

RLMSEE-2020
The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment
THE PROBLEM OF TEXT COHISION IN COMPUTER-
MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The entire set of message chains that form the blog text is presented in the form of certain rhetorical relationships, in which each message is an agreement / disagreement with the interlocutor's opinion, an affirmative statement or a denial. In the blog text rhetorical structure, the microtheme being discussed is represented in terms of combinations of affirmation and negation in stimulating and reacting messages (for example, negation – affirmation; negation – negation – negation, etc.). Such combinations embody the nature of the relationship of agreement and disagreement of the interlocutors with each other's opinions. In order to detail the pragmatic and cross-cultural specifics of rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships between different components of the blog text, we analyze individual statements as the basic units of the blog text. These statements are segmented into separate syntactic syntagmas, which are characterized by some propositional content. The blogger and respondent's dialogical moves often form a complete statement, the coherence of which is provided by one or another subordinate conjunction, introductory word or adverb. Rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships ensure the coherence of the blog text by: 1) modus-dictum and modus-modus coordination of the components of the corresponding syntactic construction; 2) structural and semantic coherence of the text generated jointly by the blogger and respondents; 3) programming the topic of computer-mediated communication, which is based on detailing the facts covered in the blog text and discussed by the interlocutors; 4) expanding the basic frame of communication, which was set in the incentive message, due to private slots that enter additional information.

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1. Introduction

Initially assuming the accumulation and rapid exchange of scientific and technical information, the internet has now become a constructive platform for a wide variety of communication practices, a new form of interaction between interlocutors, including within the framework of blog texts. It is likely that the rapid expansion of the blogosphere is predetermined by the flexible formal, functional and genre characteristics of this type of text. Entering into computer-mediated communication in the contextual surrounding of the blogosphere, the interlocutors pursue and, if possible, implement a wide variety of intentions, which include, among other things, mutual establishment and maintenance of phatic contact, interactive exchange of life experience and assessments of the discussed situation. Initiating and reacting messages that form a blog text can contain both spontaneous reflections and carefully thought-out points of view on a particular issue.

The current research is carried out in line with the discursive and pragmatic approaches presupposing the analysis of cohesive mechanism, the linguistic indicators of the blog text multidimensional continuity, enhancing the subjective perspective of a message and shifting the interlocutor's attention to the objects and facts discussed in the current speech situation (Mann et al., 1992). In language studies the computer-mediated communication is widely interpreted as an integral section of analyzing the processes of comprehending texts jointly created by the interlocutors (Ibraeva, 2018; Kirillov, 2017; Myers, 2010; Schipichina, 2010; Schmidt, 2007). The research focuses on how the communication participants process the speech material perceived, takes into consideration the syntactical conventions of the computer-mediated collaboration between the bloggers and his / her respondents. The approaches adopted and developed in the article comprise the linguistic methodology and theoretical principles used while analyzing meaningful segments of dialogical stimulus and reaction, the frequent interaction models that tend to be modified in the process of solving non-speech problems in the communicative context (Borisova & Semelet, 2017; Nayar, 2010). Such kind of scientific research is relevant for specifying the blog text structures as well as the threads of docking tools, and the multidimensional links between stimulus and reaction at the level of one or two speech moves.

In numerous studies devoted to the blog text pragmatics, it is recognized that such category as dialogicity is of particular importance in the interpersonal interaction of the author and his respondents. Blog texts unfold as a result of a coherent organization of stimulating and responsive messages. The processes of voicing ratings and opinions of respondents are controlled and coordinated by the blogger. The structural interface of blogs forms a dualistic dialogic space, within which authors and respondents-commentators interact at the intersection of point of view expression characteristic of websites and the polyphony of voices, which is systematically implemented in Internet chats. In this regard, an urgent problem of linguistic research of blog texts is to determine whether the interlocutors who exchange opinions and assessments form integral models of dialogic communication, based on which means of linking the stimulating and reacting messages are connected. This problem has not yet received a proper empirical analysis in Russian studies and general language theory, although its solution, as we believe, contains significant implications for detailing the pragmatic specifics of blog communication. Within the framework of our work, we analyze the pragmatic features of textual cooperation between the blogger

and his / her addressees using the collected empirical data from the web. The research focuses on the problem of interactive distribution of connectivity in blog texts, which, in turn, provides an opportunity to further compare the specifics of the implementation of this category in computer-mediated communication, prototypical written monologues and oral spontaneous dialogues.

A blog is defined by us as a frequently updated website, which:

- consists of recordings of interlocutors, dated in reverse chronological order;
- based on the organizational format of hypertexts, selectively perceived and interpreted by participants of communication;
- functions as an open set of the original initiating message of the author, setting a relevant topic for subsequent discussion, and commenting – including evaluation-responses of respondents.

Having initiated the initial message, bloggers can also participate in the subsequent unfolding of the text, respond to respondents' messages with commenting remarks, thereby stimulating potential recipients to reactive dialogic activity. The bloggers' stimulating messages are qualified by respondents as a universal source of response. Blog texts unfold as a consequence of the interaction between the discursive voices of the interlocutors, generating meanings and meanings in conceptual and social terms. We undertake the discursive analysis of blog texts systematically describing those language segments that fix the communicative practices of coordinating the semantic content of stimulating and reacting messages, i.e., means of binding.

The most common technique for co-generating a coherent discourse of a blogger and his respondents is the use of relevant intersubjective staples and lexical units, which determine the possibility of perceiving a computer-mediated text as a syntactically significant integral work. The continuity of the structural and semantic coherence of the blog text is ensured by the following four language categories, which manifest themselves:

1. the person / producer of the action (for example, personal and demonstrative pronouns, comparative references);
2. lexical specifics of the text (cf., language expressions of varying degrees of stability);
3. temporal characteristics of the text (for example, predicates and adverbs with temporal semantics);
4. logical conclusions or argumentative justification of the text (cf., conjunctions and allied means, rhetorical models).

The integration of meanings in the blog text is implemented through connecting tools that conceptually synchronize the interlocutor's mental processes and clarify the types of relations between: 1) segments of a single replica; 2) messages functioning as the stimulus and reaction forming a dialogic integrity. The analysis of the cohesive relations sheds light on comprehending how the blog text subsequent segments connect with the previous segments in order to create some coherent discursive representations. The connecting links reactivate the semantic and pragmatic content of the first segment when the reacting interlocutor completes processing the second segment. As a result, consistent representations of these two segments are activated in the interlocutor's consciousness.

The thematic continuity of a blog text is realized based on the discursive relationships between individual sentences or parts of a complex sentence as part of an autonomous replica or at the junction of

a stimulating and reacting replica. In turn, these thematic relations generate sufficient and relevant continuity between various text fragments, and are interpreted as a kind of structural bonds. In the context of our research, we analyze exclusively non-structural relationships between text fragments, i.e., between text fragments, connectivity tools that go beyond the boundaries of a single sentence. It is argued that this type of relationship also includes syntactic continuity, is not limited to the framework of sentences, and requires access to the research space of discursive analysis. In this regard, the range of binders under consideration is specified. At the same time, three methodologically essential possibilities are distinguished, namely, the means of connectivity between:

- (1) contact / distantly located sentences (if there is / is no junction between them);
- (2) parts of a complex sentence as part of a single message from a computer-mediated communication participant;
- (3) parts of complex sentences as part of adjacent / distantly located messages from different interlocutors.

All these types of binders have varying degrees of complexity. Thus, means (1) are formed by lexical units found in various sentences, reflecting a narrow understanding of the category of connectivity. Tools (2) – (3) capture all possible types of connectivity relationships (within a single sentence, between parts of a complex sentence and autonomous sentences), revealing a broad understanding of the category we are considering.

In this regard, there is an increased and widely shared interest in Russian studies in the pragmatic and cognitive effects produced by the binders in the process of processing and comprehending the peculiarities the blog text. At the language level, this kind text is a linear sequence of interlocutors' acts of speech through providing the feedback to the addressee, conversational norms and rules that are used in spontaneous and computer-mediated communication and are modified at various stages of generating and dynamic developing the dialogic communication cycles. In this respect, one of the actual problems is to reveal how causal relationships as a means of cohesion determine the structural and semantic integration of segments and statements and judgements in the blog text. This type of rhetorical relations contributes to the discursive coherence of the joint speech product of communicants, and functions as a signal of the interlocutors' joint efforts in the process of modeling successful communication, even when a significant discrepancy is found between the interlocutors' general and background knowledge.

2. Problem Statement

Cause and effect are important principles that underlie the ordering of everyday experience related to the perception and evaluation of the surrounding reality, and therefore belong to the central categories of cognition of the speaking and thinking person. Cause-and-effect relationships are fundamental to the formation and representation of knowledge about the world, and are determined by such cognitive processes of human consciousness as forecasting, explaining, and understanding facts, phenomena, and events. Interpretation of cause-and-effect relationships involves matching the information expressed by parts of the utterance with the specifics of the cognitive representation of the corresponding connections between facts, phenomena, and events occurring in objective reality. In this case, the cause precedes the effect in time (Gavrilova, 2015).

Analyzing the cause-and-effect relations in the syntactic system of the Russian language, researchers focus mainly on the problems of using conjunctions and conjunctive means that mark this type of relationship in a complex sentence. In particular, the research focuses on the paratactic use of the conjunction *potomu chto* / because, which is interpreted as the most frequent means of marking cause-and-effect relations, including in the contextual surrounding of the interlocutors' dialogical interaction (Kalashnikova 2017; Kalashnikova et al., 2017).

According to our observations, the computer-mediated communication in modeling rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships is dominated by the asyndetic connection: the respondent provides a justification for the fact, phenomenon, or event reported in the blogger's initial remark, without explicitly objectifying the means of connectivity between two dialogical moves. Participants in this type of communication show a stable tendency to interpret the event sequence in terms of reason-and-consequence links, even when these relationships are not actually and explicitly found between the reported events in objective reality.

The researchers say that the experience of perceiving the causality of real-world events turns out to be a priority factor in the conceptual representation of cause and effect in the text, in which the addressee's primary task is to express evaluation, argumentation, and personal opinion (Akay et al., 2017; Gurochkina 2015; Kudryashov & Kalashnikova, 2015). In other words, the empirical experience of perceiving cause-and-effect links between facts and events in the objective world is thought to be the cornerstone for the discursive and pragmatic realization of the corresponding relationships in a subjectively oriented text. Cause-and-effect relationships are «extracted» by the speaking subject from the personal experience of perception of the surrounding reality. As a result, we recognize that this type of relationship in the process of reality textual fixation reflects the addressee's personal experience, is represented as a conjunction in which the cause precedes the effect. Conceptually, the cause is extracted from the effect, and the effect, in turn, is treated as a symptom of the cause.

3. Research Questions

The rhetorical relationships modeled by one of the participants or both participants in the computer-mediated interaction are considered as a means of linking within one or two dialogical moves, since these relationships update and detail the background information necessary for the communication smooth flow. In this research, we study the cause-and-effect constructs formed in a connected fragment of the blog text based on the asyndetic connection. The components of these structures are located remotely – in the stimulating and reacting messages of participants in computer-mediated communication. In this regard, the article deals with such problems as:

- in what contextual surroundings of the computer-mediated communication do the components of the initial and reactive messages of the blogger and respondent form a cause-and-effect structures, which, in turn, can be considered as a coherent blog fragments?
- based on what pragmatic parameters is the coherence of a fragment of blog text that activates rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships marked?

- what are the reasons for highlighting adjacent blogger and respondent's posts that establish rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships in the absence of conventional connecting tools that signal this type of relationship?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the scientific inquiry is seen in implementing a structural and pragmatic analysis of rhetorical cause-and-effect relations of concession in blog texts, which involves identifying the dominant markers of these relations, their basic model and its variants.

5. Research Methods

The purpose claimed in the article is achieved using such research methods as:

- the method of observing and interpreting the blog texts while revealing the specific features of cohesive tools ensuring the integrity of stimulus and reaction;
- descriptive method – contextual analysis of the blog text fragments as linear and cohesive sequences;
- the method for reconstructing the rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships between segments within both the single message and the consistent dialogical unity in the Russian blog texts.

6. Findings

When analyzing the asyndetic constructions formed by segments of initial and reactive messages, the cohesion of which is not marked by grammatical means (conjunction, adverb, etc.), we are faced with the problem of objectification of the connecting predestination of the pragmatic structures under consideration. The cohesive potential of the components of these structures found in the blogger and respondent's speech actions is primarily indicated by the context of the virtual conversation being unfolded and the fact that the components indicating the cause and effect between the discussed events are directly adjacent to each other and form an integral semantic unity. Cf.:

«– Na kazhdoe udachnoe dejstvie svoej komandy v zashhite Klopp aplodiroval, na kazhdyj upushhennyj shans v atake – jarostno razmahival rukami i podbadrival napadajushhih. (X) Klop zametno jevoljucioniruet kak trener.

– (Y) Jetot «Liverpul'» mne bol'she nravitsja. Esli ran'she byla romantika i krasivyy futbol, pri jetom nol' uspeha, sejchas s jetim zhe sostavom, s takoj zatochkoj na rezul'tat, možno zhdat' chuda».

«– For every successful action of his team in defense, Klopp applauded, for every missed chance in attack – violently waved his hands and cheered the attackers. (X) the Bug is noticeably evolving as a trainer.

– (Y) I like this Liverpool better. If before there was romance and beautiful football, with zero success, now with the same squad, with such a focus on the result, you can expect a miracle» (London Eye Blog, 2020).

The causal relationships are established between the components (X) and (Y) that are found in the stimulating and reacting message, which are not marked by explicit grammatical indicators. In turn, these

components form an integral semantic unity and can be interpreted as a single dialogical utterance with the structure of a compound sentence (cf.: *Klop zametno jevoljucioniruet kak trener, a pojetomu jetot «Liverpool» mne bol'she nravitsja / Klopp is noticeably evolving as a coach, and therefore I like this Liverpool more*). In the context of a virtual conversation, when forming the holistic nature of this statement, the modus contents of the interlocutors' messages are consistent: in the dialogic step (Y), the respondent supports the positive assessment of the Liverpool football team coach professional activity, expressed by the blogger in the previous step (X), and considers this assessment as a reason for expressing a judgment about the discussed person. The cohesion between the analyzed components of messages of participants in computer-mediated communication is maintained due to their contact location in the jointly generated dialogical unity structure.

The connectedness of the components of stimulating and reacting messages in the context of a complete fragment of the blog text is also provided by modal particles detected immediately before the component that expresses the consequence. The linguistic literature that reveals the pragmatic specifics of modal particles in Russian dialogic speech is extensive. In particular, it is indicated that in the context of dialogic interaction, these particles carry the following functional load:

1. signal the pragmatic attitude of the speaking subject to the proposition of the expressed utterance;
2. act as a means of connecting this statement with the previous statement (Anufrieva, 2016; Volodina & Kovalchuk, 2019).

In the corpus of our factual material, the modal particles do not so much mark rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships, as they act as a means of cohesion between two components that are located in contact, but are found in the blogger and respondent's posts. Cf.:

«– (X) ... Odnako na postu rukovoditelja Mattiju zhdet mnogo interesnogo. On – tipichnyj predstavitel' «molchalivyh tehnafej» v jepohu glavenstva v «Formule-1» ljudej, umejushhih rassuzhdat' i krasivo vyskazyvat'sja na publike, vesti peregovory i ubezhdat' sobesednikov, partnerov i kolleg.

– (Y) *Kak raz Mattia ukrepit psihologicheskoe sostojanie Sebast'jana Fettelja i okazhet posil'nuju pomoshh' Sharlju Lekleru na novom meste*».

«– (X) ... however, there are a lot of interesting things waiting for Mattia as a leader. He is a typical representative of the “silent techies” in the era of Primacy in Formula 1, people who can reason and speak beautifully in public, negotiate and convince interlocutors, partners and colleagues.

– (Y) *just Mattia will strengthen the psychological state of Sebastian Vettel and will provide all possible assistance to Charles Leclerc in the new place*» (London Eye Blog, 2020).

Between the components (X) and (Y) that form stimulating and reactive messages, rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships are established that are not marked by explicit grammatical means. The amplifying modal particle, which opens the respondent's judgment, acts as a means of connectivity between the analyzed components. As a result, the messages of the participants in the virtual conversation form a complete semantic unity. In this case, the component (X) is the cause for the effect manifested by the component (Y). The analyzed particle also helps to coordinate the modus States of participants in virtual communication. The positive assessment of the psychological profile of the head of Ferrari, initially expressed by the blogger, is reinforced in the respondent's reactive message: the general positive

characteristics of Mattia's professional personality find a similar emotional response in the respondent when reflecting his specific actions that will raise the level of performances at the competitions of the most popular racing team in the history of Formula 1 in the future.

The particle *kak raz / just* is interpreted by us as an operator of the modal plan of the proposition interpreted by the Respondent as a consequence of the blogger's message. The blogger, initiating communication, expresses a personal opinion about the person who interested him / her. The respondent, reacting to the blogger's message (X), projects a rhetorical cause-and-effect relationship between this message and their dialogical course. In other words, the blogger's (X) judgments are considered by the respondent as a kind of pragmatic springboard for projecting certain rhetorical relations predetermined by their current communicative intentions. In this case, modal particles act as a means of linking the components of stimulating and reacting messages into the complete assidential structure.

As a result of their use, the respondent not only forms a judgment (Y) as a consequence of the blogger's personal opinion (X), but also expresses unanimity with this opinion, maintains a phatic contact with the blogger. So, in a fragment of the blog text, the modal particle *kak raz / just* strengthens the subjective reading of the pragmatic content of the consequence (Y), orients this content to the blogger's perception of his judgment as a reason for the subsequent consequence, and a holistic interpretation of the overlapping messages as a combination of cause and effect. As a means of connecting these messages, the modal particle allows the respondent to express the effect in a single emotional way with the cause.

When activating the asyndetic connection between the stimulating and reacting message in the framework of computer-mediated communication, it is not always possible to unambiguously determine the grounds for connectivity without referring to the broader context of communication and taking into account the sequence of implementation of the blogger and respondent's dialogical moves, their contact location in the jointly generated text. In other words, specific rhetorical relations between communicants' messages are projected and established based on the interaction of their semantic contents and the contextual parameter. Cf.:

«– (X) ... *Po faktu vse chempionaty pri Bragine, krome Baffalo, sbornaja zanimala primerno to mesto, kotoroe i dolzhna byla – esli pytat'sja rasstavljat' komandy po kakomu-to urovnju potenciala v vakuume.*

– (Y) *Ni odin iz igrokov molodezhki pro Bragina plohogo slova ne skazal. On dlja nih (po mnogim interv'ju) – kak otec. To est' avtoritet...».*

«– (X) ... *In fact, all the Championships under Bragin, except for Buffalo, the national team occupied approximately the place that it should have – if you try to arrange teams by some level of potential in a vacuum.*

– (Y) *none of the youth players said a bad word about Bragin. He is like a father to them (according to many interviews). That is, the credibility...»* (London Eye blog, 2020).

«– (X) ... *Imja Davidsa prevratilos' v brend, on stal samym uznavaemym poluzashhitnikom iz teh, kto igral blizhe k svojim vorotam. Prichem za vsju istoriju pro nego uznali ljudi, voobshhe ne smotrevshie futbol.*

– (Y-1) *Futbol – uzhe ne futbol, a komercija.*

– (Y-2) *Togda byl futbol s primes'ju komercii, a teper' komercija s primes'ju futbola».*

«– (X) ... the name of Davids became a brand, he became the most recognizable midfielder of those who played closer to their goal. And for the entire history, people who did not watch football at all found out about it.

– (Y-1) Football is no longer football, but Commerce.

– (Y-2) then there was football with a mixture of Commerce, and now Commerce with a mixture of football» (London Eye Blog, 2020).

In both text fragments, the rhetorical cause-and-effect relationships between stimulating and reacting messages (X) and (Y-1), (Y-2) are reconstructed taking into consideration the contextual surroundings in which the computer-mediated communication unfolds, general encyclopedic knowledge about the world of modern sports. So, in the first fragment, the respondent interprets the proposition about the high level of play of the youth hockey team at the Championships as the reason for his positive judgment about the professionalism of the coach of this team. In other words, without professional guidance from the coach the team would not have achieved the excellent results in the Championships of different levels. In the second fragment, for an optimal interpretation of the rhetorical cause-and-effect relationship between the blogger's posts and the two addressees, we take into account the current tendencies to commercialization in the sports sphere, when popular football players become the recognizable media faces.

In this case, the rhetorical cause-and-effect relationship between the interlocutors' messages is based not so much on specific knowledge about sports, but on cultural conventions of gaining popularity of famous players. The respondents, alternately implementing value judgments (Y-1) and (Y-2), actually use the blogger's message as a hard argument in favour of their individual opinions. A famous player is recognized by the audience far from the world of sports. That is why football games turn into commercial spectacles where popular media personalities participate. At the semantic level of judgments, addressees concentrate the speakers' attention on the indisputable fact that modern football is not so much a sphere of achieving high results as a mass entertainment event.

The rhetorical relations studied by us are projected precisely at the junction of stimulating and reacting messages and are not marked with specific grammatical indicators. In this context, in order to identify the prospects for the unfolding of the blog text, we use the procedure for justifying the subsequent dialogical course, i.e. we determine the pragmatic specifics of the interpretation of the blogger's message carried out by the respondent, in order to confirm the analytical (research) interpretation.

7. Conclusion

The cause-and-effect statements fix national and cultural stereotypes, which, in turn, determine the material and ideal scope of the degree of relevance of the addressee's evaluation activity. When implementing such speech actions, the interlocutors take into account not only general cultural scenarios of axiological activity, but also relevant stereotypes of such activities, which are set by the language system. Rhetorical relations between stimulating and reacting messages in the context of computer-mediated communication generate a personal projection of cause-and-effect stereotypes and scenarios in

the interlocutors' language consciousness facilitating the processes of extracting the informative and emotional content of the jointly generated text and its implicit implications.

In the developed blog, there is a contextual relationship between the indicators of connectivity of thematically correlated constituents and the pragmatic consistency of messages of participants in computer-mediated communication. In the blogosphere, lexical and grammatical tools that function in an anaphoric or cataphoric function are endowed with such semantics that acquire relevant meaning for the interlocutors only taking into account the previous or subsequent messages. These messages, in turn, turn out to be the context against which these units are identified and interpreted by the blogger and respondents. The relationship of connectedness is manifested not so much in the blog text, but at the moment of perception by the interlocutors of each other's discursive works. The category of connectedness is a value proportional to the communicative ability of the interlocutors to compare and coordinate the semantics of discursive elements, taking into account the referential schemes activated in their minds.

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