*ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ /
POLITICAL SCIENCE*

Научная статья / Original article

Алексей Михайлович Ерохин
[Alexey M. Erokhin][1*],
Мария Егоровна Ерохина
[Maria E. Erokhina][2],
Евгений Александрович Авдеев
[Evgeniy A. Avdeev][3]

Конфликтогенность сетевого дискурса полиэтничных регионов Северного Кавказа: методология исследования

Conflict potential of network discourse in multiethnic regions of the North Caucasus: research methodology

*[1, 2, 3]Северо-Кавказский федеральный университет, г. Ставрополь, Россия /
North-Caucasus Federal University, Stavropol, Russia,*

**Автор, ответственный за переписку: Алексей Михайлович Ерохин, a_erohin@mail.ru /
Corresponding author: Alexey M. Erokhin, a_erohin@mail.ru*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматривается актуальная методология исследования конфликтогенности сетевого дискурса полиэтничных регионов Северного Кавказа. Вербальная сфера, имевшая по отношению к реальным социальным отношением вторичный характер, в информационном обществе приобретает самостоятельное значение. Целевое воздействия на сознание человека реализуется за счет целенаправленного применения вербальных и невербальных средств и приемов, направленных на размежевание, раскол и конфликтную мобилизацию. Значимость исследования конфликтогенности сетевого дискурса полиэтничных регионов Северного Кавказа определяется, прежде всего, возможностью их использования для дальнейшего снижения рисков этноконфессиональной конфликтности в регионах Северного Кавказа, профилактики радикализма в молодежной среде. Исследование конфронтационности и радикализации сетевого контента, прогнозирование потенциальных конфликтов, выявление мотивационных факторов конфликтогенеза в полиэтничных регионах могут быть востребованы в рамках работы государственных органов, связанных с обеспечением национальной безопасности, противодействием терроризму, радикализму и экстремизму.*

Ключевые слова: конфликтогенность, сетевой дискурс, социальные сети, Северный Кавказ, полиэтничность, язык вражды, методология исследования

Abstract. *The article discusses the current methodology for studying the potential for conflict in network discourse in multiethnic regions of the North Caucasus. The verbal sphere, previously considered as a derivative of the real relations of various subjects, acquires independent significance in the information society. Targeted influence on human consciousness is realized through the targeted use of verbal and non-verbal means and techniques aimed at demarcation, splitting and conflict mobilization. The significance of studying the potential for conflict in the network discourse of multi-ethnic regions of the North Caucasus is determined, first of all, by the possibility of using them to further reduce the risks of ethno-confessional*

conflict in the regions of the North Caucasus and prevent radicalism among youth. The study of confrontation and radicalization of online content, forecasting potential conflicts, identifying motivational factors of conflict genesis in multi-ethnic regions may be in demand within the framework of the work of government bodies related to ensuring national security, countering terrorism, radicalism and extremism.

Keywords: conflict potential, network discourse, social networks, North Caucasus, multi-ethnicity, hate speech, research methodology

Introduction. The development of the information society has fundamentally expanded the possibilities of using complex sociological and linguistic-conflictological tools in the study of conflicts. Creating an appropriate linguistic context in the media space can provoke or intensify the emerging conflict. It can be created artificially, without the presence of a real conflict situation, exclusively at the verbal level. The verbal sphere, which previously acted as a derivative of social relations, has acquired independent significance in the information society. The targeted impact on a person's attitudes and behavior is practically realized through the targeted use of words - semantic markers of conflict. Conflict risks and provoking conflicts in the media space necessitate the study of potentially dangerous vocabulary, mechanisms and speech tactics for its dissemination. The Internet is increasingly used as a means of communication; comments and microblogs are often depersonalized and demonstrate a concentration of "linguistic creativity" and speech expression, which increases the potential conflict potential of the network space.

Increasing geopolitical threats associated with the confrontation between Russia and the collective West, increasing risks of conflict associated with the transformation of the modern world order, lead to the spread of hate speech in communicative practices at the global, regional, local and interpersonal levels. The large-scale dissemination of conflict-producing content in the network space, which carries threats of social disintegration, growth of hostility, hatred and violence, is not only a scientific, but also a socially significant problem. This problem acquires the greatest significance in multi-ethnic and multi-religious regions, one of which is the North Caucasus. In a multiethnic environment, negative communication practices, clearly manifested in the network space, can act as a trigger for interethnic and interreligious conflicts, provoke aggression and violence towards one or another ethnic and religious group. Similar events occurred at the end of October 2023 and led to mass anti-Semitic protests in Makhachkala and a number of other cities in the North Caucasus, which were actively fueled by the dissemination of relevant content on social networks. Network communications contribute to expanding the range of use of conflict-prone vocabulary, instantly replicating words and phrases that acquire negative, offensive or hostile connotations. The immersion of online content in the complex sociocultural context (discourse) of multiethnic regions, characterized by the existence of ethnic stereotypes, prejudices and historical traumas in the social memory, becomes an additional conflict-generating factor.

The current state of research on the potential for conflict in online discourse. The nature of social communication in modern society significantly influences the emergence of a number of new social and political movements. The development of informatization and the emergence of network forms of organization lead to the emergence of new forms of social interactions. Network discourse actively shapes network flows, a new social morphology of society, new qualitative characteristics of "sociality" [23, p. 500]. New aspects and sociocultural foundations for identity formation are emerging. Information flows, network communications and communities emerging in a network society significantly transform the social space. Network structures in the process of expansion and unification form a single network sociocultural and institutional landscape and form new institutional practices [9]. Social relationships are beginning to be governed by the network space, in which new online structures and communication channels are emerging [10]. The

sociocultural and sociopolitical foundations of identity are formed on the basis of network structures and communities, which play an increasingly important role in the formation of various aspects of a young person's identity. Therefore, in scientific discourse, research into methods for analyzing youth communities in social networks, the values of young people, and the peculiarities of using social networks, Internet channels and instant messengers in online political communication are of particular importance [12; 11; 13].

Materials and research methods. An analysis of the risks of conflict should take into account such an important factor used in network communications as hate speech. It acts as a tool that allows one to artificially incite or intensify confrontation through verbal means. Verbal and non-verbal techniques, influencing people's consciousness, can lead to disengagement, splits and conflict mobilization of social groups. In foreign conflictology, a significant place is given to the language of conflict, which is theoretically considered by such a scientific direction as linguoconflictology [20; 2].

The study of the conflict potential of online content involves research into discursive strategies and explanatory models used in conditions of speech conflict. Van Dyck made a significant contribution to this theory. He considered the ethnic majority as the We-group, and ethnic minorities as the They-group. A simple example of such opposition is the dichotomy "We are good - They are bad" [25]. T. Kinney proposed a classification of manifestations of verbal aggression in the sphere of interethnic relations. He views verbal aggression as a form of hostility. According to T. Kinney's classification, verbal aggression manifests itself through: speech (verbalization), written messages, symbols and symbolic actions. In T. Kinney's interpretation, hate speech is associated with such characteristics as fanaticism, stereotypes, intolerance and hatred [27].

Research results and their discussion. One of the current trends in modern foreign science is the study of ethnofolisms [31; 29]. This involves the analysis of potentially conflict-generating texts, which often include ethnonyms that have a negative connotation - ethnofolisms. B. Mullen and D. Rice consider the influence of stereotypes on people's behavior towards immigrant ethnic groups [30]. Among the main factors in the formation and increase of conflict-prone vocabulary, S. Benes names migration processes and new communication technologies - the Internet and social networks.

The emergence of new political technologies is also causing a surge in hate speech. Benes identifies five factors influencing hate speech: dynamics; audience; the speech itself; historical and social context; means of communication (distribution) [21]. According to J. Daniels, the process of strengthening the phenomenon of intolerance in the United States depends on new forms of communication. Internet resources are becoming new factors in the growth of discrimination on various grounds, including gender, race, nationality and religion [24].

In a comparative analysis of Germany and the United States on the subject of hate speech, K. Haupt examines both successful and imperfect attempts to regulate "hate speech" in the public life of these countries. Particular attention is paid to identifying the causes of hate speech towards racial, ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. The researcher proposes to classify the types of such statements: unfounded claims; lack of argumentation; linguistic differences ("we-they constructions"); inhuman metaphors [26]. A. Richter, using the examples of Russia and post-Soviet countries, examines the phenomenon of "extremist" and "terrorist language", forms of political dissent [33]. D. Boromis-Habashkhi hate speech is viewed through the prism of cultural differences [22]. Foreign studies note that the use of hate speech has extremely negative consequences for society [28; 34; 19; 32].

In Russia, theoretical analysis of hate speech as an independent object began in the 2000s. Research into the problems of hate speech is addressed in the fields of sociology, history, political science, pedagogy, journalism and linguistics. For Russian scientists, the main interest is the verbalization of hostility towards individual ethnic groups, which is due to the multinational composition of the country's population. Currently, research is being updated in the field of the relationship between the language of agreement (unity) and hostility. In this regard, the collective monograph edited by I.T. Vepreva, N.A. Kupina and O.A. Mikhailova is of interest. The monograph carries out the experience of linguistic and cultural research into tolerance/intolerance as a

communicative category, identifies the paradigm of modern verbal and non-verbal texts of hostility and texts of reconciliation, characterizes their ideological, ethical, emotional-psychological, communicative-pragmatic potential and directions of influence on the consciousness of modern man [18]. Leontyeva T.V. and Shchetinina A.V. Based on an analysis of the content of websites and publications on Runet social networks, it was identified that it entered into the speech of Russian speakers in the first decade of the 21st century vocabulary of the language of unity and enmity [7].

In the formation of a language of agreement, syntonic communication plays an important role, which is one of the components of the harmonization of relations in the process of interethnic communication. A number of domestic works analyze both individual characteristics of the concept of tolerance and its manifestations in various discourses [15; 5]. The transformation of the language of consent into the language of hostility occurs due to the negative psycho-emotional intention of the producer, embedded in the message and Internet comments [1].

The network space is becoming a key object for modern research in the field of conflict-prone vocabulary. It is produced at various levels: oral emotive speech with hostile intentions; written antilocutions (symbols, drawings, ornaments); hostile body language (gestures, dancing); delegitimization of outgroup members by the ingroup; stereotyping, demonizing and marginalizing certain social groups in the media; information laundering [3]. Associative verbal fields of conflict-prone vocabulary include lexemes such as war; death; blood; conflict; murder; enemy; crime; violence; dead body; hatred; terrorism; anger; insult; aggression; anger; cruelty; envy; enmity; poverty; betrayal; hysterics; bloodshed; villainy [16]. Hate speech is often used as manipulation to achieve certain goals, which leads to increased social tension and also complicates the search for compromises between the parties to the conflict [17].

A number of regional studies are devoted to the study of media texts covering the problems of ethno-confessional interaction, prevention of extremism and terrorism. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of network communication, which is characterized by a high conflict potential and may contain signs of information extremism [6; 8]. The problem of regulating information flows in the Internet space is especially acute [4].

Analysis of the current state of research on conflict-prone risks in the media environment of multi-ethnic regions, the growing influence of the network space in which conflict-prone content is produced and distributed, allows us to conclude that this problem has not been sufficiently studied. Most researchers, including regional ones, consider disparate aspects of this problem. There are gaps in the study of the network space of the North Caucasus, which has significant conflict potential and is located in a zone of high probability of information attacks. Thus, despite the presence of a large number of studies on the conflict potential of the media environment, there is a need for research into the conflict potential of network discourse in the multiethnic regions of the North Caucasus, combining sociological, conflictological, cultural and linguistic-semantic approaches and methods.

Methodological approaches to the study of network discourse in multiethnic regions of the North Caucasus. The main theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the conflict potential of network discourse are studies of discursive strategies and applied explanatory models in conditions of speech conflict by Van Dijk [25], work in the field of linguoconflictology, analysis of the language of conflict [20; 2]. Verbalization of aggression and types of its manifestations often occurs in the form of ethnofolisms, revealing the influence of stereotypes on attitudes towards ethnic groups. Factors that increase hate speech include migration, new forms of communication (Internet and social networks), and the use of political technologies.

Hate speech includes social stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination, and becomes part of a broader and more complex phenomenon - communication based on prejudices and discrimination. It is based on stereotypical cognitive schemes, negative attitudes (prejudice) and discriminatory intentions towards any groups of people or representatives of these groups. The leading role in these processes belongs to information technologies, network structures and communities. The process of identification, the formation of new identities as a result of interaction between various real and virtual groups and communities, multiple identities of modern man, old and new values, carries significant conflict potential. Network communications contribute to expanding the range of use of

hate speech, instantly replicating "targeted" words and phrases that acquire negative, offensive or hostile connotations. Analysis of the meaning and direction of online content involves the study of communication tactics and speech moves used in the implementation of a positive or negative communication strategy.

A communicative strategy is a general plan of speech behavior, expressed in the choice of a system of thoughtful stage-by-stage speech actions; line of speech behavior adopted on the basis of awareness of the communicative situation as a whole and aimed at achieving the ultimate goal in the process of verbal communication [14, p. 6]. The main strategies that shape the attitudes and behavior patterns of the content consumer are: positive or negative positioning of the covered fact, event, narrative. The implementation of a particular strategy involves the use of a number of communication tactics. Strategies and tactics related to the cognitive level of communication are associated with their verbalization through speech - a speech act (acts) that explicates communicative tactics.

The study of the network discourse of multiethnic regions of the North Caucasus involves the use of complex methodological tools based on quantitative content analysis, thematic and discourse analysis (interpretation, analysis and assessment of semantic patterns ("themes") and event analysis of event data that are potential triggers of conflict in region. Studying network content and assessing its potential for conflict involves turning to the discourse of VKontakte communities and Telegram channels. Media texts (publications and comments) contain, along with samples of syntonic communication, an array of various forms of conflict-prone vocabulary: hate speech, pejoratives, ethno-folisms, vulgarisms and swearing. The selection and analysis of conflict-producing units involves a selection of texts and comments published in VKontakte communities and Telegram channels. The peculiarities of the use of these linguistic units will be determined using linguistic-semantic analysis of the context of their use. This will make it possible to determine the specifics of the functioning of the language of agreement and hostility, the stability of ethnic and religious stereotypes. It will be established which ethno-confessional groups are targets of verbal aggression, what traits the participants in communication endow them with, as well as general trends in the use of pejorative ethnic names and shades of meaning that are endowed with ethno-folisms in Internet communications. A promising and underused method is the analysis of graphic means of creating conflict-producing content: drawings and photographs, design of article headings and comments in special fonts and colors, emoji, etc. All these non-verbal means are actively used and replicated in network communications, strengthening their verbal component.

When studying network discourse, the following main means of speech influence will be identified and analyzed:

- "labeling" and the use of ethnofolisms, which are markers of hate speech and allow one to identify stereotypical ideas of one people about another, recorded in language and consciousness;

- negative generalizations, suggesting the transfer of negative qualities inherent in individual representatives to the ethnic and religious group as a whole;

- division into "us" and "strangers", which is one of the main linguistic means that forms potentially conflict-generating interethnic communication;

- presenting an event, a person and an ethno-confessional group in an unattractive light;

- distortion of quotes.

Also, when studying media texts, such manipulative techniques as programming nomination, "brilliant uncertainty", hidden generalization, attribution, euphemization, transfer, etc. will be identified and analyzed; communication tactics such as positive positioning, disengagement, negative presentation, mobilization of public opinion, motivation, etc.

Event analysis of news media texts will allow us to identify key events (news feeds) that act as triggers for constructive / destructive manifestations in the sphere of ethno-confessional interaction. Selected events will be recorded, counted and ranked according to chronology and significance, responses to these events in the comments will be analyzed, and their conflict-generating potential will be determined.

Counting the number (%) of conflict-prone vocabulary in publications and comments of VKontakte communities and Telegram channels, the number of conflict events (news feeds),

comparing the content of network content in various multi-ethnic regions will make it possible to assess and localize the risks of interethnic and interfaith conflict, extremist activity.

Conclusion. The significance of studying the potential for conflict in the network discourse of multi-ethnic regions of the North Caucasus is determined, first of all, by the possibility of using them to further reduce the risks of ethno-confessional conflict in the regions of the North Caucasus and prevent radicalism among youth. Monitoring the confrontational nature and radicalization of online content, predicting potential conflicts, identifying motivational factors of conflict in multi-ethnic regions may be in demand within the framework of the work of government bodies related to ensuring national security, countering terrorism, radicalism and extremism. An integrated research approach based on linguo-semantic and linguo-conflictological methods for identifying and studying conflict-prone vocabulary can be used to study conflict-prone risks in other multi-ethnic regions of Russia. Theoretical, methodological and practical results of research into the network discourse of multiethnic regions can be used in scientific activities, journalism and teaching in a wide range of socio-humanitarian disciplines, such as sociology, ethno-conflictology, sociolinguistics, media linguistics, political science and cultural studies.

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ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ОБ АВТОРАХ

Алексей Михайлович Ерохин – доктор социологических наук, профессор, профессор кафедры философии и этнологии, Северо-Кавказский федеральный университет, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7381-5372, a_erohin@mail.ru

Мария Егоровна Ерохина – ассистент кафедры правовой культуры и защиты прав человека, Северо-Кавказский федеральный университет, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8015-3434, meerokhina@ncfu.ru

Евгений Александрович Авдеев – кандидат философских наук, доцент кафедры философии и этнологии, Северо-Кавказский федеральный университет, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4004-9610, ewg.avdeev@yandex.ru

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Aleksey M. Erokhin – Dr. Sci. (Social), Professor, Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Ethnology, North-Caucasus Federal University, Stavropol, Russian Federation, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7381-5372, a_erohin@mail.ru

Maria E. Erokhina – Assistant at the Department of Legal Culture and Human Rights Protection, North-Caucasus Federal University, https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8015-3434, meerokhina@ncfu.ru

Evgeniy A. Avdeev – Cand. Sci. (Philos.), Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Ethnology, North-Caucasus Federal University, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4004-9610, ewg.avdeev@yandex.ru

Вклад авторов: все авторы внесли равный вклад в подготовку публикации.
Конфликт интересов: авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Contribution of the authors: the authors contributed equally to this article.
Conflict of interest: the authors declare no conflicts of interests.