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## Values of normal and apocalyptic society in english internet news discourse

*The article focuses on the description of categorization of values of normal and apocalyptic society in terms of the Vantage theory, which is demonstrated by the dominant and recessive vantages. The dominant vantage of normal society comprises focal features ESTABLISHED STANDARD, ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR, and TYPICAL PROCEDURE in the spheres of security, economy, partnership, and success. Constructions in the recessive vantage represent values enhancement in the spheres of business and economy. The dominant vantage of apocalyptic society comprises the focal features DESTRUCTION, DISASTER, DEATH, and DAMAGE in the sphere of environment, while the recessive vantage is demonstrated by the constructions which denote maintaining the integrity or threat removal. The article proves that modern society is reconstructed with evident apocalyptic tendencies.*

**Key words:** *Internet news discourse, normal society, apocalyptic society, values, the Vantage theory.*

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Considering the immense technological development, Internet news discourse has become a great source of people's knowledge about the world [1, p. 1–3], which surrounds them, and clearly the society, which people live within. Internet news discourse is viewed as reality constructed by communication media, which mediate the process of production, preservation, distribution, and usage of information of social value [10, p. 7–8]. Nowadays, journalists often appeal to the apocalyptic motives while writing news. Such motives have become most noticeable in media discourse [9, p. 112]. For this reason, studying apocalyptic tendencies in society representation is becoming increasingly important in modern discourse studying.

A lot of **research** has been dedicated to the description of culture-specific concepts: MULTICLURALISM, DEMOCRACY, BUSINESS [Белова 2008]; RECESSION [Баран 2015]; TERRORISM [Жулавська 2011]. As far as research into the description of society is concerned, there is not much attention given to the analysis of social values in the Internet news discourse. Peculiarities of categorization are revealed

through the usage of linguistic units, constructions in particular. They are fixed pairings of form and function and are stored and entrenched in mind in a ready-made form [4, p. 200].

Regarding the social tendencies of wars, catastrophes, and natural disasters, there are distinguished two categories: normal and apocalyptic society. Ways of describing categories seem disputable. Categories appear to be fuzzy in nature and some members of one category may enter another [2, p. 253]. Dynamic representation of the categories can be demonstrated by quite a new linguistic approach – the Vantage theory, which has been applied to explain the shift of normal society to the apocalyptic one. Suggested by the American linguist Robert MacLaury, the VT describes the process of constructing a category on two levels. On the first level, we select the focus of a category and the inherently mobile similarities to the focus (S). Similarities are other stimuli that are perceived as similar to the focus. They expand range as long as they are not considered different from the focus. Then, on the second level, similarities are fixated, allowing for new information to be added. That new information is the attention to differences (D). Once differences become more prominent, the category receives its margin. So, the category is viewed as two vantages, called dominant and recessive. The dominant vantage starts with the focus and the stronger attention to similarity. In the recessive vantage, differences are foregrounded [3, p. 24–25]. Using this approach we have analysed the constructions which appeal to values of apocalyptic and normal societies.

Dictionary definitions of the adjective 'normal' has shown that the focal features of the normal society category are ESTABLISHED STANDARD, ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR, and TYPICAL PROCEDURE [5: e-ref; 7: e-ref; 8: e-ref]. Values, which guide human actions, estimate the degree to what something or someone is *important* or *useful* [7: e-ref]. Values of normal society selected in the news stories from the English web site 'BBC-News' [6: e-ref] are represented by the constructions denoting safety, economy, partnership, and success.

Safety values may be conveyed through constructions denoting passenger safety, for example: '*Your safety is our number 1 priority*' [BBC-News 05.09.2016]. In the cited example passenger safety is of great importance which is reflected by the noun '*priority*' (meaning *something that is **more important** than other things* [8: e-ref]) and intensified by the construction '*number 1*' implying *one that is **first in rank, importance, or influence*** [ibid.].

In the second group, economy VALUES, constructions appeal to the focal feature TYPICAL PROCEDURE and denote commercial activity: *support economic growth, support for private business, boost the economy.*

In the example '*It is of great importance that the UK and the EU maintain market integrity and remain attractive destinations for businesses*' [BBC-News 04.09.2016] the construction '*maintain market integrity*' in the meaning *to preserve or support market economy* [8: e-ref] denotes financial security as one of the values of the society, while the construction '*be of great importance*' proves the significance of economy for the society [5: e-ref].

VALUES of partnership are expressed by constructions denoting participation in negotiations: *hold face-to-face talks, have a one-to-one meeting, attend meeting, talks with other world leaders*. These constructions represent TYPICAL PROCEDURE. For example: '*[...] this is an important moment in the relationship between the UK and Iran*' [BBC-News 06.09.2016]. In the example above partnership between two countries is expressed by the constructions '*relationship between the UK and Iran*'. The construction '*an important moment*' stresses the worth of the relations between countries [7: e-ref].

VALUES of success are demonstrated by nouns '*achievement*', '*success*', '*hero*', '*star*' expressing reputation, in constructions with verbs '*honour*', '*mark*' denoting respect. The constructions appeal to the focal feature ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR. For example: '*[...] the best way to mark their [Olympians] achievements would be to invest in cycling*' [BBC-New 01.09.2016]. In the given example the verb '*mark*' in the meaning *to decide and show the value or quality of* [8: e-ref] emphasises the importance of sporting performance.

The recessive vantage is represented by the linguistic units which modify the focal features of the category. The constructions were analysed contextually. Normal values in the recessive vantage are represented by the constructions from the spheres of business, denoting business behaviour: *corporate governance, working practices, general culture*, and economy, appealing to society services: *the National Health Service, customer and public services*. But the context moves them farther from the focus, because the constructions express enhancement. Such verbs as *develop, improve, promote*, together with the modal verb *should* which are used in the context, imply that the values should be enhanced, since now they are not useful for a society [8: e-ref]. These constructions modify the focal feature ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR. For example: '*[...] improve both corporate governance and working practices at the company*' [BBC-News 06.09.2016]. In the example the verb '*improve*' enhances the value of *corporate governance and working practices* and at the same time indicates that their quality should be better for a society [5: e-ref].

As for the category of apocalyptic society it comprises the following focal features due to dictionary definitions: DESTRUCTION, DISASTER,

DEATH and DAMAGE [5: e-ref; 7: e-ref; 8: e-ref]. Though only few evidences of apocalyptic values were introduced the apocalyptic feature of DAMAGE is represented in the modern society description. The analysed constructions represent the sphere of environment and denote harmful impact on it and its pollution: *damage to the environment, impacts of microplastic pollution, irreversible impact, plastic pollution, microplastic pollution, ecological risk*. The issue maybe illustrated by the example: *'Most people would be dismayed to know the face scrub or toothpaste they use was causing irreversible damage to the environment'* [BBC-News 04.09.2016]. In the cited example the noun 'damage' which is used in the construction with the verb 'cause' explicitly indicates the focal feature: the natural world people live in is being affected badly. Moreover, the adjective 'irreversible' intensifies the damage caused to the environment, pointing out that it is impossible to change back to a previous condition [8: e-ref].

Constructions in the recessive vantage represent values which are connected with confidence in government, economic security, integrity of armed forces, and environment protection. But contextually they are detached from the focus of the apocalyptic category, since they denote threat removal or maintaining the integrity.

DESTRUCTION in service sector may be demonstrated by nouns denoting interruption of work 'disruption', 'strike', 'fault', while constructions 'achieve rapid improvement', 'get to grips', the nouns enter, express removing of threats, for instance *'The government action comes after months of disruption, strikes and a reduced service on rail routes in south London, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said the board would explore how to achieve rapid improvement for the public'* [BBC-News 01.09.2016]. On the one hand, the constructions 'months of disruption, strikes' and 'a reduced service' convey hindrance to work of railway services [8: e-ref], that refers to the focal feature DESTRUCTION. On the other hand, the construction 'achieve rapid improvement' underscores specific features of the issue: politicians' plans must be tackled. It is heightened by the noun 'improvement' in the meaning to enhance in **value** or quality [ibid].

Analysing the lexical units which appeal to the semantic feature DAMAGE to the environment constructions denoting subduing of harm were singled out: *save the environment, tackle the problem, cut gas emissions*, as in the example *'[...] the government needed to step in to protect the environment as soon as is practicable'* [BBC-News 04.09.2016]. The environment as one of the priorities of a society turns out to undergo damage since the verb 'protect' corroborates this tendency by the semes 'exposure', 'injury', 'damage', and 'harm' in its

meaning [7: e-ref] Though it is absolutely normal for a society to maintain the integrity of the surroundings it lives within, what is proved by the secondary definition of the verb *'protect'* [8: e-ref]. Moreover, the verb *'need'* expresses necessity to protect the environment, intensifying its value for the society [ibid.]. This detaches the linguistic units from the focus of the apocalyptic category.

DAMAGE on the economic level may be expressed by constructions denoting warning: *risk faced by companies, concerns about the impact, recession fears, cushion the economy*, for example, *'He told a committee of MPs the risk 'has gone down' thanks to its 'timely, comprehensive and concrete' action to 'support and cushion [...] the economy'* [BBC-News 07.09.2016]. Though the noun *'risk'* appeals to the semantic feature DAMAGE, implying losses or injuries for the economy [8: e-ref], the phrasal verb *'go down'* in the form of the Present Perfect Tense indicates the decrease of the risk. The verb *'cushion'*, on the one hand, refers to the focal feature by the semes *'hurt'*, *'damaged'*, and *'unpleasant'* in the definition [ibid.]. On the other hand, it implies normal process of mitigating the economy damages [ibid.]. The phrasal verb *'go down'* in the perfect form detaches the noun *'risk'* from the focus of the apocalyptic category to its margin.

The semantic feature DISASTER may be represented by linguistic units denoting defence: *the armed forces, Britain's air defence, protect the community*, as in the example *'Our commitment to protect and increase the budget for our armed forces means that every penny of that will be reinvested into defence, helping to keep Britain safe'* [BBC-News 06.09.2016]. The verb *'protect'* implicates threatened situation through its meaning [8: e-ref], as well as the noun *'defence'* alludes to the eventual attack [ibid.]. On the one hand, the linguistic units appeal to the focal feature DISASTER implying potential hazardous situation, but on the other hand, they evade to the category margin: since the noun *'defence'* comprises the seme *'protect'* in its definition [8: e-ref], and the verb *'protect'* in its turn involves maintaining the integrity [ibid.] of the country, the linguistic units are detached from the apocalyptic category's focus. Besides, the adjective *'safe'* corroborates the point. Though it appeals to DISASTER through the semes *'danger'* and *'threat'* [ibid.], it evades from the focus implying avoiding threats [ibid.].

As was stated previously, in the recessive vantages of both categories we may observe constructions which move farther from the focus of the category to its margins. The recessive vantage of the normal category explains the shift from normal to apocalyptic society. In the recessive vantage of apocalyptic society the movement is inverse: from apocalyptic to normal. Hence, the coordinates of both categories move

towards each other. The quantitative analysis has shown that the number of spheres (5) which represent normal society exceeds the number of apocalyptic spheres (4). But the number of constructions (28) belonging to apocalyptic society prevails over those representing normal society (18). The following conclusion may be drawn: the apocalyptic tendencies are evident in the reconstruction of modern society in the English Internet discourse.

There are two perspectives for further research: the study of reconstruction of society in the types of discourse other than Internet-news discourse and describing other societal features other than those which have been studied.

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**Лінгвальна репрезентація цінностей в англomовному інтернет-дискурсі новин з точки зору теорії побудови перспектив**

*Стаття присвячена описові особливостей категоризації цінностей нормального та апокаліптичного суспільства із використанням теорії побудови перспектив, яка представлена основною та другорядною перспективами. Основна перспектива нормального суспільства включає фокальні ознаки ВСТАНОВЛЕНИЙ СТАНДАРТ, ПРИЙНЯТНА ПОВЕДІНКА, ЗВИЧАЙНИЙ ПРОЦЕС у сферах особистої безпеки, економіки, партнерства та успіху. Конструкції, що належать до другорядної перспективи, позначають посилення значення цінностей у сфері бізнесу та економіки. Основна перспектива апокаліптичного суспільства репрезентована фокальними ознаками ДЕСТРУКЦІЯ, ЗАГРОЗА, СМЕРТЬ та ШКОДА у екологічній сфері, в той час як до другорядної перспективи входять конструкції, які вказують на збереження цілісності або усунення перешкоди. Доведено, що сучасне суспільство зображується з вираженими апокаліптичними тенденціями.*

**Ключові слова:** інтернет-дискурс новин, нормальне суспільство, апокаліптичне суспільство, цінності, теорія побудови перспектив.

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**Лингвальная репрезентация ценностей в англоязычном интернет-дискурсе новостей в терминах теории перспектив**

*Статья посвящена описанию особенностей категоризации ценностей нормального и апокалиптического общества согласно теории перспектив, которая представлена основной и второстепенной перспективами. Основная перспектива нормального общества состоит из фокальных характеристик УСТАНОВЛЕННЫЙ СТАНДАРТ, ПРИЕМЛЕМОЕ ПОВЕДЕНИЕ, ОБЫЧНЫЙ ПРОЦЕСС в сферах личной безопасности, экономики, партнерства и успеха. Конструкции, которые относятся к второстепенной перспективе, обозначают повышение значение ценностей в сферах бизнеса и экономики. Основная перспектива апокалиптического общества представлена фокальными компонентами ДЕСТРУКЦИЯ, УГРОЗА, СМЕРТЬ и ВРЕД в сфере экологии. К второстепенной перспективе относятся конструкции, которые указывают на сохранение целостности либо устранение опасности. Доказано, что современное общество представлено с ярко выраженными апокалиптическими тенденциями.*

**Ключевые слова:** интернет-дискурс новостей, нормальное общество, апокалиптическое общество, ценности, теория перспектив.