



ACTUAL PROBLEMS
OF RUSSIAN LANGUAGE RESEARCH
АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ
ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ РУССКОГО ЯЗЫКА

DOI 10.22363/2618-8163-2022-20-4-414-433

Research article

**Verbal explication of axiological constants
of feminist discourse in the Russian language
in the context of cyberactivism**

Natalia A. Bozhenkova¹, Aleksandra A. Negushina¹,
Raisa K. Bozhenkova²

¹*Pushkin Russian Language State Institute,*

6 Akademika Volgina St, Moscow, 117485, Russian Federation

²*Bauman Moscow State Technical University,*

5 2-ya Baumanskaya St, bldg 1, Moscow, 105005, Russian Federation

 natalyach@mail.ru

Abstract. The authors focus on the interconnection between the basic constituents of two phenomena relevant to modern Russian studies – the phenomenon of cyberactivism and the linguistic personality of a feminist activist. The relevance is determined by the object of the study, which is a special form of social and linguo-cultural interactions – the discursive practices of feminist cyberactivism. Being transmitted in the network environment for promoting socio-political activities, feminist cyberactivism represents a substantial part of content nowadays and appears to be one of the most important factors in the formation of axiological determinants in the Russian society. The aim of the study is to identify and systematically characterize the specific linguistic features of actual feminist and pro-feminist blogs, demonstrating both the ideological views of the feminism and the peculiar linguistic representation of feminism as a thematic field in the aspect of idioethnic features of the linguistic personality of a feminist activist. Particular attention is paid to the methods of verbal definition of the problematic field of feminist cyberactivism (primarily, the definition of gender inequality index in Russia) as well as to the identification of basic semasiological mechanisms for “modifying” the pragmatic parameters of the Russian-speaking feminist blogosphere. The material was collected from online blogs of feminist activists, text units from thematic feminist communities in social networks, as well as text materials of public organizations whose activities are closely related to feminist ideology. The critical discourse analysis, functional analysis of media texts (blogs), complex structural and contextual analysis of the language system of the Russian blogosphere, stylistic analysis of visual resources of the Russian language, linguo-pragmatic analysis of communicative acts, and the method of linguo-culturological interpretations were applied. The authors discovered that blog activism has several characteristic features that are reflected in its verbal and communicative content. The main purpose of most blogs (especially those belonging to personal pro-

© Bozhenkova N.A., Negushina A.A., Bozhenkova R.K., 2022



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

feminist blogs) is an act of self-presentation. This is the reason why this type of activism often has an individual, rather than a collective nature, and the authors, as a rule, do not indicate their civil or political goals, which brings this framework of feminist discourse closer to non-political social practices. It is concluded that bloggers rarely use conventional language forms traditionally inherent to ideologized practices. This in turn leads to the evolvement of new communication strategies and, given the expansion pace of modern blogosphere, may have a major social effect in the future. The authors prove that by cultivating “at a certain angle,” the sense-forming component of feminist discourse, which is a critical reflection of female subjectiveness, feminist cyberactivism demonstrates a high degree of civil society involvement in certain political processes since it essentially aims at fulfilling the socio-ethological function (organization of hyperdiscourse through optimizing the recipient’s behavior and forming a need to share an actualized standpoint). Further consideration of feminist cyberactivism, which is both the primary method for the expansion of feminist community in Russia and its constitutive feature, can answer many questions on the linguo-cultural and, more broadly, civilizational structure of Russian society.

Keywords: cyberactivism, Russian feminist discourse, Russian blogosphere, communicative ideologized practices, expressive resources, Russian language, linguo-axiological dominants, linguo-pragmatic tools

Article history: received 16.04.2022; accepted 11.07.2022.

For citation: Bozhenkova, N.A., Negushina, A.A., Bozhenkova, R.K. (2022). Verbal explication of axiological constants of feminist discourse in the Russian language in the context of cyberactivism. *Russian Language Studies*, 20(4), 414–433. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2022-20-4-414-433>

Introduction

As we all know, the core and main “point of attraction” for many areas in anthropological linguistics is the concept of a *linguistic personality*, considered as a convergent combination of the *universal, idio-ethnic and individual features*. The first feature means the ability to communicate; the second one is the ethnically labelled experience of mastering a language as a way to conceptualize the environment; and the third one stands for specific cognitive and communicative mechanisms of text formation, embodied in the vocabulary, a certain set of syntactic models and other sign units (in a broader sense) mastered, demonstrating both individual characteristics of a personality and its affiliation with a respective social group.

Accordingly, the description of the categorical features of a linguistic personality is based on the ascertainment of its status as a *creator, speaker, and user of a language* in communicative reality (Sakharova, 2017). Thus, the linguistic personality turns out to be a *subject of social communication*, which implies: (1) close attention to the interactive space of life scenarios of the communication agent, or, in other words, to discursive interaction; (2) focus on the creative nature of the speech; (3) identification of communicator’s ethno-mental type, i.e. through the prism of speaker’s national and cultural specificity; (4) characterization of a linguistic personality through the development of its subjectiveness (see, for instance: a linguistic personality “emerges when an individual begins to inde-

pendently perform external activities as a subject and according to the norms and standards set for him/her from the outside – by the culture that raised and brought this person to human life and human activity” (Ilyenkov, 1991: 398).

Undeniably, all these vectors of scientific research are interdependent and interconnected. However, the first and fourth vectors in the list are of particular interest for modern Russian linguistics due to the dramatic transformation of the nature of communicative relations, conditioned by the accelerating digitalization of society and, as a result, the formation of a new, virtual environment of interaction – an online reality. Not only does it set the “rules of existence” of the Russian language on the Internet, but also determines “alternative meanings” and rules of speech behavior in general (see works: Bozhenkova et al., 2019; Kozhemyakin, 2010; Solnceva, 2019; Shurukhova, 2016; Zelenovskaya, 2014, etc.).

The focus of all constitutive features of online communication is, undoubtedly, the *media language of the Internet*, which is a powerful means of communicative influence and an instrument of impact on public consciousness by virtue of its polysemiotic nature. And this is no coincidence: the information field of mass media, being an integral part of the socio-ethnic culture of any society, is a complex conglomerate of ideas that showcases the goals and interests of this society. Therefore, on the one hand, mass media rest upon *cultural and ideological context*, on the other hand, they shape it. Such an intensive practice (information flows are pulling all society strata into their “funnel”) has a significant impact on the communicative and psychological organization both of individuals, and of the target audience in general (Bozhenkova, Negushina, 2021: 242).

Moreover, the activation of *social media* in modern conditions and a growing number of users of various Internet resources determines the feasibility of expansion for sociopolitical capital and the emergence of new civil mobilization forms. Due to its openness and accessibility, online environment noticeably democratizes public involvement (taking politics out of the scope of purely professional space) and gives an impetus to the intensive development of cyberactivism as a form of social activity (Briuklianova, 2021).

Although cyberactivism has recently become an object of scientific research, it is already represented in a number of papers of foreign (see: Geisler, 2018; Loney-Howes, 2015; Ringrose, 2019, etc.) and domestic (see: Brodovskaya et al., 2020; Kaverina, Dekich, 2020; Parma, 2021; Saveleva, 2020, etc.) scientists; still, the importance of Internet activism is ambivalent. Some researchers believe that digital forms of public engagement are incapable of serious political consequences and gravely devalue traditional forms of civic initiative (which is related to the concept of slacktivism; see: Cabrera et al., 2017)¹. Other studies, on

¹ Morozov, E. (September 5, 2009). From slacktivism to activism. *Foreign Policy*. Retrieved February 15, 2022, from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/09/05/from-slacktivism-to-activism>

the contrary, argue that network platforms have great potential to involve a wide variety of social groups in political activities (Pikula, 2015; Pokhodnya, 2020). In general, however, researchers claim that network forms of activism differ significantly from traditional ones. Therefore, in modern political and ideological space they occupy a special place (Pokhodnya, 2020).

The main goals of cyberactivism are similar to the goals of traditional sociopolitical interaction – the initiation of civic activity in order to solve specific political problems. However, technologically speaking, cyberactivism has a significantly greater potential. Digital activists use network communication tools to expand the audience, share information and broadcast program concepts. As a result, not only new, independent formats of cyberactivism (for example, online petitions, hashtag campaigns, etc.) are emerging, but also the “standard” forms of interaction in virtual reality, such as blogs, are undergoing significant changes.

Online blogs as independent platforms with a public status (Nesterenok, 2013) provide plenty of opportunities to their authors for an effective direct communication and transmission of their views in a global social context. The authors emphasize that in the aspect of political issues, the latter turns out to be particularly important, since it means an instant group reaction to the agenda. Importantly, the blogosphere is not very sensitive to censorship (not least due to the constant increase in the number of subscribers), which makes it a suitable place for lobbying a wide range of ideas.

At the same time, the openness and interpersonality of blogosphere is an important point for scientific research, since it enables us to study both the features of an ideologically labelled discussion through network communication channels and the degree of extrapolation of certain public political constants and their influence on the axiological picture of the linguistic and cultural universe as a whole (Bozhenkova et al., 2017; Vidineeva, 2020; Generalova, Rebrina, 2018; Generalova, 2020; Savitskaya, 2011; Sidorova, 2011; Rogacheva, 2009; Fokina, 2014, etc.).

From this position, the blogs that actualize the *ideas of feminism* in the Russian communicative space appear extremely interesting, in our opinion. It was cyberactivism, a form of civil initiative, that became a “starting point” for new discursive practices for the feminist movement, localized mainly on the Internet. The “fourth wave” of feminism, which emerged in the late 2000s, deliberately focuses on the use of network tools, since they usually do not require high material costs, are easily accessible, and at the same time significantly expand the potential audience (Gnedash, 2022; Vinnik, 2010).

The central issue of the feminist movement at the current stage has been the theory of gender as a *stratification* variable (gender inequality) as well as “practices related to the establishment of social gender” (Troitskaya, 2000: 374).

The keynote here is the reflexion on *female subjectiveness*, but the influence of feminist ideology is manifested to a varying degree (from its extreme forms, when any gender differences are denied, to moderate forms attempting to keep their own rights for social status). Respectively, a meaningful unit for feminist texts is the *female identity*. This makes the feminist discourse a “specific kind of ideological discourse exemplifying an alternative picture of the world based on women's experience and transformed with the help of language” (Bozhenkova, Negushina, 2021: 243).

Since feminist issues are embedded not only in the domestic sphere, but also in the system of public institutions, their solutions often require proper political involvement. Moreover, for feminism (as well as for any other social movement), the possibility to transform the social world order is of paramount importance. Therefore, even a mere piece of information in the text space of feminist blogs is considered by cyberactivists as an effective tool for managing mass audience and regulating their communicative and, more broadly, socio-cultural behavior. That is why the macrostructure of feminist interactions and their verbal components have a special connotation, which (1) brings feminist discourse closer to political discourse, (2) intensifies the incorporation of specific constituents of feminist blogs into real communicative practice, (3) conditions the formation of a new type of a language personality – representative of the Russian feminist movement, and thus constitutes an important component of the modern Russian-speaking logosphere.

The purpose of the study was to identify, describe and carry out a comparative characterization of the linguo-cognitive and linguo-axiological aspects of feminist discursive practices in the Russian language, presented in the formal framework of feminist and pro-feminist online blogs, in the context of cyberactivism.

Methods and materials

In cyberactivism discourse, representing a new, axiologically significant socio-cultural form of communicative relations, meanings, important for individuals and for the society, are vividly actualized by different means of verbal representation. In order to identify linguo-cultural labelling of iconic constituents in feminist network discursive interactions, the authors used a combination of scientific methods and approaches: a critical discourse analysis applied to detect indications of social (gender) asymmetry; a functional analysis of media texts (blogs), which implies their genre segregation; a comprehensive structural and contextual analysis of the language system of the Russian blogosphere, which gives a holistic view of the semantic nature of the sign units in the discursive practices of feminist cyberactivism; a stylistic analysis of the expressive resources of the Russian language, actualizing the specifics of feminist interactions. Commenting on the pre-

sented empirical material is based on a linguo-pragmatic analysis of speech and communicative acts and on the method of linguo-culturological interpretation.

The material of the study was gathered from personal online blogs of feminist activists², text units posted in thematic feminist communities in social networks³, as well as from websites and official social media accounts of public organizations that pertain to feminist ideology⁴, with a total number of more than 500 text units. When selecting the empirical material for the study, the thematic orientation (reflection of feminist ideology) and/or the adherence of the author's language personality to the Russian feminist movement were considered.

Findings

The conducted research made it possible to define and describe the verbal means of communicative interaction in the context of feminist ideology and to discover the linguo-axiological dominants of feminist discursive practices and patterns of using verbal units as structural and organizational components of network activism.

The authors proved that feminist cyberactivism whose main technology is the hyperbolized problematization of particular aspects of women's lives that are rarely explicated in public space has to be considered as a certain mechanism interrupting the hyperdiscourse of discriminatory practices. Verbalizing the problem, informing the mass audience and calling for various legitimate political actions became tools for “re-accentuating” the axiological focus of society.

The authors found that this approach is based on the idea of intersectionality: suppression can take different forms, but identities (gender, national, or religious ones) frequently intersect. Thus, it follows that the experience of each individual is unique and must *be objectified with the help of linguistic means*. This is because “verbalization,” “designation” and “characterization” of

² *Zhenshhina pishet*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/readwomanread; *Doch' razbojnika*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/megabitch; *Zhenskaja vlast'*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/vlast_Zh; *Nikonova.online*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <http://nikonova.online>; *Vashu mat'!* Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/vashumat; *Avtorka negoduet*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/fmnsn; *EQUALITY*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://g-equality.livejournal.com>; *Vse skladno*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://shieldmaiden.info>

³ *Wrong Fem*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://zen.yandex.ru/id/5e8f5fdb70c4601c2c6536cd>; *Pervyj feministicheskij*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/feminism_power; *Zhenskaja logika*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from t.me/fmnsn; *Feminizm: nagljadno*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://zen.yandex.ru/id/5ed645f01642f94d932e965e>; *Vysshaja shkola ravnopravija*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://vk.com/hsequality>; *FEM TALKS*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://femtalks.moscow/texts>; *Reason&Justice*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from https://vk.com/reason_and_justice

⁴ *TyNeOdn*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://tineodna.ru>; *Rjobra Evy*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://www.rebraevy.ru/projects>; *Write Like a Grrrl*. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <http://writelikeagrrrl.ru/lab>; *RFO “ONA.”* Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://ona.org.ru>

a problem synergistically combining the unique mechanisms of discourse formation and the stable character of hierarchy inherent to social determinants (1) is a form of political statement and (2) underlies the establishment and development of the original, one-of-a-kind integral unit called linguistic personality.

The research also discovered that the combination of the verbal resources used by feminist activists in their blogs determines the dialogic impetus of feminist discourse and ensures a significant impact on the audience. We can argue that the very fact of being involved in this process directly affects both the arrangement of Internet content, its linguistic and semiotic variability and moral and value positions of the entire linguo-cultural universe.

The theoretical results and the empirical material of the study can be included in the general paradigm describing linguistic features of online communication and serve as a basis for further study of the discourse of Russian social movements, as well as their communicative and impactful potential.

Discussion

One of the important stages in the history of feminist discourse was the emergence of a new linguistic direction studying feminist discourse – *feminist criticism of language*. As feminist ideology struggles against imposing patriarchal values through different discursive practices, we can evidence the three main goals of feminist criticism: (1) identification and defeat of male dominance in the social and cultural environment, reflected in the language and literature; (2) destruction of the stereotypical opposition between men and women; (3) redefinition of gender differences in the linguistic picture of the world (Kirilina, 2000: 139–140).

So the feminist criticism focuses on surmounting “linguistic sexism”, the androcentricity of the language, gender censorship, suggesting that the change in the existing language norms and means of verbal objectivation of female would eventually change the society structure on the whole. Presumably, it is actualization of feminist criticism that has largely influenced the arrangement of modern feminist practices and the patterns by which they function.

The first essential point in this regard is a clear distinction between the concepts ‘feminist’ and ‘feministic.’⁵ For example, it is alleged that *feminist* works not only address the ideas of feminism, but are also created by feminists, whereas a *feministic* text can be of any authorship (Ismailova, 2010). Within the framework of feminist linguistics, a construct of femininity, where a woman is the main actor in this process, is fundamental. In other words, feminine is whatever a woman herself recognizes as such.

⁵ Note that in a number of lexicographic sources (see: Epishkin, 2010; Efremova, 2006) these units are presented as equivalent.

Another important point is the differentiation of feminist texts on their ideological orientation. Thus, in the description of feminist blogs, we can often see an indication of movement the authors affiliate themselves with⁶, since this not only determines the values of their linguistic personality, but also marks indispensable ideologemes of a particular text unit in feminist discourse. In this respect, the feminist movement in the Russian-speaking space is heterogeneous. For example, the Russian feminist association “Ona” (“She”) counts seventeen movements,⁷ among which, in addition to the radical, liberal or intersectional ones mentioned in various studies, there are also narrower, “niche” movements such as eco-feminism, trans-feminism, chicana-feminism, etc.

Such pluralism is explained by the multitude of problems that women experience in different social groups, which significantly complicates the taxonomization of feminist blogs (at least based on their thematic content and range of problems). This is frequently accompanied by the author's inability to identify herself with any movement (due to the positioning of the feminist activist as a self-sufficient linguistic personality or to the multipolarity of her point of view). Based on these factors, we divide all feminist blogs into *actual feminist* and *pro-feminist*. This division is conditional to a certain extent; however, several linguistic features allow us to distinguish them.

Actual feminist blogs are communities that transmit theoretical and ideological tenets of the movement (or, at least, indicate which ideology they incline to). The content of such blogs consists mainly of precedent feminist texts written by well-known representatives of feminism and analytical articles dedicated to the feminist agenda (often informationally secondary texts or translations of foreign sources) designed to modify readers' worldview in accordance with the goals and objectives of feminism. In ideological and political communication, such platforms are of great interest in terms of their mobilization potential, since *actual feminist* blogs generate the agenda, shape and transmit the ideology of the movement, and deploy campaigns. Depending on the format of the campaign – offline or online – a blog can serve both as a source of information about an upcoming rally and a platform to host a campaign itself.

In turn, *pro-feminist* blogs have a more personal character as they actualize the “optics” of a linguistic personality showing their own “female” view of a wide range of issues. The creators of such resources are not always fem-activists in the direct sense; this is the reason why we call these communities pro-feminist. The main goal of pro-feminist blogs is to develop new discursive practices that

⁶ See: “free of anything • феминизм” (<https://vk.com/freeofanything>) – radical community; “Women's Power” (t.me/vlast_Zh) – liberal feminism; “SotsFem Alternative” (<https://zen.yandex.ru/id/5ed51d292c0e3530af43e10a?lang=ru>) – socialist movement, etc.

⁷ List of feminist movements, ideologies. *Russian feminist society “Ona.”* Retrieved July 11, 2022, from <https://ona.org.ru/feminist-currents>

create an “ideological background.” The semantic dominant in this occasion is the explication of female subjectiveness and identity, which in the future can develop in various directions: women’s social activity, the formation of gender and gender normativity, comprehension of the role of women in all spheres of public life, etc. As a rule, a pro-feminist blog acts as a platform for *author's reflection in a selected vector* and further readers’/subscribers’ commentaries. This promotes the achievement of the implicit goal of feminism – author’s self-affirmation within the framework of feminist theory.

Since pro-feminist blogs usually have a personal and individual nature, their basic genre features are self-presentation and self-characterization, localized in the blog description or in the author’s profile header. The **main communication technologies for fem-bloggers’ self-presentation** include:

- social portrait (indication of age, social status, job, etc.): “*An arrant feminist, a Siberian l*****, a shameless mother, a greedy illustrator, an impudent journalist*”⁸ (Hm, interesting!);
- identity explication: “*Hello! My name is Sasha Kharitonsky, I am a **non-binary person** and a helping practitioner* (Narrativny|Haritonsky);
- indication of affiliation with a certain ideological movement: “*Personal means political: a channel about the daily practices of an **intersectional feminist***” (Даша пишет);
- reference to personal experience: “*This channel is about the **experience of first steps in polyamory: our thoughts, fears and research** of ourselves and the world around us :)*” (Полиамория оглашенных);
- restriction of blog topics: “*Gender studies, women’s and gender history, history of feminism, phd-everyday life*” (Смех Медузы);
- presentation of the author's assessment of reality: “*Women's texts **as the meaning of life. Destroying stereotypes, changing canons, drinking wine and laughing***” (Своя комната).

Pro-feminist resources are markedly depoliticized; they focus on the recipient’s emotions and her sense of security and comfort, which explains their integrative character and clear signs of interpersonality. This, however, does not negate their political effect, since the increase in the audience makes a blog author an opinion leader, able to effectively lobby her interests and form an up-to-date agenda in the context of feminism.

To conceptualize the feminist agenda, to form an image of the world in mass consciousness that would develop within the movement, and to elaborate a proper feminist terminology, which is still taking shape in the Russian feminist

⁸ Hereinafter, the author's spelling and punctuation are preserved. However, in rare cases, lexemes used in the texts are replaced with * for ethical reasons.

space, feminist bloggers use **a few specific lexical means**. The most frequent of them are:

- feminist terminology:

- *“It’s very sad that Ph.D’s in medical sciences do not read modern guides for doctors dealing with obesity (where they constantly repeat that **fat shaming** harms patients ...).”*

- *“The existence of homophobia, racism, islamophobia, **misandry** and other forms of xenophobia simply erases our agenda.”*

- *“Feminist newbies appended theory to the problem and academic language to ordinary speech, so now everyone is talking in terms of **gaslighting** and **mansplaining**, but no one has started the conversation.”*

- thematic phraseology:

- *“Who will love a careerist like you? A spinster with **forty cats**. Be softer.”*

- *“Okay, our **couch warriors**, who recently had massive seizures about women’s and children’s hygiene products ...”*

- *“But let’s imagine what happens if all women in the world suddenly realize they are right and run home, **to cook children and to give birth to borscht**.”*

- feminization (used to highlight the female gender of the speech object):

- *“I can talk about this endlessly, but so many books have been written about this so far. Learned **‘psycholog-esses’** and psychologists have explained the mechanism of abuse, and all that.”*

- *“Citydrive <...> found out that 72% of **‘chauffeuses’** have experienced bullying on the road at least once...”*

- *“At the same time, their communication was in the manner: “We are, first of all, friends”, so the **‘author-esses’** of the reviews never received money for their work.”*

Since one of the key ideological elements of the feminist movement is the *establishment* of female identity, the authors of pro-feminist blogs aim to rethink sociocultural stereotypes by describing women’s specific experience, delineated from men’s worldview and masculine categories. The main means for achieving this is to use **feminist metaphors**, which (unlike gender metaphors) do not conceptualize gender, but serve to introduce the dominant ideologemes in feminism:

- *“You either have to “freely make a choice to remain merely a mother or mostly a mother”, or fiercely fight **on three fronts** in order to **defend** your right to at least some piece of life outside nursery or kitchen.”*

- *“This is not even a matter of personal moral qualities. You can keep your own wife **on a leash in the closet** ...”*

- *“It’s amazing how easy it is for men to accept the idea that a woman **should have a master**, whose desires must be respected.”*

Other common stylistic devices – **antithesis, gradation, hyperbole** – shift the emphatic focus in the syntagma to those aspects of women's experience that are deliberately problematized in feminist discourse:

– “*It seems to me that this is a wonderful illustration of reproductive service labor: **while your husband in a tie makes comments in a stern voice, you are scraping your common children off the floor after they decided to check on how dad was doing.***”

– “*We have a classic example of a “glass ceiling” before us, cruel and cynical: **women can risk their lives, die, write the best texts, and only men will be invited to an executive meeting of the A+++ level anyway.***”

– “***Men are not able to live** without women's reproductive labor. If women stop taking their children to the kindergarten, cleaning apartments, washing clothes for their husbands, cooking, etc., **the economies of entire countries will collapse.***”

Here we point out that this “semantic amplification” is often accompanied by **syntactic parallelism and anaphoric-epiphoric figures**:

– “***How about paying attention** to how many women become victims in an attempt to live up to these very values and start a family? **How about accepting the fact** that women are killed by men – and the existing laws are not efficient enough to protect them? **How about imagining** that women might just be scared to start a family?*”

– “***So sick and tired** of this artificial division of the world into “men are from Mars” and “women are from Venus”. **So annoyed** by this blind misbelief that there is a “male point of view.”*”

– “*And here I want to tell you: **if you send your child** to an expensive private school or a public one in the neighborhood, **I don't blame you.** If you go back to work a week after giving birth and hire a babysitter, **I don't blame you.** If you decide to quit your career and take care of your children and home, **I don't blame you.***”

From our point of view, it is significant that text units in feminist blogs can be a certain form of political action that imitates traditional scenarios such as rally, picket or street protest. This correlation is achieved (1) with the help of various rhetorical figures – **an appeal, a call, a rhetorical question or an exclamation**:

– “*And now, over the whole earth, we hear the howling and crying about the “war of sexes”. Suddenly we are called to think again, retreat, remember that violence breeds violence, and that “**we can't keep going like that!**” **Why, I wonder, why? And what terrible thing has happened?***”

– “*But **please PLEASE stop calling** ordinary women plus-size!”*

– “*We've had **enough** stories about heroic men at war!”*

(2) graphic expression of rhythmic and melodic pattern of sentences and their expressiveness (deliberate display of anger is a protest against a public ban on the open manifestation of negative emotions by women). Emotiveness is extremely important for feminist practices in general. This is exemplified through **direct nomination of feelings and emotions, the use of interjections and/or change of case to imitate screaming:**

– “For some online advertisers, you are just a pencil in a glass. Just because you are a woman. **Hate this.**”

– “Media about parenting are read **ONLY** by women. Not a single comment from a man. Not a single **FATHER** is there.”

– “I want to wave this leaflet and yell **“WHY DO YOU NEED A HUSBAND WHO LEAVES WHEN YOU ARE ILL?”**”

– “The body is unfamiliar and “alien”, sex hurts, your partner requires attention and gets upset because of your hanging belly (**lol what?!.**)”

– “Fasten your brain! With the help of sexism, they now learned to advertise prescription antidepressants (**AAAAA.**)”

In order to give a pejorative expressiveness to the phenomena, against which feminism struggles, as well as to amplify the sharpness of their speech, feminist bloggers actively use reduced or rude colloquial vocabulary, including **dysphemisms:**

– “She can't tell her breadwinner and protector “you've **crapped your pants**, so go and fix the situation.”

– “For example, the advice to dress modestly to those who are afraid of sexual violence is **bullshit**, because clothes cannot affect whether you will encounter violence or not.”

– “A man is declared to be a person who cannot wash a child's **ass** without precise instructions.”

The differences between the actual feminist and pro-feminist platforms are also traceable at the level of tactical and strategic preferences.

The rhetoric of actual feminist blogs is based on harsh criticism of opponents, in this case – outspoken opponents of feminism or promoters of anti-feminist ideas and beliefs:

– “They **impose** spiritual bonds, **destroy** education, science, medicine, **encourage pro-life and degradation, they take us back to the Stone Age**, and then they call us are incapable of progress, science and logic.”

– “Of course, it is good news that the law (on domestic violence) is still going to be adopted sooner or later. <...> At the same time, it is super annoying that instead of taking into account the needs of potential victims, they listen to some right-wing conservative **demagogues who couldn't care less about women.**”

– “*Sexism and misogyny are now public policy. <...> This is the true face of the current government.*”

The impact of actual feminist blogs is exerted, among other things, by **manipulative communication tactics**. For example, to demonstrate their competence, feminist bloggers often operate with facts and references to reputable persons and present information “in a destabilizing manner,” a-priori inducing an emotional response from the recipient:

– “*<...> but Russia is such a country, where women mostly face problems in heterosexual marriages, and alimony arrears in Russia exceed 100 billion rubles.*”

– “*It is a fact that only a very small number of working people can adequately support at least two dependent children for two or three years on a salary alone. It is a fact that it is almost impossible for a woman with two children to reach the pre-maternity income level. It is a fact that we already measure poverty against the bar below the lowest limit, and the cost of living equals to the cost of survival.*”

– “*Only 20% of women say they have never experienced harassment in their workplace in any form. 20%! This means that out of 10 women, only two were able to work peacefully and concentrate on their work tasks in a favorable environment!*”

In contrast to actual feminist platforms, where criticism of the opposing ideology is supported by facts (albeit with a shift/enhancement of thematic accents), authors of pro-feminist blogs prefer **defamatory tactics and irony towards opponents** (usually men):

– “*A Russian husband will demand three children from you, and the first one should always be a boy, in order to continue the glorious Pupkin family. <...> He will be a breadwinner and will bring you the average regional salary, so fall at the patriarch’s feet for this.*”

– “*Maybe for women’s comfort we should stop harassing them? Nah, that’s nonsense.*”

– “*Yes, Dmitry, it is certainly your right to decide for women what to do with their own lives.*”

Emotional tension and aggressive communication in this case are determined by the gender opposition “positive female image - negative male image”. To achieve linguistic objectification of masculinity, feminist bloggers use **confrontational tactics**, i.e. condemnation, accusation and direct insults:

– “*The plot of the first and the main part of the novel “June” builds upon a false allegation of rape. I will not deny that rapes do happen <...> But taking into account the public opinion described above, no well-known writer should fos-*

ter this legend. They simply must not do that. This is vile, stupid, shortsighted and cruel.”

– *“At some point – someone at the end of her adolescence, someone else in her 20s or 30s – we all understand that something is fundamentally wrong with men. That they are misogynists, rapists, murderers.”*

– *“In the end, what do these degraded cads fight for? Against the law, of course! Where is the logic? There is no logic! To put it shortly, they are cads!*

Feminist activists strive to raise the status of women by creating a positive women’s image in the eyes of the recipient and to shape an understanding among women themselves that feminist community is a safe and friendly space where they are valued and respected. To do so, the authors of pro-feminist blogs use a wide range of **integrative communication strategies and tactics**, for example:

- demonstration of engagement: *“Yes, I want the labor of people who raise children without a partner to become visible. I want single parents to feel more confident. I want to believe that I can make at least a small contribution to this”;*

- apology: *“I am sorry if you expect me to react to current events – unfortunately, I am completely incapable of any reaction”;*

- gratitude: *“With your support and faith in freedom, I am getting stronger! Thank you for standing by my side!”;*

- compliment: *“Let’s stop apologizing, enough is enough. We are beautiful, smart, and talented”;*

- humor: *“You will die with forty cats, they say <...> Every person of every age has once been threatened with cats”;*

- praise: *“I want to remind you again that women with children are superheroes!”;*

- expression of sympathy: *“I feel so sad for all the women who are harmed by other women. Words cannot express”;*

- offer of cooperation: *“It is necessary to show solidarity and express support to our sisters: organize various protest events, fight for reclassification of charges, disseminate information”;*

- suggestion of a solution: *“A man starts yelling at you? Shut him up by saying “I can’t continue communication while you are so emotional”;*

- promise: *“I promise to never say to anyone “your baby feels everything so pull yourself together, darling”;*

- request for information: *“Today I will share my list of things that encourage me, and you tell me what encourages you now ...”;*

- direct answer: *“Am I a good housewife? No. Do I want to be a better housewife? Neither.”;*

- informing: “*Today’s tip for all women and persons supporting equality in Vladivostok: on March 7, this city will host a rally in support of victims of domestic violence*”;
- generalization: “*Of course, I answer that patriarchy affects everyone and that even in the most prosperous country, there is not a single woman or a single man who would never experience its impact*”;
- description of a positive prospect: “*A woman should do whatever is convenient for her. <...> In a world of the victorious feminism, there is no reason to forbid a woman to bare her breasts*”.

The analysis of text units presented on the Internet and created by representatives of the feminist movement allows us to formulate some general provisions that characterize feminist blogs in terms of their ideological and political potential and their influence on readers’ axiological position.

The semasiological core of feminist discursive practices is a *negative assessment of the social reflection of female subjectiveness*, since the “masculinity” of many social phenomena not only restricts women in their basic rights, but also puts them in a context that consolidates, reinforces, and normalizes the idea of women’s “secondary importance” and transmits it to subsequent generations. Therefore, feministic revision of the existing social structure is carried out, on the one hand, by discrediting the “men’s point of view” through confrontational/manipulative/argumentative communicative tactics (with thematic accentuation), and, on the other hand, by asserting a new status of feminine subjectiveness that underlines a special, but always an equal social role of women in society.

All feminist texts are distinguished by a specific set of lexical and phraseological units, as well as syntactic and stylistic constructions that determine the interpersonal and, more broadly, interdiscursive development of feminist interactions. In this regard, the expressiveness and a high emotional charge of these statements are extremely important. To actualize them, feminist bloggers use an ambivalent combination of numerous linguistic tools – from feminine forms, feminist terminology, gender metaphors, thematic phraseological units, discursive and emphatic units to reduced colloquial words, dysphemisms and irony (when statements framed with various figurative constructions with a clear hyperbolization are directed at the opponents). Collectively, they contribute to the expression of the ideological position of the author.

Paradoxically, a tangible political impact of feminist texts is created by *depoliticization of feminism*. In this respect, the feminist movement is presented more as a way of life rather than a form of political engagement, which increases public interest in the tenets of feminism and, as a result, contributes to the expansion of feminist ideas’ supporters.

Conclusion

Despite its “scientific infancy” (the definition and categorization of the phenomenon in question are still at the stage of formation), the essential feature of cyberactivism as a social phenomenon is the use of digital communications to perform political actions – dissemination of information and transmission of one’s ideological views. The development of cyberactivism had a remarkable influence on the actualization of feminist ideas in the Russian linguo-cultural space and, as a result, led to the emergence of new discursive practices in the feminist movement. Blogs turned out to be the most productive “environment” for online activism since – unlike other digital media – they can facilitate various activities. One source can simultaneously serve as a platform for media content, exchange of contacts, storage of author's notes and collective discussions.

In this regard, we can assert that feminist discourse is a new type of social and linguo-cultural interaction – interaction between persons and institutions with the focus on comprehending female subjectiveness through the prism of gender differences in the linguistic image of the world. Transmitted in a network environment, modern feminist discourse becomes a significant component of media resources (including social media) and an essential part of cyberactivism. Thereby, it directly affects both the axiological positions of Internet users and verbal components of the logosphere, embodied in semantic, stylistic, and structural variability of sign units in the communicative practice of a feminist’s linguistic personality.

Further discourse-generating activity of a linguistic personality, who shares the ideas of feminist movements, can be represented as a complex self-defining process with a “spiral” trajectory. As a feminism supporter masters language conventions, she expands her ability to arbitrarily choose and vary the forms of her verbal (and not only!) behavior based on a subjective action plan. Meanwhile, the purported and adopted system of values that sets the criteria for her own communicative experience (as well as the acceptance/non-acceptance of the discourse of another person) further determines the transition to meta-communication – to the level of social relations, and not the content. Thus, it conditions the possible transformation of the entire socio-cultural system.

At present, there is no evidence that the described communicative acts and feminist cyberactivism in general can lead to significant institutional changes. However, the actualization of feminist principles and the expansion of the audience engaged in this ideological/political movement is undeniable. Even information campaigns that do not usually have an emotional charge lead to active responses such as mass reposts (i.e., dissemination of information) and voluntary donations in favor of various feminist organizations. Thus, the practices of cyberactivism have a substantial impact on the political engagement (especially among the younger generation, where this phenomenon resonates the most), which makes this area of discourse analysis promising for further research.

References

- Bozhenkova, N.A., & Negushina, A.A. (2021). Interpersonal characteristics of Russian-speaking feminist mediadiscourse (based on the telegram-channel “The robber’s daughter”). *Culture and Text*, (4), 240–252. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.37386/2305-4077-2021-4-240-252>
- Bozhenkova, N.A., Bozhenkova, R.K., & Bozhenkova, A.M. (2017). Modern political discourse: Verbal exemplification of tactical and strategic preferences. *RUDN Journal of Russian and Foreign Languages Research and Teaching*, 15(3), 255–284. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2264-2017-15-3-255-284>
- Bozhenkova, N.A., Katyshev, P.A., Ionova, S.V., Afanasyeva, E.M., & Saakyan, L.N. (2019). Russian political discourse in the focus of linguistic ecology. *Science Journal of Volgograd State University. Linguistics*, 18(3), 76–92. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu2.2019.3.6>
- Briuklianova, A.A. (2021). Digital activism: Forms and theoretical approaches. *Bulletin of Perm University. Political Science*, 15(4), 121–130. (In Russ.)
- Brodovskaya, E.V., Dombrovskaya, A.Yu., & Karzubov, D.N. (2020). Digital communities of civil and political activists in Russia: Integration, governance and mobilization potential. *Bulletin of Moscow Region State University*, (4), 3–27. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.18384/2224-0209-2020-4-1043>
- Cabrera, N.L., Matias, C.E., & Montoya, R. (2017). Activism or Slacktivism? The potential and pitfalls of social media in contemporary student activism. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, (10), 400–415. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000061>
- Efremova, T.F. (2006). *Modern explanatory dictionary of the Russian language*. Moscow: AST Publ., Astrel' Publ., Harvest Publ. (In Russ.)
- Epishkin, N.N. (2010). *Historical dictionary of Gallicisms of the Russian language*. Moscow: ETS Publ. (In Russ.)
- Fokina, M.A. (2014). Genre and linguistic peculiarities of blogs of politicians. *Political Linguistics*, (4), 187–192. (In Russ.)
- Geisler, C. (2018). The Voices of #MeToo: From grassroots activism to a viral roar. *International Communication Association*. Prague.
- Generalova, L.M. (2020). Genre specifics of the political blog. *The World of Science, Culture, Education*, (3), 500–503. (In Russ.)
- Generalova, L.M., & Rebrina, L.N. (2018). Blogging as a form of public subjectivity in protest communication. *Modern Studies of Social Issues*, 10(2–3), 157–176. (In Russ.)
- Gnedash, A.A. (2022). The fourth wave of feminism: Political discourse and opinion leaders in Twitter. *RUDN Journal of Political Science*, 24(1), 64–89. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2022-24-1-64-89>
- Ilyenkov, E.V. (1991). *Philosophy and culture*. Moscow: Politizdat Publ. (In Russ.)
- Ismailova, F.E. (2010). Evolution of the social status of women in world literature. *Modern Studies of Social Issues*, (4–2), 612–616. (In Russ.)
- Kaverina, E.A., & Dekich, E. (2020). The development of feminist discourse in digital media (the experience of Russia and the USA). *Media Almanah*, (4), 26–36. (In Russ.)
- Kirilina, A.V. (2000). Gender studies in foreign and Russian linguistics. *Social Sciences and Contemporary World*, (4), 138–143. (In Russ.)
- Kozhemyakin, E.A. (2010). Mass communication and media discourse: Towards methodology. *Scientific bulletin of Belgorod State University. Humanities Sciences*, 12(83), 13–21. (In Russ.)
- Loney-Howes, R. (2015). Beyond the spectacle of suffering: representations of rape in online anti-rape activism. *Outskirts: Feminism along the Edge*, (33), 1–17.
- Nesterenok, Y.I. (2013). Blogs are the elements of political field. *Modern Studies of Social Issues*, 10(30), 44. (In Russ.)
- Parma, R.V. (2021). Public activism of Russian citizens in offline and online spaces. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes Journal*, (6), 145–170. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.14515/monitoring.2021.6.2042>

- Pikula, M.M. (2015). Interactive communication and political consciousness. *Studia Humanitatis*, (2). Retrieved July 11, 2022, from <http://st-hum.ru/sites/st-hum.ru/files/pdf/pikula.pdf>
- Pokhodnya, A.V. (2020). Approaches to the study of the possibilities and effects of online activism as part of political communication. *South-Russian Journal of Social Sciences*, 21(3), 37–46. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.31429/26190567-21-3-37-46>
- Ringrose, J. (2019). *Digital feminist activism: #MeToo and the everyday experiences of challenging rape culture*. Retrieved March 20, 2022, from <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-15213-0>
- Rogacheva, N.B. (2009). Speech-genre secondary in political discourse (based on the blog genre). *Political Communication: Proceedings of the All-Russian Science School for Youth* (pp. 97–100). Ekaterinburg: UrGPU Publ. (In Russ.)
- Sakharova, A.V. (2017). *Formation of a linguistic personality: Socio-philosophical aspect* (Candidate dissertation, Ivanovo). (In Russ.)
- Saveleva, I.V. (2020). Non-professional political discourse: An intentional aspect (case study of Internet comments to political news). *Scientific Research and Development. Modern Communication Studies*, (4), 83–90. <https://doi.org/10.12737/2587-9103-2020-83-90>
- Savitskaya, L.S. (2011). The image of communicative future in weblog-mediated discourse: Modus structure and linguistics expression. *Vestnik of Lobachevsky University of Nizhni Novgorod*, 6(2), 597–601. (In Russ.)
- Shurukhova, Z.S. (2016). Language specifics of Internet communication. *Innovative Processes in the Scientific Environment: Collection of Articles* (pp. 228–231). Ufa: Omega Science, LLC. (In Russ.)
- Sidorova, I.G. (2011). Pragmatic communication characteristics of personal and interpersonal genres in the Internet discourse. *Science Journal of Volgograd State University. Linguistics*, (2), 154–158. (In Russ.)
- Solnceva, E.S. (2019). On the question of the properties of media discourse. *Izvestia of the Volgograd State Pedagogical University*, 8(141), 147–153. (In Russ.)
- Troitskaya, O.G. (2000). Gender features of communication. *Problems of Intercultural Communication* (pp. 374–380). Ivanovo: IGKhTU Publ.
- Vidineeva, N.Y. (2020). Means of implicitness in Russian political weblogs. *RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 11(4), 733–744. (In Russ.) <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2020-114-733-744>
- Vinnik, N.V. (2010). Womens' movement and Runet: To find each other. In G.M. Mikhal'eva (Ed.), *Womens' Movement in Russia: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: Proceedings of the Conference* (pp. 94–95). Moscow: RODP "Yabloko" Publ., KMK Publ. (In Russ.)
- Zelenovskaya, A.V. (2014). The concepts of "computer discourse," "Internet-discourse," "virtual discourse." *Language and Culture*, (12), 17–21. (In Russ.)

Bio notes:

Natalia A. Bozhenkova, Grand PhD, Doctor of Philology, Full Professor, Professor of Department of General and Russian Linguistics, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, 6 Akademika Volgina St, Moscow, 117485, Russian Federation. *Research interests*: text linguistics, general discourse theory, psycholinguistics, cultural linguistics, political linguistics, social linguistics and cross-cultural communication, stylistics, rhetoric, Russian speech culture, linguistic and methodological aspects of the Russian Language in a foreign society, linguistic and methodological aspects of the Russian language and literature in the Russian society. The author of over 400 scientific publications. ORCID: 0000-0002-2381-5865. E-mail: natalyach@mail.ru

Aleksandra A. Negushina, postgraduate student, Department of General and Russian Linguistics, Pushkin State Russian Language Institute, 6 Akademika Volgina St, Moscow, 117485, Russian Federation. *Research interests*: text linguistics, linguoculturology, political linguistics

tics, social linguistics and cross-cultural communication. ORCID: 0000-0003-4540-3930. E-mail: sash.negusha@gmail.com

Raisa K. Bozhenkova, Grand PhD, Doctor of Philology, Full Professor, Professor at the Department of the Russian Language, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, 5 2-ya Baumanskaya St, bldg 1, Moscow, 105005, Russian Federation. *Research interests*: cultural linguistics, general discourse theory, linguistic hermeneutics, semantics, cross-cultural communication, phonetics and accentology, stylistics, rhetoric, Russian speech culture, linguistic and methodological aspects of Russian as a foreign language. The author of over 300 scientific publications. ORCID: 0000-0003-4545-9387. E-mail: rkbozhenkova@mail.ru

DOI 10.22363/2618-8163-2022-20-4-414-433

Научная статья

Вербальная экспликация аксиологических констант русскоязычного фем-дискурса в контексте феномена киберактивизма

Н.А. Боженкова¹  , А.А. Негушина¹ , Р.К. Боженкова² 

¹Государственный институт русского языка имени А.С. Пушкина,
Российская Федерация, 117485, Москва, ул. Академика Волгина, д. 6

²Московский государственный технический университет имени Н.Э. Баумана,
Российская Федерация, 105005, Москва, 2-я Бауманская ул., д. 5, стр. 1

 natalyach@mail.ru

Аннотация. Рассматривается сопряжение базисных конститuentов двух новых для современной русистики феноменов – явления интернет-активизма и языковой личности фем-активистки. Актуальность работы обуславливается объектом исследования, представляющим собой особые формы социолингвокультурных интеракций – дискурсивные практики фем-киберактивизма, которые, транслируясь в сетевой среде с целью осуществления общественно-политической деятельности, составляют сегодня значительную часть контента и оказываются одним из важнейших факторов формирования аксиологических детерминант российского общества. Цель исследования – выявление и системная характеристика лингвоспецифических признаков феминистских и профеминистских блогов, демонстрирующих как идеологические воззрения фем-движения, так и особенности языковой репрезентации тематического поля феминизма в аспекте представленности идиоэтнических черт языковой личности фем-активистки. Материалом исследования послужили авторские интернет-блоги фем-активисток, текстовые единицы тематических феминистских сообществ в социальных сетях, а также текстовые материалы общественных организаций. Использовались критический дискурс-анализ, функциональный анализ корпусов медиатекстов, комплексный компонентный и контекстуальный анализ языковой системы российской блогосферы, стилистический анализ изобразительных ресурсов русского языка, лингвопрагматический анализ речевых и коммуникативных актов и метод лингвокультурологических истолкований. Выявлено, что блогерский активизм имеет ряд характерных признаков, которые отражаются на его рече-коммуникативном наполнении. Главным назначением большинства блогов (особенно относящихся к категории личных, профеминистских) является акт самопрезентации, поэтому такой активизм нередко имеет индивидуальный, а не коллективный характер, авторы обычно не обозначают гражданско-политические цели, что сближает данный подкорпус фем-дискурса с неполитическими общественными практиками. Установлено, что авторы блогов редко используют конвенциональные языковые формы, традиционно присущие идеологизированным практикам, что

в свою очередь приводит к выработке новых коммуникативных стратегий и может иметь в будущем значительный социальный эффект. Доказано, что фем-киберактивизм, развивая «под определенным углом» смыслообразующий компонент фем-дискурса, представляющего собой критическую рефлексию женской субъектности, демонстрирует высокую степень вовлеченности гражданского сообщества в определенные политические процессы. Дальнейшее рассмотрение феномена фем-киберактивизма может дать ответ на многие вопросы лингвокультурного и – шире – цивилизационного устройства российского общества.

Ключевые слова: киберактивизм, русскоязычный феминистский дискурс, российская блогосфера, коммуникативные идеологизированные практики, изобразительные ресурсы, русский язык, лингвоаксиологические доминанты, лингвопрагматический инструментарий

История статьи: поступила в редакцию 16.04.2022; принята к печати 11.07.2022.

Для цитирования: Боженкова Н.А., Негушина А.А., Боженкова Р.К. Вербальная экспликация аксиологических констант русскоязычного фем-дискурса в контексте феномена киберактивизма // Русистика. 2022. Т. 20. № 4. С. 414–433. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2618-8163-2022-20-4-414-433>