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The Verbal-semantic Level of the Foreign Student Language Identity (Based on Internet Discourse)

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Abstract

This paper introduces characteristic features of the language identity of a foreign high school student as exemplified in the Internet discourse of National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University. The verbal-semantic language level has been investigated. The material for the study is based on foreign students' "live communication" texts from social networks. The analysis of lexical, grammatical, and syntactic levels of the Russian language in the student Internet discourse has shown the particularities of the lexical-semantic content of the collective high school bilingual student language identity and features of the student sociolect.

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Keywords: Student lingual identity; borrowing; online communication; student discourse; slang; bilingual.

1. Introduction

Active Internet informatization of modern society is the most important factor causing society's development, affecting communication on different levels and leading to the development of the information environment which is aimed at making information instantly available to users in a convenient time and in any place. In the English-

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language different scientific paradigm terms are used for defining this new electronic language: *e-language, netlingo, e-talk, geekspeak, netspeak, weblish,* and so on (Thurlow, 2001; Crystal, 2001; Herring, 2004, 2007), and the communicative space of its functioning is called *computer-mediated communication*. This term is polisemantic and means the functional kind of the language and the particular communication medium. In the post-Soviet space such scientific terms as *the language of the Internet*, *electronic communication*, *virtual / Internet communication* as well as *a computer* or *electronic discourse* are often used.

The society of foreign students (the collective bilingual student linguistic identity) as the investigated discourse subject is seen as a particular social group which belongs to a larger group and is characterized by these features: the student society is focused on getting higher education, this group is monitored by the university administration, every student group has its leader – an elder of a group and a faculty. The main connecting factors in this group are getting education, a sense of friendship, love, mutual interests. This is confirmed by the results of the material analysis; students are members of their student training group, a faculty, the university as a whole, the city's student community and so on, they have their own company of close friends, they also may belong to some interest groups. For example, high school groups on the site «VKontakte» offer more than 30 issues to consider. Thus, there are, for example, fans of various films being discussed on fan sites («The Vampire Diaries», «Supernatural» and others) (Savilova & Shchitova, 2014).

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

The relevance of this study is that the foreign student language identity in online discourse has not been investigated enough in linguistics. Therefore, there is a need to describe the verbal-semantic level of the collective bilingual student language identity in Internet discourse. The student sociolect vocabulary is limited to young people's interests: university studies, fashionable clothes, music, socializing with friends and peers from other countries, leisure time, and so on. Students borrow words from jargon very actively (for example, computer and criminal), give their own names to things, people, and phenomena instead of using common words. A large number of lexical units are borrowed from the English language. New borrowing from other languages is extremely scarce.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the first (structural-semantic) level of the foreign student language identity in online discourse represented with slang and the latest borrowings.

The study material includes student blogs and forums, chats from the social network «Vkontakte TPU» (the student online community of the National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU)) (Podslushano v TPU) and articles of the youth student newspaper «Univer CITY» (Univer City).

The methodological basis of the study is principles of system and functional approaches to lexical material. The main method of the research is the scientific description method which includes general scientific methods of direct observation, systematization, classification, and interpretation. The linguistic methods of system analysis of foreign language vocabulary in students' speech are necessary when describing various language means in the investigated social community's lexicon. The comparative method is relevant when identifying characteristics of foreign-language nomination assimilation in the recipient's language.

3. Discussion of the research results

3.1. The collective language identity of a high school bilingual student as an Internet discourse subject

In the TPU online community «Vkontakte TPU» it is possible to place your favorite text on the «wall». «The wall» is a user's page in the social network «VKontakte». Users with permission to read posts (usually from the list of «friends» or members of the group), in turn, have an opportunity to comment on them. This form of communication has a lot to do with communication in the blogging genre. Thus, at present a special portion of communication with distinctive linguistic and extra-linguistic features that define its uniqueness has been formed and is continuing to form in the Internet space. It is obvious that the text of the student Internet discourse has its own niche in the Internet language field, so it is advisable to conduct a systematic analysis of the student online discourse, determine some balance between oral and written components, and outline prospects for further development.

First of all, considering the collective language identity of a high school bilingual student in the Internet communicative space, it is possible to conduct research according to selected levels of the language identity structure, each of which is characterized by its own features, as the impact of new information technologies on the form and content of messages, as well as the awareness and behavior of a person in the Internet communication language is manifested in different ways.

Let us review the verbal-semantic level of language identity – the subject of the Internet discourse.

3.2. The verbal-semantic or structural-systemic level

The verbal-semantic or structural-systemic level of the language identity is a basic level (in the terminology of Y.N. Karaulov – a *zero* one). It involves normal command of the language and vocabulary of the language identity which it uses in the communication process. It also takes into account the ability to use verbal means in all the diversity of paradigmatic, grammatical, syntactic, semantic and associative connections. «Words, a verbal and grammatical network, stereotypical combinations (patterns) are taken by each language identity as a given, and any identity's individual creative potential, manifested in creating new words, association originality and non-standard phrases, is not able to change this genetically and static caused by a given» (Karaulov, 2004). Due to the fact that the Internet operates with a new «oral and written» kind of speech which has its own specific features and the form of its existence is graphic fixation of texts produced by communicants, Internet communication researchers have diverse material for the study of the language identity on the verbal-semantic level in Internet communication. Currently, many studies are investigating different aspects of the Internet and computer language (Darics, 2013; Kalman & Gergle, 2014; Montero-Fleta, Montesinos-Loópez, Peérez-Sabater et al., 2009; Sánchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015; Savas, 2011; Vandergriff, 2014, and others).

The first thing that is impossible not to notice while communicating on the Internet, and what is certainly reflected in linguistic studies, is prominent disdain for spelling rules in the process of network participants' communication. First of all, many internet users letter a word's sound structure: this means the word's spelling goes by phonetic principle. The correctness of separate, fused, and hyphenated word spelling is also not given due consideration in discourse. Capital letters in proper nouns or in words, at the beginning of a sentence, can be replaced by lowercase ones. A student's online discourse text is full of foreign words, mostly Anglicisms. The result of these processes is such phrases as: *«Situation menyaetsya»* ('The situation is changng'), *«Ryebyat, go zavtra katatsya na katok?»* ('Guys, let's go skating on the rink tomorrow?'), and others.

In addition, the graphic form of some words is specifically approximated by communicating partners to the sound form, and looks more like a transcription of words, for example, *«go»*, «*Tochno, rekvest!»* ('Yeah, rekvest!') (from the English word 'request' – a claim, a demand), or contraction of a word with the omission of letters signifying vowels: «pls» (please) and others. Each of the words and expressions used is an errative (from Latin «errāre» – 'be mistaken'). This means a word or an expression that has been subjected to a deliberate distortion by native speakers possessing literary language.

In this paper we consider only erratives of a foreign origin. All language erratives are divided into primary and secondary. Primary erratives are those which distort the written rules by reproducing the oral word form (usually distorting the written norm): Rus. *«как слышыццо так и пишыццо» / «kak slyshytso tak i pishitso»* ('You write what you hear'). The written forms of the Russian words are «пишется», «слышится».

Secondary erratives are usually difficult to pronounce and present overcorrection of an alleged primary errative. This linguistic phenomenon is illustrated by the following examples selected from the student social network of Tomsk Polytechnic University «VKontakte TPU»: *«Okay, shchaaas»* ('Okay, right now'). «*Shchaaas»* goes not to the normative «сейчас» / «seichas», but to its alleged errative «shchas». These erratives are the manifestation of the student speech language game.

In terms of syntax, most sentences being created in online networking are characterized by ellipticity and inverted word order, for example: *«Ne srazu ponyala ya»* («Not at once realized I»). Punctuation rules are often ignored, and punctuation marks can be used not for its intended purpose, but as the performance of speech tempo and volume parameters. Using the colon with parenthesis (**:)** or **:(**) denotes a writer's happy or sad smile, such as: *«Vysokaya, byla v zelenykh shortakh) :) ponravilas :)»* ('The high one, she was in green shorts) :) I liked her :)').

The Latin alphabet is also inappropriately used, for example: the capital Latin <u>D</u> and a bracket or alternatively the Latin <u>X</u> mean a smile: «Da i pri obrashchenii s internetom, akkuratney s online igrami *xD*» ('Yes, and when dealing with the Internet, be smart with online games xD')*, «Da uzh! <u>xDDD</u>*» ('Yeah! xDDD').

Constantly used dots may indicate that the communicant «is speaking» slowly, almost falling asleep, or does not want to finish his thought: *«Kak-to stranno poluchaetsya togda ...»* ('How strange it turns out when ...'). The person can also issue non-literary violent vocabulary with the help of ellipsis: *«Vsyo ni kak u lyudey, vsyo cherez NANO <u>...opu</u>!»* ('All is not as by people, all is through the NANO ...-hole!'); and a large number of consecutive commas, in contrast, reflects the rapid pace of speech. A large number of dots can also serve as an indicator of a gloomy mood, depressed state of the communicant; a large number of exclamation marks reflects high spirits, inexhaustible joy and optimism; and using capital letters expresses joy or shouting among Internet communicators: *«Vsem zdravstvuyte! Pomogite s domashnim zadaniem <u>!!!</u>»* ('Hello, everyone! Help me with my homework !!!') etc.

The student community members' desire to accelerate texting when communicating online, bring the print speed close to the oral speech speed, led to the use in the process of networking all sorts of abbreviations and acronyms, such as, <u>*«айпи»*</u> / *«aypi»* (from English: 'IP' – 'internet provider'), *«Ved' dustup k vnutrennemu internetu vydaetsya tolko TPU aypishnikami»* ('Because the access to the internal Internet is granted only granted only by TPU IP guys), <u>*«имхо»*</u> / *«imho»* (from English: 'IMHO' – 'in my humble opinion'), <u>*«P.S.»*</u> (from Latin: 'post scriptum'), for example: *«Rebyata, a chto za konkurs v «Fud-citi» <u>P.S.</u> nikto ne hochet uchastvovat'?»* ('Guys, and what kind of the competition is in the "Food-City" P.S. no one wants to get involved?').

4. Conclusion

The verbal-semantic level of the collective language identity of a high school bilingual student in the online discourse is represented by the student sociolect which is characterized by the presence of different layers of vocabulary used by students in communication. It includes actively employed Anglicisms, abbreviation-borrowings, slangisms, expressive vocabulary; primary and secondary erratives, and language games. In addition to the student online discourse, there is a deliberate disregard for punctuation rules and punctuation marks, and graphic signs serve as a descriptive and expressive language means.

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