Discourse of User Comments in the System of Media Influence on Public Opinion: to the Application of Critical Discourse Analysis in the Study of Social Networks

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Abstract
The article deals with the instrumental possibilities of critical discourse analysis (CDA) for the study of social networks. With the help of CDA, the discursive field of comments spreading in the public of journalistic editions has been investigated. Based on the Facebook page of the high-quality British edition "The Guardian", the peculiarities of the correlation between the comments discourse and the basic media message discourse have been revealed according to such parameters as correspondence to the topic, intertextuality, transitivity, and modality (epistemic, axiological, temporal, and spatial one). It has been proven that social networks have a high level of discursiveness, which is manifested in the ability to create a discourse independent of the commented topic of the post. The conditions under which users form their own news agenda, different from that offered by the media, have been determined.

1. Introduction

In the system of discursive power (or modal power according to M. Foucault), social networks are getting a special status. The explicit user-centrism of network communication both gives freedom of speech and perception and causes destructive phenomena like polarization of society, replication of pathogenic texts and production of messages that provoke moral panic and collective deviations. The high level of discursiveness of social networks, their role in replicating messages and catalysing influences determine the interest in this phenomenon in the field of discursive studies. Communication in social networks is growing every day. This process depends on geopolitical and sociocultural factors and shows unequal intensity for different countries. In our study we have focused on the network space of Great Britain, the country that is the European leader in the field of social media. According to the latest data of the Demand Sage automated reporting platform, the UK keeps the third place in the world and the first in Europe for the "average number of social media accounts per person" (it's 6.9 accounts per person) [1] (Table 1).

The United Kingdom is also in the top 20 countries of the world with the greatest number of social media users (61.67 million people) [1]. Additionally, Facebook is the most popular social media platform in the UK. According to the data of the Statista Research Department, in September 2022 there were 53.46 million Facebook users in the UK. It is worth noting that this is 7.61 million more users than in September 2020. Over the past two years, Facebook has shown a 16 percent increase in audience and now is the leading social network in the country [2].

Table 1

Average number of social media accounts per person in 2023

Country	Average Social Media Accounts Per Person
India	11.4
The United States	7.1
The United Kingdom	6.9
Canada	6.8
Japan	3.8

The fact is that 74% of the UK residents access their news through online networks, including social media. At the same time, Facebook is the leader in the world social media platform ranking and has more than 2.9 billion of monthly active users [2] (Figure 1).
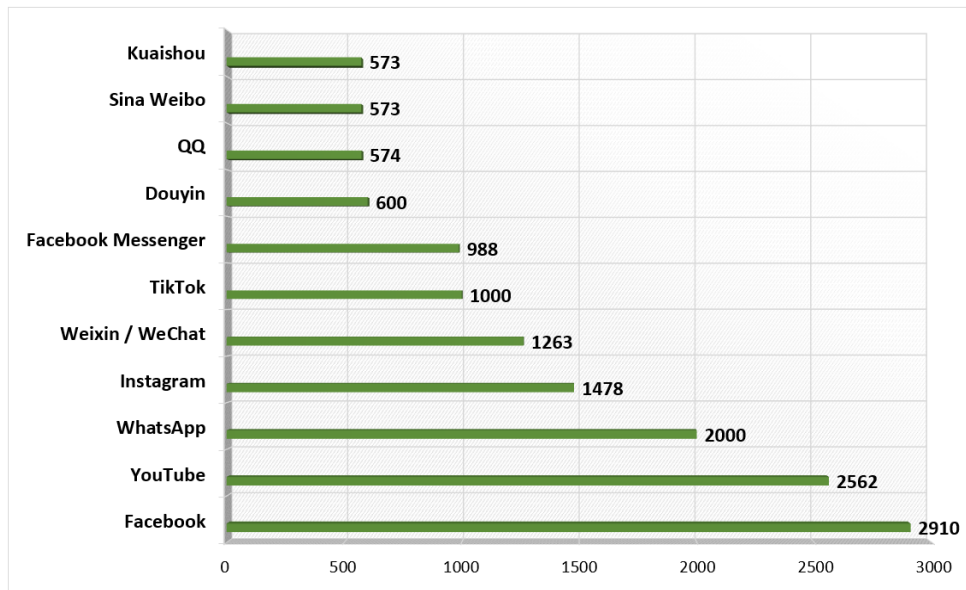
Figure 1: The most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users (in millions)

The statistical differentiation of users by age groups allows us to conclude that the most active stratum are 25-34-year-old users (25.1%) and 35-44-year-old ones (18.9%) [3] (Figure 2).
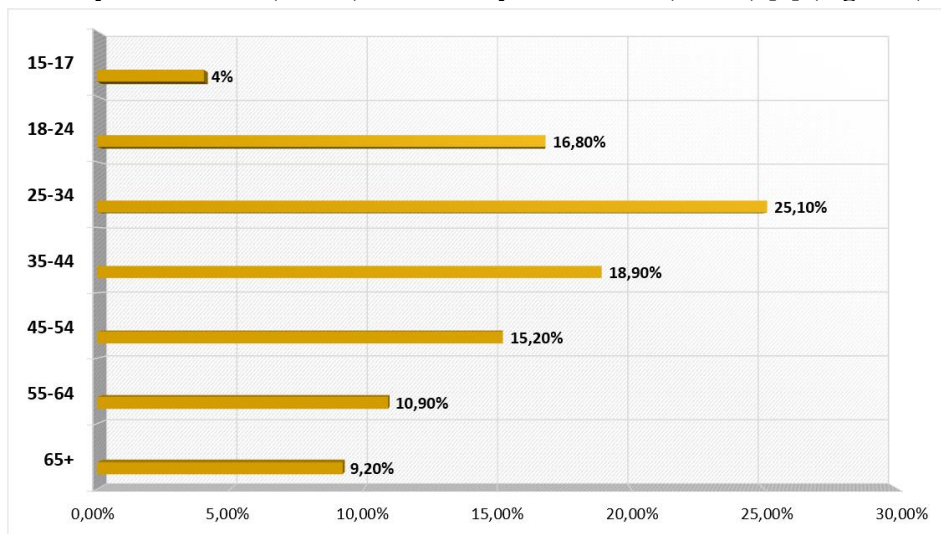
Figure 2: Distribution of Facebook users in the United Kingdom as of December 2021, by age group

These groups tend to have the highest number of influencers with high levels of digital literacy and social media skills through which they can influence society. The approach that presents social media as an environment for influencing society is the main one in scientific discourse.

In market conditions, traditional media are forced to use social media platforms and their resources, as they can quickly find their target audience there. The resonance of materials of traditional editions is very often determined by their number in the media space, the key communicators' attention paid to them, and their proximity to mainstream topics. At the same time, in the social networks space we can observe a communication situation in which social media publications don't correspond to the topics and value judgments presented in them. The comments discourse that accompanies the communicative existence of media material spreads around thematic hubs and opinions proposed by community members, and does not develop the topic presented in it. Through such discussions, society declares priority topics of the news agenda, which may not coincide with the media agenda setting and the mainstream of their media receptions. In this way, social networks form an ecosystem with a high potential for self-organization and influence on public opinion.

2. Related works

The role of social media in creating and replicating of public discourses determines the research interest in this communication phenomenon. Social media is increasingly becoming the object of interdisciplinary studies that combine paradigms and approaches of network theory, social theory, graph theory, network analysis, social psychology, media psychology, etc. Information systems such as social networks have been proven to have a significant impact on public opinion [4]. At the same time, researchers define Facebook as a fundamentally new form of communication that provides mentally unique interpersonal and social effects connecting people with each other. Donald Kirkpatrick calls this phenomenon the "Facebook effect" [5]. Given the clear representativeness of this social network in terms of discursive influences, we have chosen it for our study.

Focusing on the network relationships of individuals allows us to reveal the consequences of communication in social networks, which are not limited only to ideas about the behavior of some users. The reception of media messages articulated by readers in the discursive field of comments causes systemic effects that affect the interaction between the media and the audience. Comments influence the perception of media presentations of reality [6]. Users view comments primarily before reading the media material; this causes an appropriate disposition of perception: opinions that are incongruent with the expressed belief cause a prejudice and doubts about the authenticity of the messages [7].

S. Gearhart, I. A. Coman, A. Moe and S. Brammer point to transformations in the perception of news by a mass audience under the influence of social network discourses. Media organizations keep in touch with their target audience through Facebook, as comments are usually inaccessible on news websites. Using the platforms provided to express their beliefs, users spread their own views, stories and prejudices regarding journalistic content [8].

The use of social networks leads to the transition of journalism from single-channel activity to multi-channel communication with users. At the same time, Facebook and Twitter are used very actively for many journalistic purposes [9].

The interaction of traditional media and social networks leads to the emergence of "viral journalism", i.e., dissemination of media information among a wide audience through network platforms. At the same time, media professionals confirm the high risks of using viral technologies that can cause an outflow of loyal readers and a decrease in reputation. The "casual consumption" of news inherent in the digital sphere nullifies the value of journalistic material, which "can be shared to prove a thesis, but can also be framed according to the sender's point of view" [10].

Recipients of media messages are much more active in commenting on what they read on social networks than in real life, which is determined by various psychological factors, in particular, the ability to hide their true identity.

Users of different social strata engage in dialogue with each other on online discussion platforms offered by the media and discuss some important political and socio-economic issues [11].

In general, the analysis of comments makes it possible to reveal the content of public opinion on a particular issue [12]. Moreover, such researchers as Anamaria Dutceac Segesten, Michael Bossetta, Nils Holmberg, and Diederick Niehorster note that «because of their high visibility, comments as citizen-generated opinions may influence the news diets of their network peers» [13].

S. Formanova's research is heuristically valuable for our study, since it considers a comment as a communicative event, characterized by a subjective presentation of information and having an evident "communicative past". In the context of our study, this is a media message that causes a reaction expressed in a comment [14]. According to O. Urzhedovska, an Internet comment is an expression that does not have a definite form, it is often just a free remark not necessarily and not always referring directly to the text it concerns to [15].

Shuning Lu, Hai Liang and Gina M. Masullo note that a serious challenge for the news ecosystem, formed by quality journalism, is user comments, which, due to their low quality (bias or impoliteness), reduce media credibility and worsen the quality of news perception [16].

Thus, the comments discursive field does not so much represent reflections on the basic media message as it points out the free communicative existence of some statements of the participants of the communicative event. The low level of referentiality of comments to the main discourse is a sign of its insufficient relevance to the informational needs and expectations of the audience. At the same time, media reports are only the starting point for the recipients' discursive activity, a reflexive basis for self-expression and further influence on public opinion.

In our study we have demonstrated the phenomenon of discursiveness of social networks on the example of the reception of the Guardian's Facebook page, which was manifested in active commenting on the journalistic materials posted on it.

3. Methods and Materials

The influence of social networks on society occurs through discursive practices. Pointing to the discursive nature of network communication, we mean its rootedness in reality, contextual conditioning, as well as its connection with a number of extralinguistic factors. These characteristics of network communication point to the heuristic value of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method that demonstrates the social world to be constructed with the help of meanings. According to N. Fairclough, one of CDA founders, people are not passive social subjects, but they provoke socio-cultural changes or hinder them [17]. The network space functions as an environment of active social actors who have a multi-vector influence on society through discursive practices. Social media users somehow find themselves "inside" antagonistic discourses that polarize society on the basis of political, socio-cultural and other determinants.

According to the apt statement of V.M. Maidanyuk, a discourse is spread in the network environment, which is a historically determined image of knowledge, representing the intellectual communication of the era [18].

We propose to apply critical discourse analysis to the study of social media, since it is, first of all, a social method that focuses on such social problems as abuse of power, polarization of society, discrimination, etc., which can be criticized by revealing their discursive basis. The way of using language in CDA becomes an informative representative of ideological influences and social relations. It certifies the current social order. Secondly, CDA reveals the two-way process of constituting social practices by discourse and vice versa, the influence of an array of social manifestations of network polylogue participants on the functionality of the discourse. Thirdly, CDA considers any text unit as a field of interaction (mutual reinforcement or mutual negation) of different discourses, therefore it is guided by intertextuality.

Many researchers constitute the three-dimensionality of discourse. In particular, Jassem Fathabadi suggests considering it as a text, as a discursive practice, and as a social practice [19].

We have processed a large amount of empirical material taking into consideration the key methodological ideas and principles of the well-known developers of critical discourse analysis as Ruth Wodak, Teun A. van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Martin Nonhoff [20; 21; 22; 23]. In particular, we are guided by the idea of discourse analysis as a research program, which is based on a constructivist pragmatic methodology with its statements about the impossibility of direct access to

the empirical world, therefore researchers focus on its linguistic and other symbolic ideas [22]. M. Nonhoff points out that the object of knowledge is structured linguistically. This is observed in a number of social practices, in particular, in social media messages. According to the researcher, "discourse analysis is a critical one, since from the very beginning its proponents take a position of assessing the social (power) relations to be investigated" [22]. T. A. van Dijk notes that discourse and its structures are realized as specific social actions, and considers this statement to be the basic principle of critical discourse analysis. At the same time, researchers consider discourse analysis as criticism, which a text unit "will be subjected to during the analysis and through analysis, and the critical potential will be attributed to the discourse analysis itself. In other words, the discourse analysis can be seen as a "discursive formation".

Many CDA supporters notes that such an analysis should be applied to real social and political problems (according to T. van Dijk, these are serious problems that threaten the life and well-being of people). This allows us to take advantages of this method for studying some destructive phenomena that are vastly manifested in social media and affect the state of society as a whole.

In CDA, all empirical data appear as discursive representations. This allows you to get convincing, understandable, interesting and open to criticism knowledge. We were guided by this statement of M. Nonhoff's critical discourse analysis to systematize the empirical material. We also followed the principles of the researcher's methodological approach to the study of discursive formations, in particular, as to dividing the empirical material into research-relevant categories such as concepts, relationships, beliefs of subjects, elements of narratives, etc. with their subsequent regrouping in accordance with the research objectives.

The scientific works of N. Fairclough served as the direct methodological basis of our study as the scientist had formulated CDA program, pointing out such key points as the emergence of discourses, in particular, on the basis of already existing ones; establishment of relations of dialogue, competition, and dominance between discourses; recontextualization of discourses; operationalization of discourses, depending on conditions that are partly post-discursive ones [23].

Some posts on The Guardian's Facebook page, which were links to publications, served as empirical material. The choice of the material was determined by the characteristics of Facebook as a platform for active public communication, which has a high level of resonance and influence.

4. Experiment

According to T. A. van Dijk, the topic of conversation can significantly influence the nature of the speech strategies of polylogue participants in social networks [24]. In our study, we proceed from a hypothesis that could be represented by three interrelated statements. As a result of technological changes in the globalized information world, traditional media communicate with their audiences on social media platforms. Publications of editions, to which users get access via links posted on their official pages, cause discussions that are thematically far from the original topics, due to the non-normative nature of the discourses inherent in them. While functioning as a discourse, the journalistic text opens up in the network space, changes its modality and problem-thematic characteristics. The network audience uses it as a discursive occasion for discussing topics that have a powerful social resonance at the moment.

According to N. Luman, topics "serve to structurally connect the mass media with other social spheres, while they are so elastic and can be so diverse that the media can cover all spheres of society through its topics" [25]. So, our task was to identify the peculiarities of the reception of journalistic materials in social media. This brought to the fore the reference of the audience to the presented topics, revealed in a number of comments under the posts.

During critical discourse analysis, we identified the following characteristics:
- intertextuality of comments (appeals to other discourses or events);
- modality: epistemic (knowledge, belief and ignorance), axiological (good, bad or indifferent attitude towards the object / the actor of the material), spatial (proximity / remoteness), temporal (synchronicity / diachronicity);
- transitivity (strength of relationships between subjects and objects or processes).

Intertextuality. The higher the resonance of network messages, the wider the intertextuality of their receptive field. The number of recipient-commentators largely determines the intensity of the polylogue and affects the number of precedent texts used by the participants of communication. Their appeal to arguments, facts and characters outside the chronotope of the basic message implies the expansion of the contextual framework of the communication event created by the addressee. In our case, the edition engages the readership in the journalistic material through a link.

Intertextuality in CDA involves the interpretation of all background information, explicitly or implicitly presented in the discourse, which is defined by the formula "basic message discourse plus comments discourse." At the same time, it should be taken into account that the discursive field of a communicative event, formed by the main message, is fundamentally open to new discursive practices. N. Fairclough designates the fact of going beyond textual reality with the term "interdiscursiveness", indicating that "intertextuality" is its component [17].

Transitivity. The concept of transitivity in the use of language was first applied by critical linguistics, which was formed in Great Britain in the late 70s. This category made it possible to characterize the speaker's intentions, his attitude to the object of speech, and involvement in the topic of the message. While analising comments, it is advisable to use transitivity markers, represented by the pronouns I/we (high level of transitivity), you (medium level of transitivity), he/she/they (low level of transitivity). A high level of transitivity indicates the involvement of recipients in the topic discursive space and their actual identification with the basic topic. A medium level of transitivity indicates the situation of the recipient's subject-subject perception of the actors presented in the message. As a rule, a low level of transitivity means the basic message perception within the topic.

Modality. The category of modality is usually used by researchers to analyze the relations between the statement, the addresser, the addressee, and the reality with which the message is associated. Different types of modalities as a functional and semantic category of the message represent its different characteristics. O.A. Rudoman rightly notes, that "the cognitive aspect of modality reflects the generation and transfer of knowledge through the prism of communication" [26]. When applying CDA, we paid attention to the role of discourse both in the generation and transfer of knowledge, and in the manifestation of cognitive instructions of recipients. In turn, axiological modality indicates the peculiarities of the evaluative attitude of the recipients to the main message, which is revealed in judgments-comments.

Spatial modality characterizes the territorial proximity or remoteness of the recipients of the basic message, which they indicate in their replicas or comments.

Temporal modality of discourse is associated with the categories of synchronicity and diachronicity. They characterize any event that turns into discourse and becomes a reference to what is happening now or happened once.

Discourse-centrism is a principle of formation of network communication. This principle is extremely influential in the production of assessments, identities, and ideologies. It is discursive processes that unite community members. At the same time, O. Semenets rightly notes that "the power of discourse is manifested in its ability to exert a powerful influence both on an individual person and on social processes in general." [27].

When applying CDA, we also took into consideration the relevance of the comment to the topic of the material. Four posts from different thematic blocks (political, cultural and religious) were selected for analysis. This made it possible to demonstrate the patterns of reception of social network discourses in various social spheres.

In order to prove the hypothesis of a high level of discursiveness of social networks, we have applied CDA for two high-profile political messages, one of which was published before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the second message appeared after 7 months of the war. A high profile was a relative characteristic, which we determined by the number of comments under the post that found responses among community members.

5. Results and Discussions

The first post was a link to the speech of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson regarding the Russian-Ukrainian crisis *("Boris Johnson says «there is extreme danger to the world from potential*

Russia invasion»". *The Guardian. 19.02.2022*). The second post was also about the war in Ukraine; it was a link to the article *"Roger Waters cancels gigs in Poland amid row over Ukraine war comments" (The Guardian. 24.09.2022).* The results of critical discourse analysis of two high-profile political messages are presented in the figure 3.
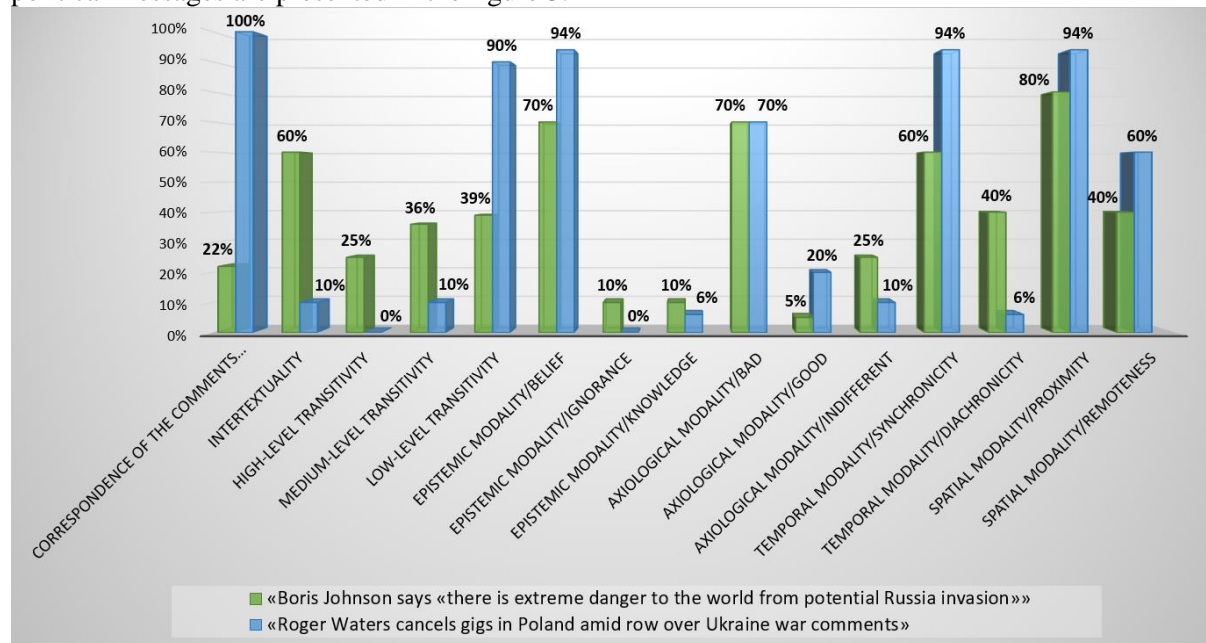
Figure 3: The results of critical discourse analysis of two high-profile political messages

The post *"Boris Johnson says «there is extreme danger to the world from potential Russia invasion»"* had about 1,000 comments. The vast majority of them (78%) showed a context shift towards current British issues and concerns.

The corpus of analyzed comments indicated a high level of intertextuality of the polylogue that was spreading around Boris Johnson's speech (60%). Among the comments one could find appeals to historical facts and eras, mentions of personalities, and reminiscences of mass culture objects. All of them illustrated the perception of the Ukrainian theme in the light of criticism of the political career of British Prime Minister. Under the post there were the most frequent references to the images of W. Churchill. In 15% of the comments, there were ironic remarks about Boris Johnson's inaccessibility to the level of the legendary British premier. A whole conceptual sphere was formed around the allusions to W. Churchill, for example, "Churchillian complex", "Churchillian ego without Churchillian strategy", "Churchill wouldn't have trusted him to empty his ashtray unassisted". The British joked about B. Johnson's futile efforts to realize Churchill's ambitions. Among the intertextual elements there were also references to the legendary conqueror of the world Alexander the Great, a serial killer Harold Shipman and a comedian Benny Hill.

The comments had a high (25%) and medium (36%) transitivity level. This indicated that digression from the subject was accompanied by a reference to personal and collective reflections (for example, "I'm a 79-year-old and could have stood up and made that speech", "I remember when the Argentinians went into the Falkland Islands").

Epistemic modality of 70% of comments was represented by "belief" modes. Statements containing manifestations of ignorance (doubts, interrogative sentences, exclamations) and knowledge (statements of historical events that correspond to the current foreign policy situation for Great Britain) were equally divided. Each group of statements accounted for 10%. Users expressed their opinions, assessed and warned. So, the discourse was critical and directed against the current prime minister. The key concept, around which the criticism was spread, we formulated as "distracting attention from current problems with the help of war." For example, "Of course, other leaders talk about it too, but not as much as Johnson does, who pumps everything possible with it to divert attention from domestic problems."

Accordingly, about 70% of comments had a bad axiological modality, 25% – indifferent, and 5% – good. Diachronicity as a feature of temporal modality was observed in 40% of comments. Spatial proximity of comments was 80%.

The post *"Roger Waters cancels gigs in Poland amid row over Ukraine war comments"* caused a wide response. There were 2,300 comments under the post. At the same time, comment branches formed an active discourse space. There were about 230 replicas in it.

The publication dedicated to Waters explicates the phenomenon of so-called culture-of-cancellation. This is mainly a discursive practice where the relationship between mainstream evaluative guidelines and social actions is clearly visible. In this case, we are talking about the act of "cancellation" of Roger Waters, a co-founder of the progressive rock band Pink Floyd, because of his unacceptable position on the war in Ukraine. In an open letter to Ukraine's first lady Olena Zelenska, R. Waters accused Ukraine's "extreme nationalists" of pushing the country onto the path of catastrophic war. The fact made the Poles' blood boil and they demanded Waters to be declared persona non grata in their country *(The Guardian. 24.09.2022)*.

So, the first material selected for CDA was a first-person narrative, and the second one was actually a reflection on a reflection, t.e. a response to the reactions of the Poles, who put a ban on Roger Waters.

The thematic correlation of these two materials was evident, while their temporal characteristics were different, but just they determined the nature of the reception of these basic media messages.

Critical discourse analysis of the corpus of comments of the second material revealed their high relevance to the topic of the main message. In any case, 100% of the comments developed the topic of the media message. The comments had a low and medium transitivity level, namely 90% of them pointed to the hero of the narrative and 10% contained imperatives or ironic recommendations to R. Waters. This allowed us to conclude that the topic did not cause personal reflections, and the responses mainly concerned the hero of the material as a third person. This indirectly indicated the commentators' focus on the topic. In order to confirm this thesis, we'd like to give some examples of the comments: "well, he had to cancel concerts because people didn't want to buy tickets after his revolting letter about the war"; "nobody needs pro-putin musicians here!"; "let him go to russia and sing for putin."

Epistemic modality expressed users' opinion in 94% of cases. And only 6% of the comments demonstrated knowledge of the extralinguistic situation. The comments had a heterogeneous axiological modality. This indicated a certain polarization of the community in political assessments. In our opinion, accusing R. Waters of pro-russian / pro-kremlin / pro-putin views included the modes of bad modality. This is about 70% of the comments. Intertextuality was provided by appeals to the communist ideology and the corresponding sympathies of the musician. For example, "Perhaps Waters still need an education, because when you read his views, he seems as impenetrable as a brick in a wall. I have never been a Pink Floyd's fan and I'm not a fan of such an ignorant blind follower of communist ideology as Waters"; "Roger Waters is a relic of the past, he's a pro-Soviet, authoritarian and anti-Western until his last breath"; "If you're Roger Waters, you can be wrong about one or two things, and the war in Ukraine is one of them. Like many members of his generation, he is a socialist, but still a great artist, perhaps the greatest of all"; "I wish you weren't here. Sincerely, Poland"; "Ignorance is bliss, but ignorance plus publicity is a disaster. Unfortunately, such things happen to great musicians too."

It is worth noting that 10% of narratives showed an indifferent attitude towards the actor of the material. They took art beyond politics and actually levelled the scandalous resonance of Waters' political action. For example, "Roger Waters is a great musician, and his views on politics are just the views of a musician. They may be ungrounded, preconceived or superficial. I would like him to keep only music for himself, because his political views make his music difficult to listen to"; "He's a brilliant musician, but politics is not his strong point. He must do what he does best and bring pleasure to millions. He is not a political genius."

About 20% of comments had a good modality. It's characteristic that they were purely evaluative, cognitively simplistic and stereotypical such as "He's a brave man to resist Western advertising"; "Keep it up, Roger!" The absence of an argumentative component levelled the development of discourse around such replicas.

About 10% of comments had intertextuality. Moreover, biographical references directly related to Roger Waters (e.g., references to David Gilmour, Richard Wright or Ted Nugent) and political allusions that expanded the context of negatively connoted comments (e.g., Brexit, anti-Americanism, the war in Palestine, Oliver Stone's pro-russian documentary "Ukraine's on fire") were singled out.

In 94% of cases, synchronicity was the main characteristic of temporal modality. This means that the commentators were in the time frame of the discursive event. In 95% of cases, spatial modality also indicated a clear stabilization of comments within the discursive space of the media message.

Thus, CDA confirmed the fact that the discourse of comments was dependent on the chronotope of the basic media message. The "pre-war" discursive situation generated receptions beyond this concept and created context-bound themes. This indicated spatial and temporal proximity to users. Instead, the discursive situation "during the war" focused recipient-commentators' attention on events distant from them, especially in the Ukrainian and near-Ukrainian contexts. The results of CDA coincided with M. Nonhoff's opinion about the temporally mediated connection between the subject and the discourse [28].

We also applied CDA to art-themed material *"It's a strange moment we live in': MLK sculptor on backlash to monument" (20.01.2023)* and to the commentary corpus inspired by it. The object of the material had caused high-profile public discussions, which led to a high level of polarization of the comments. A wide range of reflections on the monument to Martin Luther King could be already seen at the beginning of the material. For example, "The Embrace, a 19-ton bronze depicting Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King and a love that helped change the world, has inspired praise, jokes and bile".

The author of the article, on the one hand, set himself the task of explaining the artistic idea to the readers, and on the other hand, demonstrated the ambiguity of the reception of the monument. This caused a lot of readers' reflections – from approval to censure – on the Facebook platform offered by the edition for expressing opinions. It is significant that in the comments textual space we encountered concerns from recipients that readers' comments suggested they hadn't read the material at all. For example, "Good article, maybe people should read it before commenting."

In this case the title of the article and a recognizable illustration became a sufficient informational reason for free speech and in total gave an idea of the public opinion regarding a specific event, namely the installation of a monument. This art object became an index sign for a larger topic. In fact, the discussion was spread around modern art, its content, functionality, and role in society. For example, "It's beautiful. This is an art installation. Look at it, move around it, delve into its meaning, read the sign-board next to it and move on. Each part does not have to be simple. Maybe people should go back to school or take an art class to figure it out."

There were 261 comments under the article. All of them corresponded to the topic. At the same time, the comments had a low level of intertextuality (3% of them were references to other works of contemporary art). For example, "I remember when Cassandra was installed in Chicago for the first time. This caused a lot of controversy. Now it is a cultural monument visited by millions of people."

Most of the comments (70%) had a low level of transitivity and showed references to the material object, the hero, and the broad category of "contemporary art." Comments with a high level of transitivity (28%) conveyed the direct reasoning of the panelists regarding the disputed art object. For example, "Just visited Boston and saw this sculpture last weekend. It's beautiful" or "It's very confusing for me". There were very few comments with a middle level of transitivity (2%). They were an appeal to the hero of the material, given as a replica from the dialogue, such as "If people can't explain what your art should be, it's your fault as an artist, not people's fault for not having a psychic connection to the vision in your mind."

Epistemic modality of the comments was 100% represented by beliefs, which were completely determined by both the journalistic intention and the conceptual trajectory of the comments discourse: users justified and articulated their opinion "for" or "against" the MLK monument. Axiological modality was presented as follows: 50% of good comments, 40% – bad and 10% – indifferent.

Temporal modality was characterized by synchronicity in 97% of cases, as the discourse was spread around an event that happened right there and right at that time. Accordingly, in 97% of cases, spatial modality also indicated the concentration of comments within the territorial framework of the basic message. Only 3% of comments demonstrated both diachronicity and spacial remoteness and correlated with intertextuality of the discourse.

We also applied CDA to a material from the Guardian – *"Church camping movement seeks to spread the word far and wide" (25.01.2023)*. The post concerned a religious theme and highlighted the phenomenon of "churchcamping", which was new for the UK. It was about the possibility of short-term renting of church buildings. The churches were closed down and owned by the charitable organization Churches Conservation Trust, which looked after their protection and preservation. The discourse of 150 comments was spread on the Facebook platform and demonstrated the relevance of the topic. At the same time, the tone of user comments was mostly ironic, such as "Great, the crusades are back". A "champing" longread was used as an informational occasion for jokes and reflections on fictitious charity, for example, "It would be nice to see them offering free homeless accommdation in city churches evertim when somone books". Users clearly identified the material as a native ad text and articulated that in their responses, like "Oh, I thought this was going to be an article about churches offering shelter to homeless people... my mistake".

The discourse of the comments 100% corresponded to the topic of the material. In addition, they had quite high level of intertextuality (60%). Commentators appealled to their mostly associative experience of interpreting the church theme. A number of tongue-in-cheek comments included a reference to "Inside Number Nine", which was considered to be a British black comedy anthology. For example, "Background for Inside Number Nine's Christmas special. A wonderful thing."

The vast majority of comments had a high level of transitivity (70%), as the topic passed through the commentators' own receptive optics. For example, "We stayed at St James' Church in Cooling, Kent – where Charles Dickens set part of Great Expectations – and it was beautiful, very atmospheric watching the sun set through the stained glass". Special mention should be made of tagged comment threads, where users urged their friends to confirm or refute their statements about the main topic. We consider tags to be an important means of getting into contact with somebody, which helps to conduct a polylogue and ensures non-linear communication. 30% of comments had a low level of transitivity. Basically, they rated church camping impersonally. There were no comments with medium transitivity, since there was no hero as such in the media message.

Epistemic modality was conveyed mainly by the "belief" category (80%). Commentators expressed their views of church tourism, like "What a great idea!"; "Such a touching experience". Under the post there were more detailed comments that assessed the phenomenon and went beyond the discursive space of the basic media message, such as "American here. "Church camping" brings up images of bible camps which are very much still active here, perhaps if you adopted a different term, it would help your marketing. Something like "church hosteling" or "historic church rentals".

About 15% of comments concerned the category of "knowledge". By means of the comments, users indicated that they were aware of the Churches Conservation Trust initiative. Only 5% of commentators indicated that they were unaware of the functionality of Church camping, such as "Could allow homeless people to stay in them? Just a thought".

The comments had different axiological modality. About 40% of them contained good reviews. We classified statements with bad connotations as ironic comments (there were 60% of them), since they made fun of church camping and contained an explicit or implicit denial of the initiative. There were no indifferent comments, as the topic had a high level of reflexivity.

Synchronicity was characteristic of temporal modality in 95% of cases. A new phenomenon of church camping was considered in the modern context. Spatial modality indicated 100%-proximity to the object of the basic message. It was obvious that the chronotope of the material coincided with the chronotope of the discursive field of comments.

6. Conclusions

So, CDA has confirmed the fact that social networks are an active discursive space, which, on the one hand, expresses public opinion, and on the other, forms it. Both user-centrism of social networks and the activity of network users causes self-organization of community members carrying on a polylog. This can be seen on the example of The Guardian's Facebook page. The Facebook effect described by Donald Kirkpatrick is complemented by the discursive uniqueness of the field of readers'comments that spread around media messages. Their specificity is that they can demonstrate different levels of relevance to the topic of the key post – from full correspondence to absolute

autonomy, when the discourse of the basic post does not correspond to the discourse of the comments. This characteristic depends on such parameters of the media message as its topicality, transitivity, spatial and temporal proximity to the recipient. CDA has brought to light the fact that the agendas of the media and public news do not coincide with each other. Under these conditions, readers use media messages only as a starting point for branching out comments that match their personal and group interests.

Due to CDA, which is an informative representative of modern sociality, we have found that the same topic, depending on the temporal context, evokes different responses from users. Moreover, comments with a low level of relevance to the topic have a high level of intertextuality, which is manifested in the appeal to texts that go beyond the main media message. It is significant that texts on political topics provoke an autonomous discursive field of comments. At the same time, the indicator of axiological modality used in CDA points out the polarization of commentators' responses to such posts. This indicates the political heterogeneity of society. Interdiscursiveness is also demonstrated by corpora of comments related to media publications on non-political topics. This confirms Luhmann's thesis about the flexibility of the media, as their themes can penetrate into different spheres of society.

So, critical discourse analysis has revealed the peculiarities of the reception of journalistic materials in social networks and proved their high level of discursivity. This is indicated by the autonomous branches of comments under the main media posts. We believe that CDA is a heuristically valuable research tool for studying network communication in its various manifestations and patterns.

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