

DISCOURSE ANALYTIC APPROACH TO VERBAL AGGRESSION IN SOCIAL MEDIA TEXTS

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Abstract:

The article discusses the issues related to detection of verbal aggressiveness in social media texts. The problem of verbal aggression is approached in the scope of establishing social network communities, as it is assumed that such groups are based on the value priorities, which act as converging point for a community. The possibility of using Opinion Mining method for evaluating the subjective content of the text is also analyzed. The author describes various forms of verbal aggression using the example of texts of several network communities. It is shown that verbal aggression in the texts of the social networks communities is diverse which may be explained by the variety of communities' values and various types of speakers' verbal behavior.

Keywords: verbal aggression, discourse analysis, social networks, values, text sentiment

Introduction

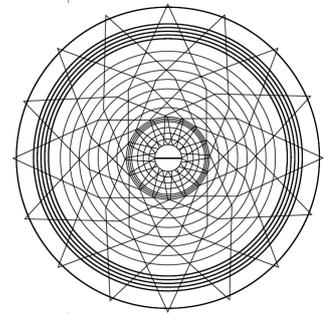
Due to the development of modern communication and social networks in particular, new forms of communication are developing, as well as the modern means of sociological, psychological and psycholinguistics research are gaining popularity. Multifaceted approach and comprehensive discourse analysis of social networks is becoming a basic tool for describing the structure and dynamics of various social phenomena, such as for instance its constituent groups, social communities or processes of socialization.

The development of science and technology in particular takes the analysis of the processes that occur in virtual space and have a great impact on the life of social networks communities to entirely new level. Forms of existence of the virtual communities reflect the characteristics of the Internet communication that are actively

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analyzed starting from the moment of the network functioning as an essential part of life of a large number of people (McCroskey, 2017).

Among the numerous contributions to the process of interaction with social reality that takes place in the social network, we highlight the specific conditions of the subject's entry into the virtual community as the subject of this study.

Like any other social group, and which it undoubtedly is by nature, a network community is united by the shared goals and collective values above the goals (Dahlin et al., 2016). Just like in typical offline groups, values determine the content and criteria for the success of a virtual group's joint activities, as well as the ones that as well as the rules governing it, hierarchy and forms of control, and ultimately close the boundaries that divide the world and create a collective identity.

Values are the higher mode of motivational and meaning-forming structures of an individual, which are experienced by the subjects as ideals – the final reference points of the desired state of their lives (Meloy et al., 2018). At the same time, such ideals for the subject do not seem to be the embodiment of it individual desire, and having the status of objective desirability, as desirability for all members of the community in general.

The structure stability of the personal values is determined by the fact that the person's relations with the world reflected in them are processed and generalized in accordance with the overall experience of the social group (Karlgrén, 2016).

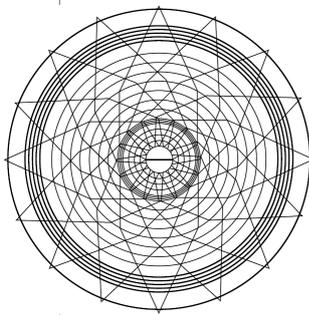
Therefore, personal values, both in their origin and in their content, connect a person directly with social reality. The forms of interaction available to a person with various types of social interactions make possible the very existence of personal values due to the support of like-minded people, and their actualization, which implies the achievement of the common good, as it is understood or perceived by the communicants.

This essential common sense explains the high motivating potential of personal values that require people to be active in finding and organizing a supportive social environment (Abbasi et al., 2018). Thanks to the peculiarities of social network communication, a person gets the opportunity, while maintaining personal security, to declare their values as openly as possible and select partners for interaction of their free will.

The virtual environment consequently becomes a space for value self-realization of a modern person, which occurs, in particular, in the form of joining existing network communities with corresponding value priorities or, if such communities are not found, establishing new ones.

Social Network Discourse

The main and the most essential sort of joint activities for a social network is communication. Due to that fact, the leading role in the processes of group foundation is played by the characteristic features of the community's discourse. The presence of a special and unique discourse is considered as one of the constitutive features of a virtual social group.



According to Normand (2011) and Rancer (2016), the most successful communities are established on a basis of a common topic or issue that all members of the group are interested in. While expanding, the community develops its own discourse, rules of communication, various memes, and myths. Matheson (2018) believes that it may also create its own conceptual feature and group vocabulary in particular, as well as develop its own significant words that function as linguistic markers and help members of the community to most likely identify each other. The presence of such linguistic features can lead to the fact that the communication of members of the virtual community becomes incomprehensible to external observers.

In order to be accepted into a group with already established rules and language of communication, its new members must follow the group-wide logic and build their verbal behavior according to the discourse of the community. Switching off from the general discourse automatically leads to the transfer of this group member to the periphery (Michael, 2018).

The level of aggression in the social network texts is, in our opinion, one of the essential features that characterize the discourse of communities. For this reason, we highlight verbal aggression as an indicator of a violent and threatening networking community as a subject for further consideration.

Generally speaking, verbal aggression is a functionally ambiguous phenomenon. According to (Brynielsson & Horndahl, 2012) on both the group and individual level, it can perform the opposite functions in its consequences – destructive and creative. In the first case, we are talking about such a general property of aggressiveness as a violation of borders committed by the subject of aggression, an unauthorized invasion of the territory belonging to the object of aggression.

At the same time, borders can be completely real: physical, territorial, or metaphorically speaking, for example, personal borders (Ravndal, 2013). The creative function consists in the fact that under certain conditions and at certain stages of development, aggression is a factor of internal integration, defining and defending borders, and thus contributes to the preservation of individuality and identity – both at the social and individual level.

Verbal Aggression Features and Functions

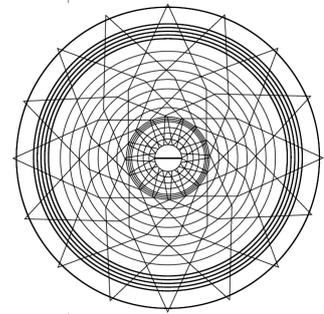
Current research on verbal aggression (Van Hee et al., 2018) indicates that communicative functions performed by it are also ambiguous. On the one hand, it is indicated that speech aggression (accusation, rude demand, rude refusal, threat, malice, abuse, slander, ridicule, barb, reproach) distorts the communicative space, interferes with full communication, absorbing both the communicative resources of the aggressor and the emotional forces of the victim of aggression, causing the latter to fear and respond to hostility.

On the other hand, the so-called non-threatening speech is distinguished aggression as such attribute of informal friendly communication, especially male, which serves for participants as a sign of "normality of relations". Invective, messages with the mention of body parts, malevolence, threats, etc., formally corresponding to

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the signs of verbal aggression, in the context of friendly communication are not really it (Davison et al., 2015). These same means of verbal aggression directed outside the group, in relation to people who do not belong to it, are designed to protect the boundaries of the social group at the communicative level.

Returning to the problem of value self-determination of the subject in the virtual space, we can suggest that a certain level of expression of verbal aggressiveness of texts can become a factor determining the choice – to join a certain network community or not. At the same time, the perceived level the aggressiveness of texts does not necessarily directly correspond to the content of the goals and values that serve as a unifying beginning for this group.

In some cases, it may be that the values that are being preached in themselves they are associated with violence, destruction, and opposition to someone or something. However, there may also be a situation when a high level of verbal aggression reflects the existing communicative norms in the community that do not coincide with the conventional ones, or a stage of its formation when the task of closing its own borders and actively contrasting the emerging community with external others is relevant.

To determine the level of verbal aggression, it is necessary, first of all, to identify the means of its expression. Tausczik & Pennebaker (2016) stated that there are two main groups of language tools used in aggressive verbal behavior – lexical and discursive.

1. The first group is represented by combined lexical means of language expressing a negative assessment. These tools are usually used to express open verbal aggression. At the same time, lexical means of language can express a negative assessment by themselves or under the influence of a metaphorical context:

1.1. Direct, the simplest and the most common tool of verbal aggression is evaluative vocabulary, including invective (expletive), obscene and colloquial vocabulary.

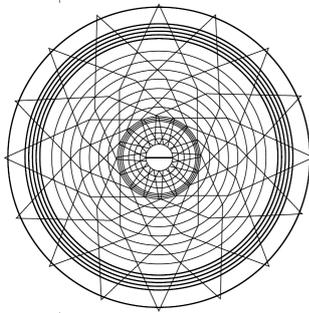
1.2. Extremely expressive and therefore stylistically aggressive mean of expressing a negative assessment is slang vocabulary.

1.3. Occasional words such as neologisms (word of modern coinage) the evaluation of which can be associated with both the motivating (producing) base (for example, proper names, words with a negative denotation, etc.), and with word-forming means.

1.4. Aggressive comparisons and metaphors.

1.5. Unmotivated use of foreign language elements for the purpose of aggressive influence on the reader, provoking the emergence of a sense of inferiority due to incomprehensibility of the presentation; on the other hand, borrowing creates an intellectual intervention in the sphere of national speech, there is a gross invasion of the Russian ethno-cultural picture of the world of a different mentality.

2. The second group is formed by discursive means of verbal aggression, which are formed directly in the text-discourse. Their aggressive potential is not so much in the words themselves, but is related to the accepted norms of successful



communication, the participants' knowledge of the world, and the problems of adequate interpretation of words. Discursive means are used primarily for indirect speech aggression. Among these are:

2.1. Language demagoguery (deliberate violation of verbal presuppositions, postulates of successful communication, use of speech implicatures).

2.2. Tendentious use of negative information, first of all, overloading the text with negative information. Pointing out the vices, the author emphasizes their inclusiveness. For this purpose, language generalization tools are widely used (for example, non-exclusive vocabulary: everyone, anyone, nobody, etc.).

2.3. Intertextuality. Aggression is actualized in verbal speech by quoting, referring to verbal precedent phenomena that are associated with certain emotions and assessments for the representatives of society who share knowledge about them: a case situation, a case text, a case name. The main purpose of quoting in an aggressive text is irony, ridicule, and jibe (Muresan et al., 2015). At the same time, the base for cultural and historical intertexts that should not be ridiculed and become ironic citations by moral criteria.

Some lexical and phraseological units that are neutral in their basic meaning can, under certain conditions, become means of verbal aggression. The implementation of the conflict potential of a word, as shown in the research performed by (Baron & Richardson, 2014), depends on such variables as the social status of communicants or the publicity of the communication situation – and in some cases, the mention of a person's name, nationality, etc. in a public text becomes conflict-prone.

Obviously, from the point of view of possible formalization, the listed means of expressing verbal aggression are very unequal: for computational linguistics, lexical analysis is a well – developed direction, and identifying and interpreting, for instance, metaphors or case texts is still the task of tomorrow.

Methods of Text Analysis

The main focus of verbal aggression, as already been mentioned, is the emotional sphere of the victim. In other words, one aspect of its existence is verbal aggression as an emotional phenomenon. In this regard, the analysis of special literature devoted to the currently existing methods of automatic text analysis designed to identify the subjective content, or emotional tonality, of network texts was carried out.

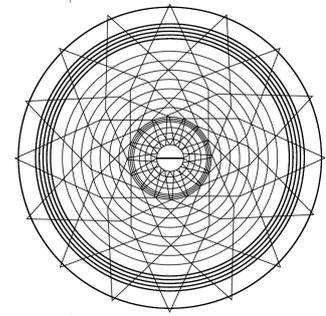
Small & Medsker (2013) provide the main characteristics of an actively developing field of applied research, united by the name of Opinion Mining. General the purpose of these studies is to create computer systems for intelligent automatic extraction of subjective information from texts (such as opinions, value judgments, attitudes, emotions, feelings, beliefs, etc.). The systems created with the Opinion Mining method are used for automatic real-time evaluation of electronic media materials, discussion forums, blogger posts, etc.

One of the main methods of analysis that is widely used in Opinion Mining for practical applications is a Sentiment Analysis (Pennebaker et al., 2017). It is used for automatic analysis of the relationship presented in text messages to any object

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(person, media message, event, organization, etc.) in terms of positive, negative, neutral ratings, favorable and unfavorable opinions, quantitative indices, etc.

Rezaeinia et al. (2018) describe the following characteristics of automatic text sentiment detection. Its purpose is to highlight those parts of the text that express positive or negative emotionality in relation to the object of emotional evaluation. The object of emotional evaluation can be set as one in the whole text (taking into account its synonymous and anaphoric uses), or it can be defined in sentences as any proper or common name.

The text sentiment is determined by three factors: 1) the subject of sentiment (the author of the text or the quotation given by the author); 2) the actual sentiment score (positive/neutral/negative); 3) the object of sentiment (Cohen et al., 2014).

One of the useful methods is the search for emotive vocabulary (lexical sentiment) in the text using pre-compiled tonal dictionaries (lists of patterns) using linguistic analysis. Based on the set of emotive vocabulary found the text can be evaluated on a scale that reflects the amount of negative and positive vocabulary. This method can use both lists of patterns inserted in regular expressions, and rules for connecting tonal vocabulary within a sentence.

This method is time-consuming, since it requires compiling tonal dictionaries (or getting a list of tonal patterns), but in combination with syntactic and morphological analysis, it allows you not only to show the chains of tonal vocabulary, but also to get syntactically correct emotional expressions. With a good filling of tonal vocabulary lists, this method allows you to achieve good completeness (covering emotive vocabulary). The disadvantage of this method is that it is difficult to quantify the negative or positive features of a text.

Means of Expressing Verbal Aggression in Social Media Texts

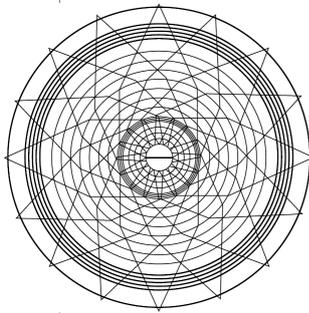
This study is aimed at identifying words of emotions of a certain nature, namely, related to aggression that occurs in relation to various aspects of social reality. Therefore, hereafter we will describe only some of the features of the text analysis that are directly related to the evaluating the level of verbal aggression in social media discourse.

Our research is based on the model of reflection of the author's emotional attitude to various aspects of the surrounding social reality in the formalized indicators of the text.

Based on the results of the study, we have created lists of words that include lexical units (words, and in some cases phrases), whose semantics are related to the following areas: expressiveness as such (without defining the content negative emotional evaluation, negative rational evaluation, positive emotional evaluation, positive rational evaluation, and mental actions. The vocabulary assigned to each of these areas is meaningfully divided into more specific groups:

1. Non-differentiable vocabulary in the sense of the expression.

1.1. Vocabulary of motivation, activity and tension, for example: resolute, strive, courage.



- 1.2. Slang vocabulary, including colloquial words.
- 1.3. Obscene vocabulary.
- 1.4. Non-exclusive and amplifying vocabulary, for example: everything, no one, impossible.
2. Vocabulary of negative emotional assessment.
 - 2.1. Invective vocabulary: general and specific negative assessment of subjects and groups; abnormal speech behavior; expression of social reproof; metaphors with negative connotation.
 - 2.2. Vocabulary of destruction and violence: destructive actions and their results; vocabulary of catastrophes; military slang.
 - 2.3. Vocabulary of suffering: vocabulary of death and illness; vocabulary of negative bodily states; vocabulary of negative emotional states of the asthenic circle, including their nonverbal manifestations, for example: die, sick.
 - 2.4. Vocabulary of negative emotions: angry, disgusted, jealous.
 - 2.5. Vocabulary of social disunity: vocabulary of social isolation and abnormal social status; non-slang vocabulary related to crimes; vocabulary of power; vocabulary of the court; vocabulary of concealment, deception and manipulation; vocabulary of publicity; vocabulary of the games: master, compel, defenseless, rehearse, provocateur.
 - 2.6. Vocabulary of protest behavior: the hunger strike, seditious, etc.
3. Vocabulary of negative rational evaluation: ineffective mental actions and their results; lack of necessary qualities in the subject, loss of positive characteristics, and occurrence of negative characteristics: misunderstanding, backward, spoil, etc.

Thus, we defined the threatening and aggressive vocabulary related to both general categories and specific subcategories in the texts of social media. It allowed us to create a kind of profile of the subjective attitude to the topics discussed in the social networks and, to describe this attitude in terms corresponding to the selected categories of verbal aggression.

Grouping in the social network, as already been mentioned, as well as any grouping, is based on the acceptance of group goals by group members and shared values. Groups that focus on different values adopt different conversation tactics: discussions of conservationists are verbose, while those of human rights defenders have a large number of comments; comments are most concise in a community that supports the value of hedonism.

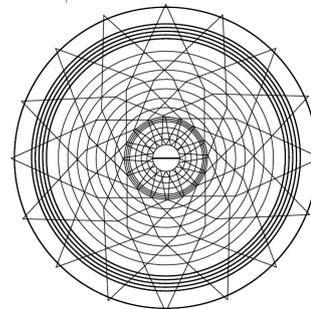
Human rights defenders often use the vocabulary of social disunity. Moreover, it is in the texts of this group that this indicator reaches its maximum: conservationists and nationalists also often use this vocabulary, but still not as often as members of the community of a legislative assembly member.

Actual communication is represented by genres that directly or indirectly worsen relations and suppress the interlocutor: remarks, reproaches, irony, ridicule, barbs, insults, clarification of attitudes, taunts, which are based on invective vocabulary (slang, colloquial expressions), which performs several communicative tasks in the following speech fragments: insult, humiliation, defaming the partner; demonstrating

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language freedom; discharge of emotional tension. For all threat genres, the main topic becomes the interlocutor himself, expressing disagreement with the majority, and journalistic materials play a secondary role in the discussion, while the speakers of an alternative point of view are the first to set an aggressive tone.

At the linguistic level, aggression is expressed by the use of the following means as verbal markers of aggression: colloquial expressions, offensive nominations, familiar addresses, evaluative particles used to express mockery.

Social networks that dictate the fashion for the so-called language of hostility to users and form their language taste destroy the language as a national asset, and therefore deform the national consciousness, so it is necessary to understand this problem by the state, public organizations, and the scientific community.

Thus, the social media discourse, like other genre forms, is characterized by the presence of specific language tools that implement the intentions and goals of communicants. The most frequent verbal means of implementing the threat speech genre are verbs. This speech genre as a conflict is characterized by the use of expressive and evaluative vocabulary, mainly with a negative connotation.

Discussion and conclusion

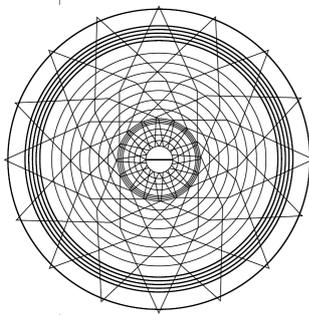
Modern psychology, sociology, and cultural studies are characterized by an appeal to the reality of network communication. At the same time, one of the most urgent tasks is to study and monitor the level of aggression and social tension in society, carried out by methods of automatic analysis of network content, in which aggression and tension find their expression.

The research shows, first of all, that the allocation of the so-called social media is justified, since social media texts significantly differ from other media texts, political media for example. There are various linguistic markers such as richness of vocabulary of social disunity and vocabulary of protest behavior, as well as significantly large presence of the vocabulary of destruction, aggression and violence.

Interestingly, the differences within one particular the social networks group at the level of aggression vocabulary were not so significant. Apparently, the differences between different groups manifest themselves at a deeper at the semantic and syntactic level of text construction and should be studied by methods of discourse analysis.

We are primarily interested in the problem of the expression of verbal aggression as related to the formation of network communities and by recruiting new members. We assume that value priorities act as the basis for group formation and joining the community, and the expression of a hostile position among members of network discussions allows a person to navigate the values that unite members of the community on a sensory level, without a deep analysis of the content of texts, and thus choose a group of belonging for themselves.

In this regard, we are particularly interested in the methods of analyzing the social networks discourse. The possibilities of using analysis tools and methods for evaluating the subjective content of the text were described.



The conducted empirical research has shown the possibility of applying the developed methods of discourse analysis to find the patterns of means of using verbal aggression by people with different types of value priorities.

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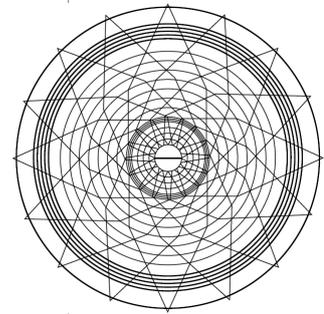
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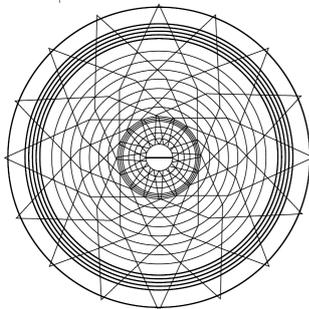
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ДИСКУРСИВНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ПРОЯВЛЕНИЙ ВЕРБАЛЬНОЙ АГРЕССИИ В ТЕКСТАХ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ

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Аннотация:

В настоящей статье исследуются вопросы, связанные с выявлением случаев вербальной агрессивности в текстах социальных сетей. Проблема проявления вербальной агрессии рассматривается в рамках анализа особенностей создания сообществ в социальных сетях, поскольку предполагается, что такие группы базируются на ценностных приоритетах, скрепляющих эти сообщества. Кроме того, анализируется возможность использования метода дискурсивного анализа для оценки содержания текста, а также на примере текстов нескольких сетевых сообществ дифференцируются и описываются различные типы лексических средств, используемых с целью экспликации вербальной агрессии. Автор приходит к выводу, что вербальная агрессия в текстах социальных сетей представлена разнообразными средствами языка, что может быть связано с различием ценностей сообществ и типов вербального поведения носителей языка.

Ключевые слова: вербальная агрессия, дискурсивный анализ, социальная сеть, ценности, тональность текста.