TILTM 2020
Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication

INFLUENCE OF INTERNET SPACE ON INTERCULTURAL AND BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The 2016–2018 election cycle in France, the USA and Russia showed the need to develop new options for analyzing the election campaign and the degree of potential voter turnout on the Internet, taking into account the impact on social networks. The article discusses the results of an empirical study, "Communication Campaign Model: A Comparative Analysis of Russia's Experience in the USA," and analyzes the election campaign of the "unexpected" presidential candidate in Russia, Ksenia Sobchak. By the word "unexpected" we mean that the person never appeared on the political stage before, and no one saw this person before the presidential election. The empirical base for the study was taken from the presidential candidate's account on social networks. The study analyzed the informative patterns of the personal page of Ksenia Sobchak, where the analysis was performed on four social networks (VKontakte, Instagram, Facebook and Odnoklassniki). An excerpt from the discourse contains all the materials published by the candidate since the announcement of her candidacy for the presidency of Russia (from May 18, 2017 to March 19, 2018). As part of the study, a new model of selective advertising communications was developed and conceptualized. Sobchak's personal appearance on social networks was not always realistic, but attracted a certain group of voters. A comparative analysis of the election campaign of K. Sobchak and Donald Trump revealed similar ways of forming and maintaining political content, common linguistic and cultural methods of interaction with potential voters and political opponents.

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Keywords: Election cycle, communication strategy, social media, semantic analysis, network analysis, internet space.

1. Introduction

In a network society, a language personality, as an actor of network communication, is subject to imminent change. Everyday Internet users send 195 billion emails, make 4 billion requests in search engines, process 3 billion gigabytes of data and watch and post 5 billion videos on YouTube (Trends in monetization of content on the Internet, 2019). Moreover, an average Russian spends almost half of their day using online services, whereas for a younger generation online media is the main source of information in comparison to the traditional ones (How media consumption and content are changing. Digital Trends 2019 in quotes and comments, n.d.). Furthermore, the political public debate has also been changed recently. More and more politicians try to conduct their political campaigns online and engage more and more users (Lai et al., 2017). Correspondingly, it is important to study the peculiar characteristics of the communicative practices of the individual and his or her relationship in the context of network communication since the study of personality changes is becoming more common in a network society where the evolution of the virtual information space takes place.

The World Electoral Cycle in 2016-2018 forced analysts, political strategists, linguists, representatives of government bodies, and politicians to reconsider their attitude to the degree of influence of the Internet space on the development and transformation of political processes, election technologies in particular. The development of information and communication technologies has led to the impact of the Internet on intercultural communication and business communication and, as a result, on the transformation of political processes and election technologies. The United States presidential election redefined the development vectors of both election technologies and social media: Donald Trump became the US president, and the founder and head of the largest social network in the world, Facebook, testified to the US Senate about interference in the election and data leakage of millions of social network users (Transcript of Mark Zuckerberg's Senate hearing, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

The campaign of D. Trump showed a new level of influence of social media in comparison with other communication channels. Social media have become the new "city square" with the possibility of using "information imbalance" and the formation of targeted messages for the electorate. In 2017, Ryabchenko and Malysheva conducted a linguistic-discursive and network analysis of D. Trump's election campaign and the impact of modern social media on socio-political processes. As a result, the features and current trends of campaigning were identified, considering the process of forming of a new kind of political culture – post-truth politics and the use of social media. A well-planned campaign allowed D. Trump to get a position of the US president (the second American president, who had not previously held any government posts).

In December 2017, the Civic Initiative Party nominated Ksenia Anatolyevna Sobchak ("Grazhdanskaja iniciativa" proposed Sobchak as a candidate for the Presidential Race, 2018) as a runner for the presidency of the Russian Federation on March 18, 2018. K. Sobchak, a Russian politician, TV presenter and radio host, journalist, public figure, actress (Ksenia Sobchak. Biography, 2018), October 18, 2017 in a viral video posted on Instagram announced her intention to run for president of the Russian

Federation. She became perhaps the most unexpected player in the political arena of Russia (like D. Trump in the US election), taking fourth place in the presidential election (a total of 8 presidential candidates were represented), gaining 1.68% of the vote (The Results of the Russian Presidential Elections, 2018).

3. Research Questions

1. What linguistic-discursive features are characterized by the posts of Donald Trump and Kseniya Sobchak in popular social networks?

2. Is the content created by the political candidates different depending on various social networks?

4. How does the model of election technologies influence the electorate in the online space?

5. What are the ways of forming and maintaining the political content used by political candidates?

4. Purpose of the Study

Information and communication technologies lead to qualitative and quantitative changes in the social space and form new habits of consumption and reproduction of politically significant content. Collective consciousness has now become the dominant form of "thought" in modern society. Investigations performed on their own are considered to be destructive as they undermine the principles of security and trust both in state power and moral standards (Benamara et al., 2018; González-Bailón & Wang, 2016). Social media allows to accumulate and analyze a large amount of data, including numerous content activity in the form of messages, likes, comments and hashtags, thus creating and building a new communicative model of the election campaign. Content activity is becoming a new source of data for the social sciences and involves an interdisciplinary format for conducting research. New areas of scientific knowledge are emerging – Digital Humanities and BigData, using network analysis and linguodiscursive analysis tools.

5. Research Methods

To analyze the new communicative model of the election campaign, we conducted a comprehensive study of political content that has a network approach as its foundation. It deals with considering the socio-political practices and their members as global social graphs. The notion of a social graph is grounded on the fact that networks (not groups) make up the world around us, and the behavior of the members in network collaboration is affected by the joining of these networks (Albert & Barabasi, 2002). As a result of applying network analysis, we got a sample of social networks and communities that are the main producers and consumers of political content dedicated to the election campaign of D.Trump and K. Sobchak. Linguistic-discursive analysis which is represented by content analysis and discursive analysis was applied in order to learn the interpretation procedures and the creation of meanings in the political content formed by social networks and groups. A determining factor in the process of making either individual or collective decisions is the usage of linguistic patterns under the "power" influence of the discursive field (Katermina & Gnedash, 2018; Ridout, 2018). Content analysis was used to look for patterns, the main trends in the organization of information flows in political content; determine the intent of the communicator when replicating these streams; predict possible audience reactions to this information.

Network data with this approach are considered as an objective (but indirect) reflection of the interests, requests of the parties involved in the process of political communication. In the community, special ways of speaking and thinking of social actors are formed which determine their further participation in the implementation of certain common practices. Their description was made by means of discourse analysis. The study of the methods of production, reproduction and consumption of political content are accentuated. Not only the ways of the language representation of political context of language can be considered by means of discourse analysis but also how both online and offline essence of communication can be formed and constructed by language.

Moreover, the political actors also understand a significant role of language and they use it in promoting their ideologies and persuading people (Bodoc, 2018). The application of the above research methods and theoretical approaches allowed us to describe a new communication model of the election campaign based on the consumption and reproduction of political content on the Internet.

6. Findings

What do D. Trump and K. Sobchak have in common? Both of them hosted TV reality shows. They frequently use social networks. They can say anything for any reason: sports, cinema, colleagues and, of course, politics. The posts of D. Trump and K. Sobchak collect hundreds of comments and are discussed for a rather long time in the news and information field. At the same time, the online activities of both of them are accompanied by high activity of haters: for example, the Internet drowned in memes and caricatures just a couple of hours after the announcement of the intention of K. Sobchak to run for president of the Russian Federation. In March 2018, according to the Brand Analytics campaign (Media trends. Media persons, 2018), K. Sobchak entered the Top-20 media persons discussed in social media (more than 6,000,000 Russian-language posts in social media were considered for the rating).

K. Sobchak succeeded in achieving a high result for someone who had just entered the political arena of Russia. In her election campaign, K. Sobchak, like Donald Trump, used offline and online space. The campaign in the Internet space was based on four social platforms: Instagram, Vkontakte, Facebook, Odnoklassniki. These social networks have been chosen due to their popularity in Russia (Social networks: a list of popular in Russia, 2020). The Russian part of the online space, unlike the Western European one, is a more complex system, since it is mixed from the perspective of social platforms, and it there are no clear groups in the discussion political core. This means that potential voters of different social features (like strata, gender and age, for example) can create an account and use any of the social networks that are accessible in the Russian Federation. During the campaign, K. Sobchak used four social platforms, many of which were operated, as linguistic-discursive analysis showed, using the cross-posting method. We have analyzed each platform and have identified the center of informational attraction for the election campaign by K. Sobchak.

Instagram: there are 6,315 posts and 5.6 million subscribers; 1285 subscriptions. The first post was published on February 3, 2012. On October 18, 2017, a video was posted with the signature "Breaking News – Everything Here: www.sobchakprotivvseh.ru": it was reported that K.A. Sobchak is running for president of the Russian Federation. The video gained 1,980,485 views (as of April 22, 2018). In the period

from October 18, 2017 to March 19, 2018, 359 news was published, and 64 after March 19, 2018 (as of April 22, 2018), which shows continued activity on the basis of this social platform.

Facebook: there are 147,142 subscribers and 23 subscriptions. In the period from October 21, 2017 to March 19, 2018 – 342 news in the news chronicle, and 103 – after March 19 (on 04/22/2018). 143 cross-posting news was duplicated from Instagram. The content of these news stories suggested joining the discussion on Youtube.com: "Discussion 'What does the irremovability of power lead to?' has begun. Get connected!" This social platform was used, inter alia, for interaction with the electorate located outside the Russian Federation.

VKontakte: there are 38 883 followers, 239 friends, 389 photos and 80 videos. In total, there are 242 entries on the page, the first entry was published on November 11, 2017, almost a month after the candidate was officially announced for president, and the last on March 19, 2018, the content of which was relevant to the March 18, 2018 elections and summing up the work done. Last visit to the page – March 23, 2018.

Odnoklassniki: there are 12,763 followers, 519 photos and 2 videos. There are 132 activities in the feed, of which 104 are notes. The first entry was published on November 13, 2017, the last one on March 19, 2018, the content of which also reflected the attitude towards the elections on March 18, 2018 and summarizing the work done. Last visit to the page – April 15, 2018 (on April 22, 2018).

Instagram prevails over other social platforms in terms of the degree of semantic content of politically significant content. This suggests that Instagram was the center of informational attraction for the campaign of K. Sobchak and a source of politically significant content.

The basis of the network interaction of D. Trump's election campaign were the social platforms Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (the last two are basic social media), each of which solved a specific problem set. Facebook is the main clou for certain groups of the electorate: big business, politicians, media people and other media. An analysis of the hubs of the network environment in Facebook, which is essentially a scaleless network (Ryabchenko & Malysheva, 2017), gives an idea of the role of these special groups in the campaign of D. Trump. D. Trump's team used Facebook as the main strategy until September 2016. Then the strategy began to shift to Twitter. Messages published by the presidential candidate, as well as the fact of using Twitter, become the main topic of discussion in the media. Obviously, this was the main goal in the first phase of using Twitter as part of an enhanced communication strategy. Why Twitter? According to Cambridge Analytica's psychological targeting analysis on social media Twitter messages are perceived by the majority of the electorate in the U.S. as direct communication with each of them. Whereas Facebook was used with the aim of fundraising, the aim of Twitter was to be a means of direct communication with voters and to impact their opinions. According to a linguistic analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter, messages that have the same notion are different in style, connotation, as well as compositional and internal structure (Ryabchenko & Malysheva, 2017).

After analyzing the content generated during the implementation of the K. Sobchak's campaign in various social media, we can conclude that the style did not change depending on the platform. D.Trump's campaign was focused on the production of targeted content. The campaign of K. Sobchak in the production of politically significant content was focused on key events of the election campaign, and not the consumer. The events included the following ones: "News about the decision to run for office", "End of the election campaign", "Day of silence", "Statements on federal television channels".

"News of the decision to run." K. Sobchak begins her first video message with the rhetorical question "Why go to the polls?". The use of impersonal constructs is a generalization and manifestation of insignificance. "A lot of people offer not to take part in these elections". "A lot of" is a subjective argument of K. Sobchak since she does not give any facts to confirm her words, but this is how the audience can be made to believe that there really are many such people. The pronoun "these" is intended to demonstrate the attitude towards the elections and cause the listener to disapprove of the issue of elections in general. The use of impersonal constructions continues until the middle of the monologue. We note the appearance of introductory constructions which are also used as arguments: "Indeed, you can just go nowhere." At this stage, a sharp complication of syntactic constructions takes place: "If those candidates who are, we're tired of us, but we don't let others, real ones, anyway"? This proposal, firstly, stands out among the ones more concise in structure representing a complex proposal with subordinate and composing forms of communication; at the same time, one of the subordinate sentences is already vaguely personal (in impersonal ones, Ksenia Sobchak was detached from what was happening). A reference is made to certain "them", which creates a feeling of commonality of opinions of the sender and recipient of the content regarding who they are. Structural complementation is designed to "hold back" the attention of those who listen. The thing is that the brain of the recipient has adjusted to the "simple" style of speech, and is not able to perceive everything that was said in a complex sentence, but it captures one single word – "tired". This lexical unit is also distinguished by the fact that it enters the colloquial layer of vocabulary, thereby sharply contrasting with the entire context of the appeal. As a result, attention is focused on two aspects: "they" and "tired", respectively, thereby implicitly forming the attitude to the elections that was already laid down by the pronoun "these" in the example above. Then there is a transition to certain personal sentences: "But if you don't go, then how do you understand that you care? How to understand what exactly you are against? How to make your voice heard? " Lexical and syntactic repetitions – case forms of the pronoun "you", "how to understand", "how"? – this is a call to action directly addressed to the listener himself.

"Speeches on federal television channels." K. Sobchak criticizes the "official" language of other candidates although she herself actively uses impersonal complex grammatical and syntactic constructions. She compares the format of the debate with the "circus" ("They are satisfied with this circus" – this sarcastic metaphor is provocative and creates a negative reaction from the reader). K.Sobchak tends to divide the other candidates into two groups: men and adversaries (about the occurrence with Vladimir Zhirinovsky, she writes: "... again, none of the men and fellow opponents stood up, not like a woman, but simply against rudeness and violation of the regulations"). In her opinion, being men, they should have stood up for her, and as fellow opponents, to report a violation of the rules. This separation creates a kind of social conflict between what a man should do and what a colleague should do, and thereby distracts the user's attention from the elections, transferring the topic to the gender-personal aspect.

"Day of silence". On the day of silence, K. Sobchak posted on her Instagram page a video of her child with the caption: "It is impossible for anyone to explain that today is day of silence!!!" It is interesting that before the start of the election race, only 5 records with the image of the child were published (no photographs were visible on the face), after the announcement of the intention to run – 12. Content containing personal information about a media person increases the level of trust and stimulates interest in

this person and their social media accounts. On the day of silence, such activity plays into the hands of the presidential candidate, indirectly influencing behavioral activity on social networks.

"When the election campaign ended". When the election results were, K. Sobchak posted a post on all four social platforms which she used to run the election campaign. The static character of the text of this message (the overwhelming number of nouns in comparison with verbs) indicates the desire not to induce action, but to bring the necessary information. The placement of this content pursued the following goals: to emphasize the literacy and high level of education of K. Sobchak (the use of complex sentences, participles and participles – "... a million people who supported our values", "a power that secured itself ...") and political awareness, designate purposefulness (using infinitive constructions – "see as many people as possible", "understand and try to solve their problems", "return the issues to the federal agenda"), specific goals, its future movements (repetition of the personal pronoun "I") and make it clear that the results of the elections are not upsetting. Syntactic and lexical repetitions ("despite the humiliation", "despite the opposition", "every opposition", "everyone who disagrees with the authorities") contribute to the consolidation of the statements made in the mind of the recipient.

7. Conclusion

Thanks to a study of the election campaign of D. Trump and K. Sobchak, one can single out and conceptualize a new communicative model of the election campaign. Distinctive features of the new model are: focus on interaction with informal media; emphasis on the visualization of the personality of a politician in social media, not always relevant to reality, but impressive to selected groups of voters. Thanks to the conducted network and linguistic-discursive analysis, we can identify the main factors that determine the contours and effectiveness of the new communication model of the election campaign. The Internet space through social media outstrips events, i.e. Internet users are actively discussing various kinds of events that have not yet occurred, but with a certain probability can occur and, as a result, are predictable and controlled processes (Keneshloo et al., 2014). Negatively colored news in the fake news format spreads much faster and more efficiently than positive one and is a consolidating force in relation to opponents. It can also be mentioned that as the superiority in online space has been reached by means of social networks, it is very likely to be transformed into superiority offline. The relational analysis along with linguistic-discursive analysis helps us to recognize and analyze the basic elements of the campaign and evaluate the degree of their impact on the efficiency of the campaign as a whole. Segmentation of the electorate not only by gender and age but also in accordance with the social habits of using the Internet allows the most effective use of targeted technologies in the promotion and consumption of politically significant content. The Internet space is perceived by the participants in the political process as a new "city square for public speaking," but not everyone is aware of the possibility of the existence of an "information imbalance" in the online space, when each participant in the communication process receives a personalized message while being fully confident that all participants in the process received the same message in terms of meaning and content.

Acknowledgments

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