

**MSC 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.  
COMMUNICATION»****A POLYCODE TEXT IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF MASS MEDIA  
DISCOURSE**

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**Abstract**

Mass media environment is an integral part of the modern world, combining numerous information flows, the impact of which on an individual and society is widely recognized, however, the mechanisms of such impact and the degree of its effect onto the processes within the society are still being studied. Almost all discourses of modern society are involved in the media, which leads to the erosion of a particular discourse parameters, its characteristics, to crucial changes in the ways and means of reality representation. Media, explicitly and implicitly effecting the mass recipient of various discourses, increasingly determine the personal mental world. The article analyzes the features of the polycode texts in discourses, which differ greatly in their purpose and characteristics. The study of the implementation of various discourses allows the authors of this article to talk about the discourses transformation in the media, due to the increasing use of non-verbal sign systems. The authors characterize the functional peculiarity of a polycode text in different types of media discourse, identify the main factors effecting the functioning of the polycode texts, both in discourses with initially polycode nature and discourses for which polycode is not typical regarding their purpose. Particular attention is paid to identifying the specifics of the use of non-verbal components in polycode texts depending on the type of discourse taking into account the systemic transformation of media with complicating the cultural and communicative situation, and determining the typical use of a polycode text in the studied discourses in dynamics.

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*Keywords:* Discourse, media, media space, polycode text



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## 1. Introduction

In communication of mass media any discourse is more or less overlapped with the media discourse. In the context of the increasing complexity of the cultural and communicative situation in the media sphere, the proportion of texts with different sign systems within different discourses is increasing. A polycode text shows the discourse in a more concentrated, informative and easy to understand and decode way. A comprehensive study of non-verbal component in the functioning of legal, conflict, culinary-gastronomic, and network discourses is of interest from the point of view of the typicality / atypicality of it in different types of discourses and the identification of new trends in the media space.

## 2. Problem Statement

The systemic transformation of mass media communication with the complication of the cultural and communicative situation, when the screen culture is influencing the traditional media, becomes prevailing and leads to information visualization, which is a characteristic of modern media discourse as a whole (Berezin, 2003). This trend leads to an increase of interest to the text composed of different sign systems.

There is a different terminology to indicate the texts with a combination of verbal and non-verbal components. Over the past decades, the authors have used the terms such as “ a bimedral / polymedral / multimedial text”; “heterogeneous text”; “semiotically complicated text”, “intersemiotic text”; “iso-verbal complex”, “iso-verb”, “video-verbal text”, “composite text”, etc. In the text typology developed by Eiger and Yukht (1974) such texts are referred to polycode in contrast to monocode texts. These texts combine a natural language code with a code of another semiotic system. The term “creolized text”, proposed by Sorokin and Tarasov (1990), is actively functioning now. Creolized texts are defined as “consisting of two inhomogeneous parts – the verbal (linguistic / speech) and non-verbal (referring to other sign systems out of scope of the natural language)” (p. 180-181).

Accepting the comments of Chernyavskaya (2013) about the terminological inaccuracy of the concept of a “creolized text” (p. 68-69), we use the term “polycode text”. To indicate an element of another semiotic system in the verbal text, we prefer the terminological combinations “non-verbal component / element”, “non-verbal constituent”, since the equivalence of the replacement of the indicated units with the terms “iconic component”, “graphic component”, and “visual component” does not seem indisputable.

Being in the focus of linguistics, semiotics, philosophy, study of art, communication theory, social psychology, etc. a polycode text is studied in different directions. The types of these texts are described (Shaklein et al., 2019), hidden meanings in polycode texts are analyzed (Nesterova, 2018), the mechanism of interpretation of the semantic load of components is revealed (Blinova, 2019) etc.

Studies of a polycode text within the analysis of different types of media discourse in a quantitative ratio are presented differently. There are practically no studies about the role of polycode texts in legal discourse due to its specifics, although the characteristics of this discourse are highlighted in many works (Dubrovskaya et al., 2017). A polycode text in a conflict discourse can be considered from the point of view of impact onto the recipient consciousness and manipulating over it (Gromova, 2014).

Polycode texts in social and global networks are analyzed as well. Researchers consider the role of the verbal and non-verbal components in Internet communication (Gladkaya, 2017; Kitova, 2016), text structural features (Basalaeva et al., 2016), self-presentation of a linguistic personality and genre peculiarity (Kukuyeva, 2019). In polycode advertising texts, texts of recipes in the culinary and gastronomic discourse the authors analyze the ratio of verbal and non-verbal components (Burkova, 2004), national and cultural peculiarities (Reva et al., 2019), intercultural interaction (Moldanova, 2017; Syuj, 2018), axiological features (Krihtova, 2018; Voloshina & Tolstova, 2018). Since a polycode text is very peculiar in media discourse, a comparative analysis of the functions and nature of non-verbal components and their role in a text are of scientific interest.

### **3. Research Questions**

We consider a polycode text functioning in legal, conflict, culinary-gastronomic and network discourses. The analysis of a polycode text has been performed during 2003-2020, and it was based on printed and Internet-publications of regional and federal level, popular blogs of Moscow and St. Petersburg, regional mass media and social networks chats.

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

Description of the functional peculiarity of a polycode text in different types of mass media discourse with defining the character and role of a non-verbal component.

### **5. Research Methods**

The wide coverage of polycode texts in different types of mass media discourse presented in this work involves a set of research methods. The unit of analysis is the text in the unity of its verbal and non-verbal elements. The study of information visualization tools by the descriptive and analytical method makes it possible to trace the interaction of verbal and non-verbal components in a text. Content analysis covers texts of certain types of mass media with a variety of parameters. Communicative and discourse stylistic analysis contribute to identification of explicit and implicit semantic connections among verbal and non-verbal components, intent analysis allows to define the intentions of an author of a discourse by speech strategies and tactics, the method of comparative analysis reveals the functional polycode text specificity in a certain mass media discourse.

### **6. Findings**

The main principles of modern communicative interaction are formed in mass media space, and in the sphere of legal relations as well. To some extent, the reason for the polycode in mass media texts, including those related to the legal sphere, can be explained by the mass heterogeneous recipient with different attitudes, views, interests.

Another reason that increases the number of the polycode texts through which legal discourse is realized in mass media space is a change in human consciousness and behavior patterns, for which media

has become the preferred information and communication platform. It is characterized by a multilayer structure: it is typical for a person in the mass media sphere to perceive information using verbal and non-verbal signs, to assess and correct the data.

A comparison of the legal discourse in the federal and regional mass media gives an approximately identical trend. An increase in the number of polycode texts occurs both in the nuclear discourse (legal acts at the web site of “Rossiyskaya gazeta”) and in periphery discourse (definition, interpretation of the language of law by the participants in mass media discourse) in the spheres of legal discourse. Non-verbal signs are insignificant in legal discourse, and they are often represented by generalized images, connected either with the sphere of activity regulated by a legal act, or with law. If the goal of legal discourse is to inform about a crime and / or to prevent violations, then in many cases images of a man in handcuffs, a representative of law enforcement agencies, etc. are used. The signs of the visual system are aimed at developing a negative attitude to the actions violating the law. The recipient of the discourse should understand that in case of violation of the rules a person can be punished.

The polycode text in a conflict discourse, can reduce / raise the level of tension of the discourse. Tension as a special condition in which there is an increase in the potential conflict of a word, idiomatic expression, syntactic structure, and discourse itself, is an important feature that characterizes the functional features of a polycode text. The conflict text “contains the potential for multiple interpretations and the potential for a conflict between the author and the recipient” (Golev, 2004, p. 114).

In a polycode text a substantial part of the meaning can be attributed to the non-verbal component, and the implicit layers of such a text can decrease or increase. Addition of the main meaning of the verbal component of the text with its non-verbal element can help to avoid discrepancies between the author and the reader’s interpretation of the message, while the collision of the meanings of visual and verbal elements and the subtext lead to an increase in the implicit layers, which can increase the tension.

The analysis of the polycode texts in Pskov media space suggests the prevailing use of photo illustrations (photo portraits, photo posters, photo landscapes, etc.). Non-photographic illustrations are used much less frequently. The number of drawings, sketches, caricatures decreases.

Among the non-verbal components of a polycode text in a conflict discourse we can distinguish non-verbal components that either raise or do not raise this level. When the non-verbal component (a photo illustration) of the conflict text, performing an informatively illustrative function, confirms the authenticity of negative information in a verbal text, it does not increase the tension level (Mashkarin, 2003). When the non-verbal component, performing the same informative and illustrative function, complements the content of the verbal component, it increases the level of tension in the conflict discourse (Kamaljagin, 2018). The detailed characterization of the non-verbal component of the conflict text by the level of tension will contribute to solving the urgent problems of legal linguistics.

The blogosphere occupies a special position in mass media discourse, since the blog acts as a kind of transitional type, combining journalism and everyday discourse. In everyday discourse, colloquialism is manifested in written fixation. Experiencing limitations in the means of expressing intentions, emotions, etc., due to the distant nature of communication, communicants refer to other means to compensate the emotional component of the speech act – emoticons, emojis. The arsenal of these visual means is expanding due to GIF images, the polycode texts in the form of postcards, Internet memes, which can act as

independent texts, or as a component of the recipient's text. However, the graphic design of the text itself can be a unit of a polycode character. The presentation of words or word combinations in capital letters indicates a raising voice. For example: "These GUYS are our PRIDE!!!!" The written text also conveys a stretch of vowels to show uncertainty, surprise, indignation, sarcasm, etc. Cf.: "Ye-e-ah! There is nothing more to say! It is beyond the pale!" "Inde-e-ed! I do not believe!" "Ve-e-ery tasty!"

In distant communication punctuation marks have acquired a new pragmatic meaning. For a communicant, the presence of a certain punctuation mark or its absence has a special meaning. This feature is perceived differently by representatives of different age groups. For most Internet users over 30 years of age, the absence of a sign indicates carelessness, a hurry of the writer. Some respondents under 30 years of age note that the exclamation and question marks are important. For instance: *How can I get to such wonderful places? I have no idea* ["full stop" is missed]. The "full stop" mark at the end of a statement often gives the text categorization, sometimes even perceived as unwillingness to continue the conversation. For instance:

*A: Where are you going?*

*B: To St.Petersburg.*

*A: Are you offended?*

On the contrary, the absence of a full stop creates a feeling of easiness, spontaneity of the statement, the recipient's readiness for communication. For instance:

*Hello! 📧 Please, check direct for a message from us 🌸 We are looking forward to hearing 😊*

As a sign indicating the completeness of the phrase, emoticons, emojis expressing the emotions of the recipient or illustrating objects, units related to the content of the utterance are used. For instance:

*Its beauty moves me to tears, I have goosebumps 😊😊😊*

*Want to meet !!!))) I think it will be hot 🔥🔥🔥*

Polycode is a characteristic feature of culinary and gastronomic discourse. At the same time, it is difficult to judge about the dominant role of verbal or non-verbal elements in a polycode text here. The dominant position of a semiotic component is probably related to the genre of the text.

The main functions of the polycode texts in the structure of culinary and gastronomic discourse are illustrative, informative and aesthetic. The most common form of non-verbal component of a polycode text is an image of a finished dish with a serving option. The aesthetic function of non-verbal elements creates a deeper perception by the reader of the verbal part of the publication.

Some publications make the text of the culinary recipe informal. In "Arguments and Facts" recipes are divided into easy, medium, complex. The use of new formats for the presentation of the recipe is directly related to polycoding. A large amount of a text is compressed and transformed into a graphic scheme in combination with a picture and a special design – infographics. The text of the culinary recipe, fixed in the format of infographics, becomes a universal tool for transmitting information in mass media (<https://aif.ru/food/graphicrecipes>).

The discourse analysis of mass media allows us to specify and describe the processes of differentiation of meanings, reflecting contextual connections and positive and negative connotations. For the culinary and gastronomic discourse, the emotional-evaluative function of non-verbal components is

also a characteristic. The image in combination with the text information and dichotomy in the title cause an emotional feedback from a reader.

The evaluativity of polycode texts of the culinary and gastronomic discourse is distinguished by positive connotations. This function provides attracting the attention of the recipient and conveying an emotional evaluation of the content, the visual elements are distinguished by variety of colors. The colors of the photo must be natural, since a very brightly colored product is perceived negatively by the consumer, due to the trends of a healthy way of life. Besides, the analysis of the material showed the predominance of non-verbal components in which there is no place for a person. Even if the heading refers to the chef in the non-verbal part of the text there are only photos that accompany an instruction (Kondrashov, 2020). Exceptions are the materials where the recipe is presented by a celebrity.

## 7. Conclusion

A polycode text is a characteristic feature of Internet communication and, therefore, it penetrates into almost all discourses of mass media sphere. New conditions for legal discourse in the media space lead to the emergence of qualitatively new characteristics that are not typical for this discourse while functioning in legal sphere, in particular, they can be realized through a polycode text with a non-verbal component, aimed at development a negative attitude to the actions beyond the legal rules. In a conflict discourse of semantic but not thematic character, the functions of a polycode text are connected with raising the tension level of this discourse depending on the type of a non-verbal component, its location, character of interaction with a verbal constituent of a text. In a network discourse the set of non-verbal components of a polycode text, which compensate for limitations in expressing emotions and intentions of a recipient due to distant communication. The dominance of the culinary and gastronomic discourse, along with the illustrative-informational function, emotional-evaluative and aesthetic functions, leads to the brightness and variety of non-verbal components of the polycode text and to its significant transformation.

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