation to him [22], and accounts for 17 % of the concepts from the total sample. Processes, represented in extremist polycode texts, depict a violent action in progress or call for it and contain the frequency semantic component “beat”, represented by language units: Destroy, Rape, Poison, Kill, Hang – 19.7 % of the total volume of the Process category.

The given actions are either represented non-verbally or voiced by supporters or leaders of the respective groups, organizations, which explains the frequency of the “speak” semantic component – 17.2 % of the total volume of the Process category. Frequently represented actions include “be” (Become, Stay, Settle) – 16 % of the total volume of the Process category, “disappear” – 12 % of the total volume of the Process category, “fight” (Struggle, Combat) – 11.4 % of the total volume of the Process category, “live” – 9.7 % of the total volume of the Process category, “laugh” (Smile, Chortle) – 8.3 % of the total volume of the Process category, “greet” – 5.7 % of the total volume of the Process category.

The **Object** category is significantly inferior in terms of the volume of represented concepts and contains “units of specialized vocabulary, the referents of which are material entities that a person perceives through the senses as a result of observing and studying the existing reality” [14], that is, physical bodies, being in nature and not being a product of human activity – (**7.8 %** of concepts of the total sample). The **Locus** category – “unites the concepts of significant elements of space that have a number of differential features, characterized by the length and volume where something is located” [22], that is, a part of space, a section that determines the position of physical bodies (**6.4 %** of concepts from the total sample). These categories are represented in most cases by semantic components that are actualized in the iconic part and are symbolic for demotivators of the extremism various aspects. The frequency concepts for

the Object category are: “beast”, “piece of clothing” (Slavic shirt, Helmet, Boots, Army boots), “tree” (Birch, Spruce). The category Locus is represented by the semantic components “Motherland”, “space”, represented by language units: Glade, Field, Forest, Rus', Mother Russia, Russia. As a component of the iconic part, the considered semantic components are represented, as a rule, by the image of a coniferous forest, a birch thicket, a field with eared wheat, and a glade with flowers.

The **Situation** category, which includes concepts that indicate the nature, features of the referents' interaction in specific conditions [22] and accounts for **2.2 %** of frequently updated concepts of the total sample, is represented by the concepts of “Holocaust”, “dawn”, “youth”, and “shooting”, verbalized by means of the corresponding lexemes.

The **Substance** category is the smallest of the eight representative categories of concepts in this sample and “combines the concepts of natural substances with certain properties that make up physical objects” [22], constituting only **1.1 %** of the total sample. The most frequent concepts presented in this category are “blood”, “fire” and “gas.” The lexeme “blood” is encountered, as a rule, in the phrases “pure blood”; and it served as a symbol of violence in the iconic part. The concepts of “gas” and “fire”, presented iconically, reinforce the extremist component of the text and demonstrate methods of reprisal against opponents.

7 Conclusion

The conducted analysis has revealed a number of components that are representative of polycode texts devoted to movements and subcultures of destructive nature. The enumerated components, presented in the texts both verbally and iconically, are grouped into categories. The most representative of the concepts' categories is the Agent category, which reflects both representatives of groups, organizations, their leaders, and persons in need of protection, and persons who need to be destroyed. Approximately the same volume of frequently updated concepts is contained in the categories of Characteristics, Ideal Phenomenon and Process reflecting actions, signs and abstract phenomena, images and conclusions characteristic of various extremist movements. The Object and Locus categories are also representative. Situation and Substance are accounted for the smallest volume among the representative categories. The categories Mechanism, Construction, Material, and Instrument are less than 1 % of the total sample; they are recognized as unrepresentative.

Acknowledgments

The research was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (project No. 22-18-20091 “Conflict-generating polycode texts as a tool of destructive impact on society on social networks: cognitive research and modeling within the network approach”).

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