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Review

## Terminological system of the polycode text theory

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**Abstract.** The formation of the terminological system of the polycode text theory as part of the lexical system of the Russian language is the current interest of Russian scientists' research. The purpose of the proposed study is to overview the existing terms describing a complex text that combines series of semiotically heterogeneous codes to express a common idea. The relevance of the research is explained by the need to create a unified system of terms to describe the polycode text. The material of the study are scientific works devoted to the polycode text; the authors give quotes from scientific works that have the greatest influence on the formation of the theory of polycode text. The study considers terminological pairs: polycode – creolized text; linear – nonlinear text; polycode – polymodal text; iconic – non-verbal components of a polycode text; primary – secondary polycode text; and a separate term “paragraphemic means of a polycode text.” Currently, the polycode text is implemented in various types of discourse. The largest number of scientific papers that the authors consider are composed on the material of academic, advertising, cinema and educational discourses. Interest in the polycode text as an object of scientific analysis, on the one hand, and as an instrument, on the other, is increasing in view of growing significance of digital technologies and the semiotic series accompanying them in modern communication. As the results of the study, the authors note the relevant aspects of the polycode text studies, which include the problem of decoding, the difficulties in translating the polycode text, the prospects of a comparative analysis of the polycode text on the material of several languages, and the social orientation of the polycode text.

**Keywords:** polycode text, polycode text theory, polymodality, verbal component of the polycode text, non-verbal component of the polycode text, terminology, Russian language

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### Introduction

Plycodity as a characteristic of a non-linear text has been described in the linguistic literature for more than forty years, however, a unified system of terms has not yet been approved. The works devoted to complicated texts suggest



a number of definitions: *polycode*, *creolized*, *mixed*, *intersemiotic*, *heterogeneous*, *polymodal*, *integrative*. The number of terms that name semiotic heterogeneous texts, however, does not imply significant differences in the understanding of the object of the nomination itself, which is a text of a special kind: “[it] in a single graphic space [combines] heterogeneous components – verbal text (oral or written), images and signs of a different nature” (Sonin, 2005: 117); “[a text] that combines the means of heterogeneous semiotic systems” (Iakushkina, 2018: 88); “a text that uses several semiotic means at once: linguistic, visual and auditory” (Jakobson, 1985: 321); “a text consisting of two diverse parts: namely, verbal and non-verbal, which cannot exist separately from each other” (Trubina, 2019: 163); “a text which uses virtually heterogeneous semiotic material” (Alexandrova et al., 2019: 23); “texts of a peculiar structure, fundamentally combining linguistic oral written meaning units with non-linguistic ones” (Evgrafova, Maksimenko, 2018: 831). The definitions above show that semiotically heterogeneous codes are combined in the text, which can be divided into a series of oral (auditory and visual) and written (the text itself, as well as the drawing in the broadest sense, colour, kinesics, font, etc.) means.

A large amount of scientific literature describes discourses and their genres in terms of the features of polycode text implementation, the connection of its components, the use/non-use of a specific semiotic code, the features of the author’s intention decoding, the presence of intertext in it. There exist well-known classical works on polycode text (Poimanova, 1994; Bernatskaya, 2000; Anisimova, 2003; Voroshilova, 2007; Bolshakova, 2008; Chigaev, 2008; Chernyavskaya, 2009; Maksimenko, 2012 and others), we can mark out new areas of its research: advertising discourse (Terskikh, 2012; Kuryanovich, Dragunayte, 2015; Remchukova, Omelianenko, 2017; Romanova, Smirnova, 2019; Selezneva et al., 2021 and others), educational discourse (Belenko, 2011; Sentsova, 2017; Trubina, 2019; Galkina et al., 2021 and others), cinema discourse (Alexandrova et al., 2019; Evgrafova, 2018, 2020 and others), scientific discourse (Pervukhina, 2022 and others), Internet communication (Michurin, 2013; Shchurina, 2014; Aleksandrova, 2018; Ratsiburskaya, Zhdanova, 2021; Dulebova, Krajchovichova, 2021; Moiseenko, Gervilla, 2021; Nesterova, 2022 and others). Nevertheless, the system of terms used by linguists in the theory of the polycode text is not fully developed, which can be confirmed by pairs of terms mixed or contrasted in the context of the polycode text analysis.

**The purpose of the study** is to describe the terminology of the emerging theory of polycode texts, indicating the contribution of Russian linguists to the search for the terminological unit most clearly expressing the essence of the polycode text and to determine the current aspects of the polycode text studies and their prospects in modern Russian studies.

## Methods and materials

The materials of the study were: (1) classical works devoted to polycode texts; (2) scientific works of recent years, written by Russian and foreign linguists.

The main methods of the conducted research are the analysis of the scientific texts, commenting based on citations of scientific works, and generalization.

## Results

The main results of the study:

- substantiated the problem of not fully developed system of terms in the theory of the polycode text;
- identified the topical issues of the theory of polycode text, which is a wide range of studies, including interdisciplinary and multilingual ones;
- indicated the circle of authors and the list of works that form the basis of the theory of the polycode text;
- proposed an algorithm polycode text analysis.

## Discussion

### *Polycode text terminology*

***Polycode text – creolized text.*** The term under which this type of text has existed for a long time was first introduced into scientific use by Yu.A. Sorokin and E.F. Tarasov in the frequently cited definition: “Creolized texts are texts which consist of two non-homogeneous parts: verbal (linguistic/speech) and non-verbal (belonging to other than natural language sign systems)” (Sorokin, Tarasov, 1990: 180); this term was supported by a number of scientific works; for a long time it was the only nomination describing this phenomenon. As O.I. Maksimenko states: “this term does not fully reveal the essence of the problem, and sometimes causes unnecessary associations with creolized languages, the hallmarks of which are deformed simplifying structures, which little characterizes a combined text” (Maksimenko, 2012: 97). A.G. Sonin discusses possible associations with *creolization* (change. – *N.N.*, *N.D.*) of verbal texts, which implies the presence of the original text, which does not exist (cit. on: Maksimenko, 2012: 97).

The term *polycode text* appeared in scientific texts in the 1970s, G.V. Eiger wrote: “Polycode texts in the broad semiotic sense should include cases of a combination of a natural language code with a code of some other semiotic system (image, music, etc.)” (Eiger, Yukht, 1974: 107).

A.A. Bernatskaya uses the term *polycode text* and clarifies that in her opinion the terminological combinations *polysemantic text* and *polycode text* are synonymous and can be used “as a designation of a generic concept for inhomogeneous, syncretic messages (texts) formed by a combination of elements of sign

systems, provided their mutual synsematism with a view to indicating the degree of the very fact of the participation of elements of different semiotics. When creating a text, it is advisable to keep the metaphorical and dynamic term creolization” (Bernatskaya, 2000: 106). Creolization in this case is understood as a combination of means from different systems for a single purpose.

The most frequently cited is the definition of a polycode text proposed by E.E. Anisimova, where this type of texts is called *creolized*: “a text in which verbal and non-verbal components form one visual, structural, semantic and functioning whole, providing its complex pragmatic impact on the addressee” (Anisimova, 2003: 71).

**Linear text – non-linear text.** The definition of the polycode text comes from the assessment of the text as linear and non-linear, which traces its history back to the works by M.M. Bakhtin. He made a famous statement that “a work is a link in the chain of verbal communication; <...> it is connected with other works; <...> it is always, to some extent, an answer to what has already been said about this subject on this issue” (cit. on: Bolshakova, 2008: 20). L.S. Bolshakova divides texts that combine elements of different nature into linear ones, which she calls “information in a row,” and non-linear ones, where she sees “a multidimensional network in which any point <...> is linked to any other point anywhere” (Bolshakova, 2008: 20). Non-linear texts are represented by such types as “1) a monocode text – a homogeneous linear or non-linear formation, including codes of only one semiotic system, primarily the sign system of the language (in its written form); 2) a dicode text – a non-linear formation, including codes of two sign systems (creolized text...); 3) a polycode text – cases of combining a natural language code with a code of some other semiotic system (image, music, etc.)” (Bolshakova, 2008: 21).

**Polycode text – polymodal text.** The distinction between the terms *polycode* and *polymodal* is related to the need to evaluate the text in terms of its decoding tools: whether we distinguish several rows of codes using one sensory channel (for example, print advertising) or decoding occurs using several sensory channels (for example, television advertising). In the first case, the text is evaluated as polycode monomodal, in the second – polycode polymodal (Baranov, Parshin, 1989; Shin et al., 2020; Su et al., 2022). The use of this term in relation to polycode texts is actualized by the term *modality* in the sense in which it is used in psychology: belonging to a certain sensory system (analyzer), characterization or classification of feelings, signals, stimuli, information, receptors, disorders.<sup>1</sup>

This term does not seem quite convenient for text linguistics, which has its own term *modality*: “a conceptual category with the meaning of the speaker’s atti-

<sup>1</sup> Big psychological dictionary. Available April 5, 2022, from [https://gufo.me/dict/psychologie\\_dict/](https://gufo.me/dict/psychologie_dict/)

tude to the content of the statement and the reference of the content of the statement to reality <...>, expressed by various grammatical and lexical means...”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the term *polymodal* is widely used in psycholinguistic works devoted to the study of polycode texts, where information is perceived through two or more channels. For the most part, the purpose of such work is to evaluate the effectiveness of the perceptual channel and identify the dominant modality. So Ye.D. Nekrasova writes: “Polymodal experimental studies are mainly focused on the problem of ‘competing modalities’ in the perception of information” (Nekrasova, 2014: 45). It should be noted that the focus of a researcher of a polymodal text may not coincide with the focus of an analyzer of a polycode text: in the first case, as a rule, we are talking about the dominance/opposition of one of the heterogeneous parts, in the second – about the interaction of text components in the performance of a communicative task: “influencing the consciousness of potential buyers of children’s goods is more efficient by information coming through one of the channels of perception than through several” (Kozlovskaya, 2017: 56).

Another context for the use of the term *polymodal* is the assessment of communication as a result of mixing verbal and non-verbal codes: “Polymodal communication is by its nature indirect: the plan of the content of the statement, expressed by the meanings of its components, does not coincide with the final communicative meaning. Thus, polymodal communication is a meaningfully complex communication where the understanding of the statement includes meanings that are not contained in its own code and require additional interpretive efforts on the part of the addressee” (Guseva, 2018: 100). In our opinion, the author departs from the prevailing understanding of the term *polymodal* – perceived through several sensory channels (we are talking about a literary text complicated by the author’s design and/or drawings) – and considers the interaction of the verbal and non-verbal components of a *polycode* text.

### **Components of a polycode text**

***Non-verbal – iconic components of a polycode text.*** A distinctive feature of a polycode text is the integrity of the perception of its two components: verbal and non-verbal. This characteristic is given by the cognitive, functional and communicative idea of the author of the text, which is realized with the help of a single theme, a single compositional and stylistic solution and determines the selection of codes. Researchers of a polycode text at all stages of its scientific description speak of the presence of verbal and visual components in it, which is due to the maximum information load on the organs of hearing and vision of a person: “In cinema, in advertising (i.e. in texts of mass communication. – N.N., N.D.) the emergence of meanings depends on the interaction of image, sound and in-

<sup>2</sup> Akhmanova, O.S. (1966). *Dictionary of linguistic terms*. Moscow: Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya Publ. Available April 5, 2022, from [https://www.koob.ru/akhmanova/linguistic\\_terms](https://www.koob.ru/akhmanova/linguistic_terms)

scription of the beginners” (Bart, 1994: 124); “The largest part of socially significant, rich and significant sign systems for society is oriented towards perception through vision” (Jakobson, 1985: 323).

The formation of terms describing the components of a polycode text also did not escape variability. The most common opposition is the pair of terms *verbal component* – *iconic component*: “The iconic means of the creolized text, along with the verbal ones, reproduce the picture of the world, the scale of values and the aesthetic ideals of the nation” (Anisimova, 2003: 93–94); “The message contained in the text can be presented verbally (verbal text) or iconically (i.e. figuratively)” (Valgina, 2003: 192); and the most commonly used synonym for the term *iconic* is *pictorial*: “Iconic (pictorial) means form the dominant field of paralinguistic means of the creolized text of Internet advertising” (Anisimova, 2003: 8). However, due to the additional meanings that arise when using the term *iconic* as the second component of the pair, linguists began to use the term *averbal* or non-verbal, which is explained by the general orientation of the polycode text towards iconicity (Sigal, 1997: 19): “<...> terminologically undisputed in the analysis of creolized texts as an equivalent replacement for the designation of the pictorial component, the use of the term ‘iconic component’” (Voroshilova, 2007: 76).

Researchers also did not support the use of the term *visual* as an equivalent to the term *iconic component*, since verbal text in writing is also visual. O.V. Poimanova introduced the term *video-verbal*, dividing it into static and dynamic video-verbal texts (Poimanova, 1994).

There is no big disagreement about the use of terms united by the generic concept of paragraphemic means, which are understood as elements of a written text that accompany the verbal component and express additional connotations (Baranov, Parshin, 1989; Eykalis, 2015). Linguists classify *paragraphemic means* into elements that accompany the verbal component, elements that organize content, and elements that have special functions in the text. This classification is supported by N.N. Bolshakova (Bolshakova, 2007) who describes them as *topographemic* (planar variation of the text), *supragraphemic* (font variation of the text) and *syngraphemic* (artistic and stylistic design of the text) means.

The study indicated a growing interest in the polycode text in humanitarian sciences, primarily linguistics and sociology. Modern linguistics keeps interest in the polycode text and expands the range of phenomena and aspects of its analysis. Linguists and sociologists note the dominance of such means of communication as advertising, cinema and the Internet, which are impossible without a polycode text. Internet communication plays a significant role in modern society, which is supported by a growing number of users of this type of communication and the development of network interaction technology. This type of communication has a number of features, such as hypertext, depersonalization, interactivity. Internet communication is also characterized by the process of creating new genres,

such as Internet memes (Shchurina, 2014), and demotivators (Bugaeva, 2011; Babina, 2013). The objectives of polycode text study are the analysis of mechanisms of its influence on recipients, characteristics of the processes of the polycode text decoding and translation, and defining its intertextual components. Thus, based on the polycode text of a political cartoon in Arabic and French, Y.N. Ebzeeva and N.M. Dugalich proposed an algorithm for layer-by-layer decoding of codes of different semiotic systems (Ebzeeva, Dugalich, 2018; Dugalich, Gishkaeva, 2019; Dugalich, 2020). These layers include information occasion and cartoon personalities; consideration of the non-verbal component in terms of its composition, the use of colour codes and kinetics, as well as the genre of the drawing. The third layer of the precedent text of a political cartoon is its verbal component, its translation and analysis, which is accompanied by assessing its compositional and structural organization, considering special vocabulary, for example, dialectal and expressive means, as well as the correlation of text, image and paragramemic means. The fourth layer includes the analysis of allusive and intertextual components, the decoding of which allows the recipients to voluminously understand this cartoon and better assess the intention of the author (Dugalich, 2020).

One of the topical aspects of polycode text study is their translation. The peculiarity of the translation of complicated texts consists of such specific features as the requirement to preserve the links between the verbal and non-verbal components in a polycode text in the target language; preservation of the author's intention and mechanisms for its implementation at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels in the translated text; the most voluminous transmission of the linguocultural context (verbal and non-verbal levels) of the source text, which should become understandable to recipients who are representatives of another linguistic culture (Eykalis, 2015; Remchukova, Omelianenko, 2017; Iakushkina, 2018; Novospasskaya, Zou, 2021, etc.).

An important distinguishing feature of a polycode text is its ability to reflect social values: "A creolized text is a variant of a non-linearly constructed text, a semiotically complicated multidimensional formation, consisting of two parts: verbal and non-verbal, which are connected at the conceptual, content and compositional levels and correlate with the existing national cultural tradition" (Lomonosova, 2018: 417).

By its origin, a polycode text can be associated with one or more texts, which are usually called primary, and, accordingly, the new text is secondary. The peculiarity of the secondary polycode text is manifested at the level of content, composition, it can differ significantly at the level of vocabulary and style (Karasik, 1997; Verbitskaya, 2000; Nesterova, 2022). Currently, a typology of secondary texts is being developed, including the material of advertising (Budanova, Ryabinina, 2018; Selezneva et al., 2021).

Let us give two examples of the reception and analysis of a polycode text of different genres with some explanations.



Figure 1. Polycode text of the political cartoon “Hollande at the UN”

The cartoon (Figure 1) depicts former French President François Hollande delivering a speech at a meeting of the UN General Assembly. Mr. Hollande calls to save the north of Mali, which is on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe: “*Sauvons la normalie!*” ‘save normality’ – *Le Nord-Mali* ‘north of Mali’. The use of a play on words in this cartoon, expressed by the homophones *normalie* [nɔ:r mali] and *Nord Mali* [nɔrmali], as we see it, carries information about the attitude of French society towards François Hollande’s policy as unsatisfactory for the country, on the one hand, and touches upon the problems of the world politics – the situation in the former French colony of Mali, on the other. This play on words is supported by a drawing made in a manner traditional for a political cartoon using an exaggerated image of a politician and a high-ranking UN representative, UN symbols, official style colours. Obviously, the translation of the verbal component from French should contain a larger volume of the source text in order to be able to show the play on words, as well as a certain level of awareness of the recipient about the foreign policy situation in France during the presidency of François Hollande.

The non-verbal component of print advertising in Russian, which represents a new service of Yandex Corporation (Figure 2), is shown by an image of a lecture hall at the university, the desks are located as an amphitheatre, a stream of water is flowing from the window, which already reaches the chest of the teacher standing in front of the students, he is holding the bag over his head, saving it from water, while students are not alarmed by this situation. The verbal component “*Fill up a lecture for the whole group*” in the title uses the lexical unit *to fill up*, which has several meanings.<sup>3</sup> In this context, two of them are chosen to be implemented:

<sup>3</sup> Wiktionary – multifunctional multilingual dictionary. Available April 5, 2022, from <https://ru.wiktionary.org/wiki/upload>



- 1) to flood something, to completely cover everything from all sides with water or any other kind of liquid;
- 2) *fig.*, fill something, to fill completely; fill the whole space.



**Figure 2.** Polycode text of printed advertising “Yandex. Disk”

Meaning ‘fill completely; fill the whole space’, which is implemented in this context, has now received a new meaning ‘to copy information to a digital medium,’ which is actualized in the verbal component of the polycode advertising text. This meaning is not lexicographed but it is known to a native speaker of the Russian language. The first considered meaning of the lexical unit *to fill up* is realized in a non-verbal component (to flood the room during a lecture), thus, a play on words is used, the verbal component in this case implements the primary function, the non-verbal component complements it.

### **Conclusion**

At present, we can confidently state that the theory of the polycode text is a multifaceted, established field of research that does not cause discrepancies in the object of study, regularly replenishing the list of methods for its analysis. However, scientific works devoted to the polycode text, which regularly appear in the field of view of researchers, do not have a unified nomenclature of terms. We see the prospect of work in this direction in creating a dictionary or in adding a block of terms to the linguistic dictionary that would satisfy the modern level of understanding of the polycode text.

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Научный обзор

## Терминосистема теории поликодовых текстов

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**Аннотация.** Формирование терминологической системы теории поликодового текста как части лексической системы русского языка является актуальным направлением исследований ученых-русистов. Цель данного исследования – анализ существующих терминов, описывающих сложный текст, объединяющий ряды семиотически разнородных кодов для выражения общей идеи. Актуальность обусловлена необходимостью создания единой системы терминов для описания поликодового текста. Материалом послужили научные работы, посвященные поликодовому тексту; приводятся цитаты из научных работ, оказавших наибольшее влияние на формировании теории поликодовых текстов. Рассматриваются терминологические пары: поликодовый – креолизованный текст; линейный – нелинейный текст; поликодовый – полимодальный текст; иконический – невербальный компоненты поликодового текста; первичный – вторичный поликодовый текст; а также термин «параграфемные средства поликодового текста». В настоя-

щее время поликодовый текст реализуется в различных типах дискурса, наибольшее количество рассмотренных научных работ выполнено на материале научного, рекламного, образовательного дискурсов и кинодискурса. Интерес к поликодовому тексту как к объекту научного анализа, с одной стороны, и как к инструменту – с другой, возрастает в силу увеличения значимости цифровых технологий и сопровождающих их семиотических рядов в современной коммуникации. В качестве результатов исследования авторы разграничивают контексты употребления обсуждаемых терминов и отмечают актуальные аспекты изучения поликодового текста, намечая тем самым перспективы исследования: проблема декодирования поликодового текста, преодоление трудностей перевода поликодового текста, сопоставительный анализа поликодового текста на материале нескольких языков, социальная направленность поликодового текста.

**Ключевые слова:** теория поликодовых текстов, полимодальность, вербальный компонент поликодового текста, невербальный компонент поликодового текста, терминология, русский язык

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