Article

Deconstruction of a text in network communication: Hypertext as a new mechanism of social communication

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Abstract. The article presents the analysis of the transformation of texts as mechanisms of social communication, in particular in digital social reality. The transformation of social reality is updated in various spheres of human life – social communication, self-identification, sociocultural codes and rituals. Any text (statement), being a social action, is an institutional construct and correlates with the structure of the social reality of its generation. The sociological perspective of the study of texts is based on the combination of two methodological approaches - solidaristic and critical, which, however, assume the primacy of social structure and the secondary nature of language (text). In the context of the methodology of symbolic interactionism, it is shown that the meaning of any text is determined by the sociocultural context. The theory of speech acts considers all texts as sets of social actions (speech acts), the adequate interpretation of which is determined by their compliance with established social norms and traditions. The modern social reality of the digital community is characterized by uncertainty, instability and many risky situations. Under these conditions, all texts as social constructs also changed their functions. This is especially true for the texts that provide social communication in the virtual reality of the Internet. The shift in the communicative function of the text towards pragmatics led to the changes in text structures and the emergence of a new format – a hypertext. The specificity of hypertext is actualized in its nonlinearity, fragmentation and uncertainty. Network social communication, as an indirect environment remote from the communicants in time and space, operates with hypertexts containing, in addition to the primary text, evaluation comments, links and allusions. This property of hypertexts (intertextuality) provides large-scale social communication between countless numbers of communicators. The social consequences of the functioning of hypertexts are to ensure and maintain social equality between users of the Internet space.

Keywords: text, social structure, speech act, social action, fluid modernity, network communication, hypertext, uncertainty, intertextuality

Научная статья

Деконструкция текста в сетевой коммуникации: гипертекст как новый механизм социальной коммуникации

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Аннотация. В статье представлен анализ трансформации текстов как механизмов социальной коммуникаций, в частности в цифровой социальной реальности. Трансформация социальной реальности актуализируется в разных сферах человеческой жизнедеятельности – социальной коммуникации, самоидентификации, социокультурных кодах и ритуалах. Любой текст (высказывание), будучи социальным действием, является институциональным конструктом и коррелирует со структурой социальной реальности его генерирования. Социологический ракурс исследования текстов имеет основой сочетание двух методологических подходов – солидаристского и критического, предполагающих, тем не менее, первичность социальной структуры и вторичность языка (текста). В контексте методологии символического интеракционизма показано, что смысл любого текста обусловлен социокультурным контекстом. Теория речевых актов рассматривает все тексты как совокупности социальных действий (речевых актов), адекватная интерпретация которых детерминирована их соответствием установленным социальным нормам и традициям. Современная социальная реальность цифрового сообщества характеризуется неопределенностью, нестабильностью и множеством рискогенных ситуаций. В этих условиях все тексты как социальные конструкты также изменили свои функции. Особенно это касается текстов, обеспечивающих социальную коммуникацию в виртуальной реальности Интернета. Смещение коммуникативной функции текста в сторону

прагматики обусловило изменение текстовых структур и появление нового формата – гипертекста. Специфика гипертекста актуализируется в его нелинейности, фрагментации и неопределенности. Сетевая социальная коммуникация как опосредованная, удаленная от коммуникантов во времени и пространстве среда оперирует гипертекстами, содержащими, кроме первичного текста, комментарии оценки, ссылки и аллюзии. Это свойство гипертекстов (интертекстуальность) обеспечивает широкомасштабную социальную коммуникацию между бесчисленным количеством коммуникантов. Социальные последствия функционирования гипертекстов заключаются в обеспечении и поддержании социального равенства между пользователями интернет-пространства.

Ключевые слова: текст, социальная структура, речевой акт, социальное действие, текучая современность, сетевая коммуникация, гипертекст, неопределенность, интертекстуальность

The uncertainty of modern social reality as an the actualizer of post-industrial digital society is characterized by complex transformations of all spheres of human activity. In particular, this applies to social communication, perception of the surrounding reality, "blurring" of the identity of social actors, cultural codification and decodification of information. Each individual (a social actor) is both a subject and an object of social reality.

In this regard, it is legitimate to turn to the text as a reflection of the social structure and the main mechanism of social communication. Indeed, social communication is a process of generating, perceiving and interpreting texts, and any text is an institutional constructor adequate to the social structure. In other words, all texts are socially marked and generated in the process of human interaction.

Sociological analysis of texts is based on the symmetry/asymmetry of two methodological doctrines – solidaristic and critical. The solidaristic tradition assumes the interdependence of social structures and texts as the forms of knowledge [1]. The critical tradition is based on the assertion of the fact that the forms of knowledge are used by the ruling (dominant classes) to preserve their traditions and interests [2]. But, both doctrines are unanimous that the social structure is primary, and knowledge (a language and a text) is secondary as an institutional formation. Then it goes without saying that text structures correlate with the social structure of their generation.

Any society as a linguistic community uses many languages of different social groups – a literary language, vernacular, slang, dialects, oral speech, and so on. A special role is played by the official (state) language as the language of dominant social groups. These are, first of all, social groups with high social status and material capabilities. It is practical knowledge of the state language (reading, writing, speaking) that gives certain social groups the opportunity to receive a prestigious education, professional and career growth, and access to social mobility [3]. Consequently, texts as actualizers of the social actions of their creators are not just oral/written statements, but social objects. It is the social conditioning of texts that is the reason that textual analysis, both linguistic and sociocultural, is impossible without knowledge and understanding of linguistic contexts and sociocultural areas of addressers and recipients [4].

From the point of view of symbolic interactionism, an adequate interpretation of the meaning of any text is possible only with knowledge of the social context of the communicative situation. That is, the social context determines the meaning of the text as intended by the addressee. On the contrary, ignorance of the extralinguistic context turns the text into a meaningless collection of words. For example, such text characteristics as vocabulary, quotes, precedent, and in the case of oral texts, proxemics and kinesics represent a set of markers of social contexts necessary for encoding and decoding text meanings [5].

Confirmation of the validity of the methodology of symbolic interactionism is the theory of speech acts by D. Austin, according to which the meaning of spoken and written speech utterances (texts) is not so much a description and statement of facts as the implementation of a pragmatic (communicative) influence on communication partners. According to D. Austin, all texts are speech acts, representing social actions, and their interpretation is directly determined by their adequacy, corresponding to social reality with its certain conventions, norms, and traditions.

In turn, each speech act as a social action includes such components as: a goal, planned and achieved results, as well as linguistic mechanisms for achieving the goal. Then the social context is a set of rules for the implementation of social ac-

tions and an adequate reaction of communicants in a specific extralinguistic situation [6]. For example, the phrase "Happy Birthday" has no meaning outside of this event."

Textual transformation is the result of complex historical and social cultural events: the intensification of migration, the breakdown of the colonial system, the disappearance of old and the emergence of new traditions, but most important, the acceleration of scientific and technological progress. A new social reality was formed – a virtual one, the actualizer of which is the online community. It marks the emergence of new characteristics of human life, especially in the field of social communication and its main mechanism – a text.

Modern social and cultural processes have many new characteristics, the main one of which is uncertainty, which causes an increase of instability, confusion, aggressiveness and depression of social actors [7]. According to M. G. Osipova, informatization and digitalization changed the life priorities of social actors, including professional, territorial and gender affiliations and citizenship. In this regard, the variety and abundance of generated and received information make the picture of the world eclectic and uncertain [8].

The concept of Z. Bauman, who called modern social reality a fluid modernity, deserves special attention. He is credited with defining new characteristics of people's lives in modern social reality:

– liberation in the form of destruction of identity, both one's own and that of in "alien";

– individuality as opposed to the citizen in the form of a preference for consumerism, interests in the private life (rather than the activities) of famous characters;

– the emergence and implementation of new workspaces in the form of remote work and study;

– urbanization as a process of creating megapolises and increasing the gap with the provinces, leading to the creation of conflict situations – frustration, aggression [9].

Naturally, modern social reality led to dramatic changes in the generation, perception and interpretation of texts as the centers of social communication. The communicative function of the text acquired new characteristics, reflecting the changes in social contexts. The point is that the text is no longer a completed speech act (a social action), but continues to develop after its creation and completion. It should be noted that the problem of text transformations is relevant for all spheres of human life, since a text is the main mechanism for the creation, accumulation and transmission of social

knowledge in the form of social and cultural experience. Moreover, social communication views text as the main mechanism of social collective activity. From this perspective, the text as a system with structure, coherence, integrity, and completeness loses its previous characteristics, but acquires new ones. Indeed, the text currently presents the following characteristics:

– outrageousness in order to increase the status of the addressee and achieve fame;

– intertextuality as the absence of an original text, but the presence of allusions and associations as anonymous (collective) textual activity;

– hypertextuality in the form of typing text on a given topic, and the text always remains incomplete;

– a comment indicating that the addressee is not so much interested in creating texts as the final result, but is absorbed only in the process of creating the text.

Consequently, modern texts of the Internet and network communication era exist entirely in the sphere of pragmatic communication, the main goal of which is not the broadcast of social knowledge, but self-presentation and language games [10].

The development of Internet technologies provides Internet users with unlimited possibilities for generating, receiving, perceiving and interpreting information in the form of texts, photos and audio materials used for exchanging information, commenting and self-presentation. "Fluid modernity," which provides for the possibility of freedom of choice and change of identity, fully contributes to this. The information space of the Internet is the most popular and effective platform in the form of social network discourse.

Social communication in the network space ceases to fulfill its main (communicative) function of creating and perceiving information in the existing social reality. Network social communication, in contrast to real social communication, is characterized by the following specifics: indirectness, asynchrony, and remoteness of communicators in time and space.

In addition, network communication has such properties as: dynamism, democracy, situationality, a combination of polychrome and monochrome communication, the possibility of communication between representatives of high-concept and low-concept cultures, manipulation of the behavior of communicants and limitlessness of topics.

The specifics of network communication determines new text characteristics from the perspective of "everything for everyone". In other words, the

proposed text is supplemented by countless comments and ratings, which invariably lead to a decrease in the quality of the text as a speech work in pursuit of the attention of network users – for example, icons such as smiley, like, dislike – represent the entire text [11]. The development of network communications contributes to the presentation of the act of communication as an interaction between the sender and the addressee in order to create an imaginary/supposed social reality. Under these conditions, each text generated by the addressee receives various comments and is evaluated by the networked communicative society. This phenomenon is called "clickivism". In this case, communicators are interested in ranking both texts and their creators in the direction of gaining popularity. There is no doubt that a significant decrease in text quality does not affect the success of the attractiveness of the text of network communication. This fact is updated in the processes of expressing opinions of network users, stimulating clicking on links, subscribing and adding information. In other words, a successful text in the network space blocks the function of inciting action – triggering. In this regard, the problem of text authorship, that is, text attribution, has new characteristics. The peculiarity of network communication is that the text created by the addressee becomes significant and popular only with a significant increase in the number of communicators, which manifests itself in additions to the text, which can be called the crisis of attribution [12].

Moreover, the content of the text itself loses its originality in the discussion and in comments and interpretations from participants in network communications. The variety of interpretations in highlighting an image often contradicts the meaning of fragments of text as the main one (text fragmentation), and increasing uncertainty often leads to changes in the social order, and these changes affect and transform text functions.

For example, the text of network communication no longer serves as a representation of reality. On the contrary, each addressee strives to present his/her personal meaning as the basis for further comments. Consequently, the addresser does not so much address the addressee, but encourages him/her to react to the text, which allows us to talk about the emergence of a new text function such as triggering or stimulation [13].

Network communication and digitalization generated a new type of text – a hypertext, which directly actualizes virtual social reality. If constant network reality uses texts presented in the media (television, radio) and printed materials (books, newspapers and magazines) as means of transmitting social knowledge, then virtual social reality is presented in new text formats in the form of hypertext.

Particular attention should be paid to the formation of a specific area of scientific knowledge in the context of the theory of social communication, namely the sociology of the text. This is a relatively recent scientific movement that emphasizes the interaction between social actors, on the one hand, and the technological characteristics of digital media, on the other hand. From this perspective, the fundamental difference between traditional texts and hypertexts is that the former are linear in nature, while hypertexts, on the contrary, demonstrate nonlinearity, closer to the specifics of the functioning of the human brain.

Since people speak and think hypertextually, the texts they create must be hypertexts [14]. In other words, the very term "hypertext" (supertext) is a content that allows to create and transmit an unlimited amount of information, and the connection between text parts is determined not by the sender, but by the addressee. Consequently, the main function of a hypertext is that it serves as a means of combining all information about subjects, objects, concepts and phenomena into a single whole, which becomes possible only with the use of computer technology. This functional specificity of hypertexts emerged with the creation of the World Wide Web (1992). The social consequence of this event was the fact that all Internet users, without exception, have the opportunity to simultaneously and independently work with information flows. This process necessarily involves intertextuality, that is, a collective textual activity in the form of introducing quotes, allusions, references and inclusion of other authors in the text.

Thus, collective textual activity erases the boundaries between senders and recipients, ensures social equality and provides everyone with a platform for self-realization and self-expression. All textual transformations, therefore, represent the actualization of social processes taking place in time and space. They are always determined by the development of technological characteristics of social communication - the appearance of the printing press before the formation and development of digital technologies and network space. Textual transformations range from cuneiform texts on tablets to such innovations as the hypertext format, once again confirming the inextricable connection between textual and social structures.

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