

**TILTM 2020****Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANGUAGE COMPENSATORY FUNCTION IN THE MODERN INTERNET COMMUNICATION<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract*

New language phenomena are driven by social and political shifts at the global level. Even though the traditional literary norm is being destroyed, these linguistic innovations fulfil a language compensatory function. Internet communication and the new speech processes found in it provoke a keen research interest and are extensively explored by linguists. Major global changes in our life (cloud-based technologies, ecology, post-truth, the problem of generations, Big Data, etc.) were bound to transform communication itself. Therefore, we see changes in genres, functional styles, texts and our traditional ideas of various forms of the Russian national language usage. The Russian Internet (Runet) reveals language potential, fulfils the compensatory function of the language filling in all the elements missing so far and language shortcomings (neologisms denoting feminine gender-specific job titles, deviant verbal forms, new structures in comparative forms of adverbs and adjectives, etc.). The speech system of the Internet communication should be considered not as a double-sided one (oral and written) but as a conceptually new digital form of language use. In the democratic environment of pluralism, tolerance and the freedom of language use, lexical and lexical-grammatical innovations, “the new vernacular”, irregular grammar and lexical collocability, as well as the direct and conscious intention to break the norm of the literary language, should be justified and deemed a manifestation of the compensatory language function. Special attention is given to the acute problem of fundamental transformations in teaching practice.

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**Keywords:** Internet communication, liberty of language use, the norm, Russian literary language, the new vernacular, language compensatory function.

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## **1. Introduction**

The new environment of digital communication allows the language to reveal its potentialities and fulfil the compensatory function. Today's language phenomena and speech processes taking place in the Internet arise a tremendous research interest and are extensively explored by linguists, with many researchers not only studying the changes in lexis, word formation, grammar and style per se, not only pointing out the transformation of genres, functional styles, change of text types, but also justifying and developing new areas of scientific knowledge such as Internet stylistics (Toshovich, 2015).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The principal problem of this research is connected with studying new language phenomena in the modern-day Internet communication against the backdrop of global political, social and cultural shifts.

## **3. Research Questions**

The two most substantial issues addressed by this paper relate to, first, the rehabilitation of all the "irregularities" of language use in Internet communication, and second, the theoretical rationale of developing completely new approaches to language instruction.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The Purpose of this study is to explore new language phenomena in the Internet communication as seen against the background of new global development trends and new phenomena of life. At a time when the principles of freedom, pluralism of opinion and tolerance are considered supreme values worldwide, the speech system of Internet communication and its deviation from the accepted literary norms, etc. should be considered a new form of language use and manifestation of the compensatory language function.

## **5. Research Methods**

The methodology of this study has a comprehensive nature and comprises traditional and time-proven research methods of linguistics. The paper utilizes general scientific methods of collection/selection, description, analysis and generalization of the empirical material and scientific data. The systemic method is used to study new language phenomena discovered in the Internet communication, while the classifying/classification method allows to break them down into types and build a typology.

The study employed the linguistic analysis method, the comparative and contrastive method, the historical and linguistic method, which allow to produce the chief study findings, as well as the content analysis method.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. E-language and e-communication

The new trends in global development provoke extensive discussions about the new social life phenomena in the media space. The topical trend is digitalization of everything. That makes us think over the necessity to transform the literary language into an e-literary language and elaborate new approaches to language stylistics. Modern journalist and visual artist James Bridle wrote once that dealing with hyper objects requires a faith in the network as a mode of seeing, thinking and acting (Bridle, 2018). Correspondingly, the detailed description of hyper objects requires writing and new linguistic means or at least new shifts in the traditional paradigm.

Thus, looking into Donald Trump's success in the U.S. Presidential race 2016 Scott Adams, a well-known publicist and coach, makes conclusions about the increasing role of speech persuasion "in a world where facts don't matter" (Adams, 2017). In his book *Win Bigly, a New York Times* bestseller, Scott Adams illustrates this trend with a number of psychological techniques which can impact the listener and receiver of information in a major way. Among some of the persuasion tools he emphasizes social proof, which allows to exaggerate the number of people in agreement, direct request to the audience, simplicity that makes ideas and opinions easier to remember, understand and discuss and repetition, or refrain, as it is referred to in linguistics. These psychological innovations are likely to be reflected in the modern Internet communication that tends to shorten and simplify the ideas, as well as to repeat everything said more than once.

Indeed, the forms of using language in the digital domain change our traditional idea of the various possibilities of expressing the Russian national language.

For instance, the principal differences between the literary written and colloquial oral forms of the Russian language use have long been established; those forms are clearly contrasted in stylistics (especially in the historical stylistics), even though in various historic periods they would find themselves a little closer or farther from each other (Ivanova, 2011). Yet, the issue of their distinct features and structural specifics, or dissimilation, has long been resolved. Meanwhile, Internet communication sees the fusion of written and oral forms of language use, which is by default impossible. It is due to its impossibility that this phenomenon arises a negative attitude of the advocates of the Russian speech culture, as this fusion erodes the norm and breaks the rules.

However, if we look at this digital oral-written speech from the perspective of new language possibilities, the creative standpoint, we should admit that this does not constitute a merging of two old forms. This is in fact a new form of language use in the digital domain, as in it we do not see a mechanical connection of individually singled out features of oral and written speech but instead a certain common harmonious yet norm-breaking speech regularly reproducible by all Internet users in the blogosphere, chats and forums. In other words, the Internet discourse, or the Internet communication, has made up for a shortage of Russian language use forms – while we used to have written literary and oral colloquial speech, we now have a separate speech form – the digital, or oral-written one.

## 6.2. Compensatory function of Russian language in Runet communication

The compensatory function of the Russian language in Internet communication is fulfilled in filling in all the previously missing language elements, compensating for all its shortcomings. For example, masculine name units in the Russian language are used to denote persons of both male and female gender. In grammar it is called the person category. Those words, though widely and constantly used in speech, have not changed the masculine gender for the common one. Therefore, the Russian speech regularly witnesses a grammar conflict whenever such words as *inzhenер (engineer)*, *prokuror (prosecutor)*, *arkhitektoр (architect)*, and even *vрач (doctor)* and *uchitel (teacher)* are used with regard to a woman. Runet is righting this wrongful situation in that it produces many neologisms denoting feminine gender-specific job titles: *vрачinya (doctress)*, *uchitelka (teacheress)*, *professorka (professoress)*, *bloginya/blogessa (bloggeress)*, etc. The free speech activity in the digital domain produces a multitude of lexical and semantical neo-formations, for example *khrenovatsii (unrenovations)*, *shikardos (shizit)*, *cheloveyniki (human ant-hill)*, *bablo (dough)*, *bablosy (wad)*, *respect i uvazhukha (kudos)*, *nesti purgu (talk piffle)*, *pilit budzhet (saw the budget)*, etc. The non-standard and missing from the verbal paradigm forms like *platyu, shutyu, ugodyu, pobedyu, zhget (incorrect second person singular forms of the verbs 'to pay', 'to joke' 'to please', 'to win', 'to burn')*, the imperative verb form *ekhaya (incorrect imperative form of the verb 'to go')*, irregular structures of the comparative forms of adverbs *boleye legche (more easy)*, *boleye luchshe (more better)*, the continued destruction of the ancient declension of stems ending in a consonant (Ivanova, 2011) *skolko vremya?*, the convergence of the Nominative case of the singular form with the Genitive of the plural form in the masculine gender instead of their divergence (also a compensation of the language forms lost to history) *pomidor-pomidorov*, *nosok-noskov*, *chulok-chulkov*, as well as many other unexpected grammar positions are easily invented and freely used in the Runet's language space.

Such active language processes and compensations of what has never been in place, the revival of what has been preserved in the potential possibilities of language transformations, may occur only under major changes in communication on the whole.

Today's linguistic processes happen against the background of fundamental and global shifts in our life – changes in freedom, democracy and tolerance.

## 6.3. New phenomena impacting language shifts

The age of post-truth, for instance, implies attributing an increasing value to personal opinions and subjective factors in all domains, while real events and objectivity lose their significance. The Internet environment produces a situation where public opinion is influenced by the personal and subjective emotions and beliefs of one individual person instead of real objective facts.

New technologies and digital communication have exacerbated the problem of generations. The conflict is no longer that of a generation gap, or “parents” and “children” (here we can already see a global divide), but rather develops within various age groups of “children” – the millennials and Generation Z members. The young generation born in the Internet age, with an iPhone in their hands, so to speak, can perceive and process only clear and short information which fits in the size of a phone screen and choose images instead of texts. According to surveys, seven out of ten members of Gen Z aged

18+ check their smartphones every two minutes (How generations Y and Z differ - and what brands can talk to them, 2019), which means that they cannot engage themselves in anything in a serious way or focus on something; they (at least as of now) are not able to perform and complete even a minor task. All they are capable of is checking their smartphones.

The changes affect many traditional and established forms of human and social communication as well. The best example of this is International Diplomacy. Being an art-like skill for thousands of years since the famous Ramesses the Great' Treaty with Hittites is currently transforming into one of the e-services, promoted by the governments worldwide. Thus, according to the Delivering Global Britain: Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Skills report (House of Commons. The Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018), presented by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee in 2018, among key strategic transformations of diplomacy are expertise, agility and platform. And all of the three demand wider usage of social media to a certain extent. Later, Hamad Al-Muftah, an e-diplomacy researcher at the University of Bradford, provided a correlation between personnel expertise and their "knowledge and ability to use digital platforms" (Al-Muftah et al., 2018).

However, the language we use on Twitter can form a stylistic gap with the one we speak on Instagram or TikTok. The social media distinction has been visualized during a well-known #dollypartonchallenge when people made collages of their profile pictures. By all means, social media language stylistics stand no comparison with the formal style of written papers. Taking into consideration that diplomacy deals with the issues related to war and peace, a lack of linguistic support in diplomatic communication within digital platforms can lead to numerous misunderstandings or even conflicts. Some experts stating that language barriers may affect the ability of diplomats to communicate effectively (Al-Muftah et al., 2018) put a stress on cultural diversity, whereas in fact it is rather an issue of stylistic literacy and practical use of language.

#### **6.4. Challenges for communication within educational domain**

Education, an area which lies at the interface of the traditional and the ground-breaking, the young and fresh perspective and the classical proven paradigm, which are inextricably connected, feels the need for transformations most acutely.

In the new social environment and the new language situation marked by the inevitable use of digital technologies, which are largely responsible for novelties in the language usage and for the freedom and "irregularities" of speech expression, the "digital learners" can no longer be taught the old way. First of all, one should not give them formal (e.g. grammatical) knowledge for extended periods of time in a consistent and persistent way; should not focus their attention on one specific, however substantial, educational/scientific point for a long time; should not present the material according to the previous rigid rules with long explanations and elaborations, etc. (See, for instance, the works by Tatiana Chernigovskaya). The way you are supposed to teach now is, first, by formulating important points in a succinct manner; second, presenting them in a graphic way. i.e. keeping a constant visual (and not just verbal) contact; third, having the teaching practice be dominated by play, entertainment, interactivity; fourth, making instruction joyful, even merry, and bringing out only positive emotions in the students.

It goes without saying that no teacher or instructor is against the students being happy. But what we are used to is not the entertaining educational process, but instead an in-depth and comprehensive study of the subject, the serious and responsible attitude of students, the strict objectivity of knowledge evaluation, etc. So, all of us, teachers from the previous century, do not see an entertaining (in place of scientific or pragmatic) interest of students as befitting the situation, we consider the students being late for class and their chatting during lessons bad manners and so on.

Incidentally, the teaching practice has always provided possibilities to engage and excite students, to present the material in an entertaining and amusing way. Thus, the 18<sup>th</sup> century advanced mathematics and navigation professor Nikolay Kurganov, had to literally rewrite Mikhail Lomonosov's grammar when trying to teach it to his children by simplifying it and adding funny and amusing examples for all grammar rules. That book titled *Pismovnik, soderzhashiy v sebe nauku rossiyskogo yazyka so mnogim prisovokupleniem raznogo uchebnogo i poleznogo veschesloviya* [the Grammar Handbook Containing the Theory of the Russian Language With Many a Supplement of Various Instructive and Amusing Trivia] was not just a smash hit but became the most popular book in Russia and was published 11 (!) times since 1777 (when it was first published) until 1837. The most valuable thing about it was its entertaining and 'amusement' nature.

Granted, such long-winded "scholastic" monologues and similar approaches are instrumental in neither engaging the students, nor making them improve their performance, nor building a rapport with them. Every teacher has to resort to entertainment, games, jokes, etc. in their practice. Yet, until present, it never used to be the centerpiece of the educational process. Besides, while for very young learners instruction of subjects can be turned into a game, into "pictures and stickers", this does not feel quite appropriate for adult students. However, the near future will see coursebooks, reading books, workbooks and other study books being replaced with computer games, documentary animation, comic strips, etc.

It is already clear that we are dealing with a whole new generation of students with a clip way of thinking and the need for visualization. This brings us to Lenin and his statement that "cinema is the most important of all arts". Lenin was saying that in the context of illiteracy of common people who, despite not being able to read, could perceive documentary cinema, with real-life images easily replacing verbal text for them. What we have today is a similarly strange situation where the literary (educational, scientific, fiction, journalistic, etc.) text loses its relevance to the image.

The students of today have a hard time processing large texts and high volumes of information. It appears the ability to multitask, which is a mark of high intelligence and high professionalism, is out of the question now.

The linguistical problems of instruction per se are determined by the changes in language usage and language renewal. Speaking of the Russian language, for one, there is, first, an insurmountable and irreconcilable contradiction between teaching from the positions of speech culture and the complete destruction of this speech culture in the real life of the language, especially in the Internet communication which is indispensable to the life of modern-day young people. Moreover, in the climate of freedom and tolerance, the demands to stick to the literary norm feel out of place.

Second, we have to teach the Russian language using textbooks marked by a distinct academic-scientific style and a regulated bookish literary language usage which is far from the vernacular. It should

be mentioned that the gap between the spontaneous “live” expressive colloquial language and the language taught by textbooks and used in textbooks has always been there. Never before, though, has this gap been as considerable and difference as significant. A particularly graphic example of this can be seen in teaching Russian to foreign students, who, if they had properly studied the textbooks, cannot speak the language the way Russians do and do not understand Russians (such words and expressions as *баблосы*, *пошел ты...*, *братаны?*, among others). Apart from that, out contemporary coursebooks do not match the required digitalization level. To be fair, we do see a new generation of textbooks emerging now which contain exercises involving digital resources, but so far this has been too narrow-ranging and small-scale. There are also good quality online courses, open educational platforms envisaging remote/distance education, which is so popular today. They are good for learning the theoretical basics of the language, for doing written exercises, but are in no way instrumental in examining the student’s speaking and text retelling skills, intonation, phonetic correctness, etc.

Third, the literary norm is destroyed most in the Internet communication with the Internet activating the compensatory function of the language, filling in the elements absent in the literary usage as irregular or impossible. However, it is the Internet that has to be primarily incorporated in the teaching/learning process. Hence, the question: what kind of Russian language are we going to teach our students?

Fourth, the problem of teaching language for special purposes is as acute as ever. On the one hand, the language should be taught so as to allow the students to master it, easily use it, have a strong command of it in a wide enough range. But in this case the educational process may get protracted. On the other hand, the instruction should reduce the language usage to professional use, the professional language. Even though the fact that a linguist and an engineer should be instructed differently and taught “different” Russian language is nothing new, the problem has not been fully resolved. Moreover, it is further aggravated by a general unregulated situation of fluctuation and destruction of the literary language norms and deformation of its usage areas.

All those social, linguistic and educational problems in the digitalization age prompt us to create new models of instruction, drastically different approaches to learning and teaching Russian.

It is noteworthy that any new tendency or phenomenon does not exist separately from the linguistic methods of its description. New topics are primarily discussed through language, hence they require new concepts and forms of language usage.

This has been vividly manifested in the discourse of climate change and environmental protection issues which have lately come into the foreground. Climate and weather, assessed by an outstanding visual artist and post-minimalism photographer Horn (2007) “as a key paradox of time”, become one of the central topics in mass-media. Dealing with numerous areas of scientific knowledge such as technology, Earth study and space research, politics and international relations, climate is being debated and discussed through language means, “small talk” as Roni Horn idiomatically remarks. In the post-truth era, we express our attitude and our evaluation of the topic with the words that we use. And the conclusion given in Horn’s (2007) book that “talking about the weather is talking about oneself” may refer not only to weather but to all recently emerged phenomena.

According to the research of the climate change speech delivered by Greta Thunberg in UN, conducted on the basis of MoNa (the Moral Narrative Analyzer) by a group of researchers headed by Rene Weber, director of the Media Neuroscience Lab at the University of California, the young climate idol relies upon moral words relating to moral foundations of care (40 words), fairness (approximately 27 words), loyalty (19 words), authority (14 words) and sanctity (14 words) (How moral language helped Greta Thunberg make an impact, 2019). Research has also pointed out that Thunberg relies on more negative words when referring to issues of care and authority but uses more positive language when referring to topics of fairness and loyalty. That makes the audience more willing to put fairness and loyalty foundations at the center of climate media discourse in the future.

## 7. Conclusion

**7.1.** The new oral and written speech usage in the contemporary Internet space should be considered not a distortion of the two traditional and long existing principal forms of language use – the written one and colloquial one, but rather a special digital form of the national language fundamentally different from the two previous ones.

**7.2.** In the democratic context of pluralism, tolerance and freedom of language use, the new lexical and grammatical structures, “the new vernacular”, the new nature of language elements usage, non-conventional grammar and irregular lexical collocations, the direct and conscious intentions to break the literary language norm in Internet communication should be, first, deemed the manifestation of language creativity and the fulfillment of the compensatory language function, and second, justified or rather no longer assessed from the perspective of dated regulations of the Russian speech culture.

**7.3.** All the phenomena of the new digital age, all the social, linguistic, cultural, educational and other problems brought about by Internet communication inevitably make us create new models and develop conceptually new approaches to language teaching and learning practice.

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