

**1. HUMAN PLUS WORD**

УДК: 316.772:004.738.5

DOI: 10.18503/2658-3186-2021-5-4-30-33

*Е. В. Суворова (Москва, Россия)**Ю. Г. Романова (Москва, Россия)***ИНФЕРЕНЦИЯ В ВИРТУАЛЬНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ**

**Аннотация.** В век компьютерных технологий, когда часть общения перенесена в область социальных сетей и мессенджеров, проблема восприятия виртуального дискурса становится особенно актуальной. Это в первую очередь связано с необходимостью быть понятым и, как следствие, с процессами, скрытыми за интерпретацией сообщений. Виртуальная коммуникация отличается от живого общения по ряду причин, а именно: во-первых, любой виртуальный дискурс имеет гибридный характер, объединяя характеристики устного и письменного дискурса; во-вторых, в отличие от живого общения он характеризуется отсутствием визуального контакта, который может компенсироваться эмоджи-символами; в-третьих, он содержит множество сокращений и аббревиатур; и, наконец, виртуальный дискурс принадлежит одновременно к двум символическим системам (вербальной и невербальной). Все перечисленные специфические черты виртуального дискурса оказывают влияние на процесс инференции и могут вести к недопониманию. В статье рассматривается зависимость инференции от особенностей виртуального дискурса. В заключении раскрывается разница между процессами инференции в ходе живой коммуникации и социальным общением с помощью мессенджеров, определяются такие характерные черты виртуального общения, как субъективность, лакуарность, незначительная зависимость от контекста, и, как следствие, слабая целостность и связность СМС-сообщений между собой.

**Ключевые слова:** инференция, виртуальный дискурс, восприятие, интерпретация, креолизованный текст, виртуальное общение.

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**Abstract.** Nowadays, in the computer age, when the vast part of negotiations and usual talks are conducted in various social networks, the problem of virtual discourse comprehension becomes especially urgent, as we come across the necessity of being understood correctly. Virtual communication differs from live speech in a range of aspects, which are: firstly, any virtual discourse has a sub-language of hybrid character, combining elements of oral and written discourse with its own specific features; secondly, unlike live communication it is marked by the absence of visual contact which can be compensated by emoji characters; incomplete perception of the interlocutor's true intentions causes sometimes a dramatic lack of specificity in understanding; thirdly, it contains a lot of drastic abridgements and abbreviations; and, finally, it can belong to simultaneously two symbolic systems (verbal and non-verbal). All the listed specific features of the virtual discourse have an impact on the processes of inference and can cause misunderstanding. The paper focuses on the virtual discourse features and shows the way the inferential process depends on them. In conclusion, the paper reveals the difference between inference processes in real-time communication and in a social chat pointing out that the latter is more subjective, gap-filling, less context-dependent, less coherent and cohesive.

**Keywords:** inference, virtual discourse, comprehension, creolised text, real-time communication, gap-filling, social networks, virtual communication.

**Introduction**

In the age of modern computer technology, a significant part of our communication with other people takes place within social networks. To save time, many people prefer to send a short message and get a quick response instead of calling or writing a letter. This form of sms-communication through electronic devices is called virtual discourse. Virtual discourse is significantly different from narrative discourse or discourse arising from live communication. It is characterized by greater subjectivity, the need to fill in gaps while interpreting a message, less contextual dependence, coherence and cohesion.

**Discussion**

The term «virtual discourse» may well be attributed to the category of neologisms (words or expressions that have recently appeared in the language<sup>1</sup>), although it is based on a long and widely studied concept

<sup>1</sup>Ожегов С. И., Шведова Н. Ю. Толковый словарь русского языка: 72500 слов и 7500 фразеологических выражений

of discourse. In this situation, it may seem that rooting of the term «virtual discourse» in language should occur without any difficulty. Nevertheless, in spite of the great number of scientific works devoted to the study of discourse and its types, linguistic community has not come to any common understanding of it, which in turn makes it difficult to define «virtual discourse», as a correlated term. The difficulty of specifying the term «virtual discourse» is also created by the polysemy of the word «virtual» which includes such meanings as: actual, real; virtual, possible; imaginary; effective and others [1]. This may be the reason why in scientific literature «virtual discourse» is often replaced by the term «computer-mediated discourse» or «computer-mediated communication».

In the «Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary» discourse is explained as «a coherent text in conjunction with extralinguistic factors: pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological and others; a text taken in a communicative situation; speech which is considered to be a purposeful, social action; a component involved in the interaction of people and being a mechanism of cognitive processes. Therefore, virtual discourse can be called a virtual text in the frame of a communicative situation. However, this definition simplifies and distorts the meaning of this word, since it does not take into account such an important quality of discourse as processuality, which is based on incompleteness, dynamism, qualitative change under the influence of external factors. Considering discourse from the perspective of linguistics, V.I. Karasik defines it as a process of live verbalized communication characterized by many deviations from canonical written speech, which directly point to virtual discourse, the implementation of which takes place in a virtual environment, which imposes a number of features on this process and distinguish it from the common act of communication [2].

Firstly, virtual communication is of a hybrid nature. It combines the features of simultaneously two types of communication: oral and written. In this regard, virtual discourse has a number of antinomies: time pressure and prolongation (written speech is slower than oral, but in this situation it is carried out in a time pressure mode); spontaneity and correctness (when responding to a message in a chat, we often react spontaneously, but at the same time we can re-read the message and correct it); dependence on a situation and weak context-tying (the moment of writing a message and the moment of reading it can be significantly separated in time, therefore, the situation in which the message is written and which affects its content may change for the reader of this message, and, accordingly, the context of interpreting the message may change as well) [3].

Secondly, unlike oral communication, virtual discourse does not imply visual contact. In virtual discourse, visual contact is often compensated by emoji symbols. In this case, a double symbolic system is involved: verbal and non-verbal. Emoji symbols cannot completely replace intonation, gestures, facial expressions in live communication, however, their influence on speech interpretation is more obvious than facial expressions, for instance (we do not need to interpret our interlocutor's intonation or mimics, emoji symbols clearly show us what the addresser means).

Thirdly, unlike ordinary text, virtual discourse is often filled with abbreviations, and abridgements. There is even a separate symbolic coded language used in SMS messages (compare: 2DAY = today; 2MORO / 2MROW = tomorrow; 2NITE / 2NYT = tonight; 2U = to you; 4U = for you; 4E = forever; AFAIK= as far as I know; ASAP = as soon as possible; ATB = all the best) which makes them polymodal.

Fourthly, abridgements and abbreviations can result in inaccuracy of understanding of the text by an interlocutor and prevent them from understanding intentions of an addresser of the message. In some cases, it can also lead to a conflict situation (compare the message: «Good afternoon, did you make an enquiry yesterday?» and the complete conversation: Good afternoon! This is MMC company. Did you make an enquiry about the possibility to provide the internet connection yesterday? « As we can see, in the first case, misunderstanding takes place: who is sending the message, what enquiry it is, etc. The interlocutor is forced to speculate on the situation, compare the events, look for additional information (for example, who is the addresser). Similar misunderstanding may arise when messages from different addressers come within a very short interval and the addressee doesn't understand who they are from. The process of inference in this situation is more intense and subjective, that is, we have to rely more on our own subjective perception of the message than on its real meaning. The lack of accuracy in understanding and the necessity to reconstruct the lacunae force an addressee search for extra support. Considering that interpretation has a cognitive, affective and perceptual character, the lack of understanding is compensated by affective and perceptual components [4]. As a result, the emotionality and evaluativeness of interpretation increases as well as perceptual feelings (when an addressee does not understand something, but is forced to answer, they unwillingly interpret it more emotionally). It can be assumed that the interpretation of an inaccurate SMS message may be under the influence of various insignificant factors of perceptual nature (this hypothesis requires experi-

mental verification).

Studying the difference between the processes of inference when interpreting narrative discourse, live speech and SMS messages, we come to the following conclusion. When interpreting a text, the process of inference is based mainly on processing semantic content and prognostic strategies, as well as the knowledge about the participants of the discourse (their social roles, intentions, relations between them, etc.), time and place of the described events and so on [5].

At the same time, the interpretation of live communicative discourse is based on processing both the keywords and, to a large extent, extralinguistic information including nonverbal information (gestures, facial expressions), assessment of interlocutors' social roles, time and place of communication, as well as perceptual information about the surrounding environment. At the same time, virtual discourse is of hybrid nature. That is why, its interpretation is based mainly on the keywords of a message, but is under great influence of the communicative situation, intentions and social roles of interlocutors, on the one hand, and the surrounding environment, on the other hand. Both the communicative situation (that is inside the communication process) and the surrounding environment can not coincide causing some disbalance and misunderstanding. In our opinion, there is an inversely proportional relationship, that is, the longer the message, the more likely the interlocutor will rely on its semantic content when interpreting it, and the shorter the message, the more subjectivity there will be in its perception, i.e. the interpretation process will be significantly under the influence of extralinguistic information. However, this hypothesis requires experimental verification.

### Conclusion

The interpretation of virtual discourse is often characterized by a number of distinctive features. They are: a hybrid nature of the discourse (combination of two types of communication, written and oral, the use of two symbolic systems, verbal and non-verbal, for example, emoji symbols); a lack of visual contact; abbreviated character of the communication (regarding personal communication, the incompleteness of a message is compensated by interlocutors' gestures and facial expressions, there is always a chance to get a quick feedback, at contrast, in case of exchanging short messages, there can be no opportunity to clarify the received information); uncertainty and the presence of coded symbols replacing words. All these features create the unique character of virtual discourse, including subjectivity of perception, lacunarity, less dependence on context, caused by a time gap between messages. The context of a new message may significantly change from message to message and, as a result, there is a lack of coherence and integrity between messages.

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Дата поступления тезисов – 24.11.2021; 0,38 печ. л.

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