

LEXICAL MEANS OF IMAGE-MAKING ON AN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

EKATERINA SHIMAN

ALEKSANDR POLIKARPOV

Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Arkhangelsk, Russia

This paper presents the results of linguosemiotic analysis of English-language universities' websites in terms of lexical means used to create a positive image of universities.

The multifaceted nature of image as a scientific concept determines the integrative nature of the study presented, which combines data from cultural studies, economics, linguistics and other humanities fields. The focus of the study is on the linguistic means of forming a positive international image of a university from the point of view of the linguocultural approach.

The Russian International Affairs Council's 2020 report "Web-Internationalisation: English-language Internet Resources of Russian Universities" states that the potential of a university should be adequately represented on the university's English-language website [6].

Given the fact that "consumers expect and believe information that does not contradict their understanding of the world" and that "the best message is the one that is expected", website producers are aware of the need to match all textual elements with the expectations and perception of the recipient, taking into account the strategic goal of creating an image that is understandable and close to the target audience [6].

The planned result of the speech impact through the text posted on the university website is to convince the recipients of the texts that there are certain features of educational services of the university, corresponding to the components of the simulated image. The initial task of the English-language university website is to establish communication with the main target group – foreign applicants. The English-language website should be designed taking into account the needs of this group of visitors, without mechanically copying the content of the Russian-language university website.

The relationship between language and cultural concepts is, however, crucial to explore in order to interact effectively in a multicultural environment. It is this environment that the university space possesses, because in the era of globalisation a modern Russian university is an international community which is constantly expanding and developing its international activities by means of external (interaction with foreign partners) and internal internationalisation (internationalisation at home). The university website is often the first source from which a person can obtain information about the educational organisation. The website is visited by many categories of stakeholders: students and university staff, applicants and their parents, representatives of partner organisations, supervisory bodies, grant funds, etc.

University discourse is a special kind of institutional discourse that serves a broad sphere of human activity, related not only to the acquisition and production of knowledge, but also to a whole range of human relationships both within the university and in the university's interaction with the outside world. University discourse is a phenomenon that integrates academic and scientific discourse, as well as many other related discourses [3]. In the era of commercialization of scientific and educational activities, there has been an expansion of market discourse into the sphere of higher education, which for Russian culture has traditionally been non-commercial [2]. Modern higher education in Russia and in many countries is student-centric, which means that it is not the applicant who fights for the access to higher education, but the university fights for the applicant, the retention of a certain number of students and ensuring quality indicators of enrolled applicants. The changing focus of the university is largely reflected in the nature of the discourse.

Of particular interest is the use of certain speech signs in the texts describing educational products posted on English-language university websites, as they are created for a range of stakeholders from a variety of cultures. In order to prepare effective content for an English-language website, the culture of the target audience of potential applicants and their parents should be taken into account in order to create a positive image and, ultimately, to attract upscale students to the university [6].

Successful communication with potential applicants and university counterparts requires first defining the cultural parameters and concepts of the target audience and considering them when preparing the text content of the English-language university website. When designing university discourse, it is necessary not only to apply the principles of multiculturalism and multiculturalism and thereby create an environment that is friendly to representatives of all cultures, but also to appeal to the values of foreign applicants, students and researchers,

creating a positive image of the university. It is important not only to be aware of the conceptual framework of the culture whose representatives need to be addressed through the texts posted on the university website, but also to be able to operate competently with the cultural codes.

The English-language website of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University was chosen as the material for the study because the university, being the northernmost federal university of Russia and having a clearly expressed Arctic vector, brings together students and teaching staff from more than fifty countries of the world. The analysis shows that a positive image of the university is maintained at the linguistic level through a number of verbal means of emotional and evaluative nature.

For comparative purposes, the linguistic devices used in the textual content of Cambridge University, the University of Oslo and NArFU websites are identified and analysed. Why are not the title pages of the university websites used? It is possible to go to them and see that the home pages of the websites of Europe's leading universities contain most of the information about the coronavirus (which, for example, is not the case on the English-language websites of Russia's leading universities).

First, I would like to consider the International Students section of the University of Cambridge website. As this section shows, there is very little text in it. A large part of the interface is taken up by photographs. The texts on the page use the following lexemes and phrases different, diverse international community, important, talented students, ensure, educational establishment, you have experienced, the correct visa, permits study, from around the world, Defining Cambridge (not Cambridge University), Student Visas, Orientation Information, International Student Guide, provide practical pre-arrival and orientation information, to help students coming from outside the UK, confederation, autonomous, collegiate University and some others.

Proceeding from the definition of syntactics as a branch of semiotics studying rules of sign combinability, let us consider relations between signs at the level of language (paradigmatic) and relations between signs arising in the process of their combinability with each other in speech (syntagmatic) [5]: "International" is combined with the words "students", "community"; the noun "community" is used with the epithets "global", "diverse", "international"; "students" is combined with the epithets "international", "from around the world", "talented", "coming [from outside the UK]"; "information" is quite often used in combination with the lexemes "practical", "pre-arrival", "orientation". There is also a speech synonymy: different, diverse; international, global, from outside the UK, from around the world; educational establishment, confederation of autonomous Colleges, collegiate University; ensure, provide.

The studied material illustrates the peculiarities of implicit verbalisation of the concepts "freedom", "democracy", "diversity", "collegiality" of the simulated university image within the evaluation act. Much attention is paid to the students themselves when representing the university (talented students, diverse international community, have experienced).

Having considered the semantic dimension of language signs, let us move on to the next dimension – the pragmatic one. The preconditions and effects of the concrete application of language signs are quite clearly traceable through the results of speech effects. Between semantics and pragmatics¹ there cannot be clearly delineated boundaries, as they are two closely interrelated dimensions of semiosis.

It is clear that the aim in creating the content was not to convince the addressee of the significance of the university. It shows that it is the only free association where there is no place for discrimination and all actions are aimed at supporting talented students, who, in turn, accept the values of the university and abide by the rules.

Next, we shall look at the International students section of the English-language website of the University of Oslo. It contains language such as: New international students at UiO!, strongly recommend, The International Student Reception, support exchange and degree students decide to try to come, offered online, expected to arrive, stay updated, subject to change, entry regulations, quarantine regulations, at your own responsibility, to follow classes.

The syntactic relations of the signs are represented by synonymy (come – arrive; stay updated – see further information) and hyper-hyponymy (classes < studies). The pragmatic side of the studied linguistic material can be illustrated by the repeated lexeme "please", as well as by the words regulations, responsibility. The given lexical units demonstrate the verbalisation of the concepts "friendliness", "care", "safety" and "responsibility".

The next slide is the International Student Support section of the English-language NAFU website. The linguistic material presented in it demonstrates the verbalisation of the concepts "practicality", "systematicity", "order", "support", "warmth", "advanced technology". The linguistic means used are informative and systematising: Arctic; Northern; glad to offer; foreign students; seeking to study at a Russian university; need

¹ Pragmatics is a field of study in semiotics and linguistics that studies the functioning of language signs [1].

Linguistics, Literature, Philology

of additional training; improve their Russian language skills; please; an intensive Russian course; a special one-semester course; prepared to enter; Small groups; Experienced teaching staff and high-quality education; Modern language teaching methods and learning facilities; Free Wi-Fi, computer classes and multimedia resources; Adaptive, social, and cultural events; International Discussion Club; Reasonable tuition fees; Comply with the Order; requirements; provide training for foreign citizens and stateless persons.

Syntactic relationships of signs are represented by synonymy: Arctic & Northern; foreign – international – stateless; intensive – one-semester; teaching – learning – study – education – tuition – training – course; order – requirements; resources – facilities, etc.

The lexemes and collocations used on the pages of the English-language websites under consideration can be divided into the categories of "emotionally evaluative vocabulary", "evaluative vocabulary" and "neutral vocabulary". Of course, this division is rather arbitrary, since, as Y.S. Starostina points out, the leading factor in distinguishing value judgments is their communicative purpose, the centre of meaning.

Type of vocabulary	Expressive vocabulary	Evaluative vocabulary	Neutral vocabulary
Cambridge University		different diverse international community important talented students autonomous collegiate University	Ensure educational establishment you have experienced the correct visa permits study from around the world Defining Cambridge Student Visas Orientation Information International Student Guide provide practical pre-arrival and orientation information to help students coming from outside the UK confederation
University of Oslo	New international students at UiO! strongly recommend	The International Student Reception support exchange and degree students decide to try to come	offered online expected to arrive stay updated subject to change entry regulations quarantine regulations at your own responsibility to follow classes
NArFU named after M.V. Lomonosov	glad to offer; please; a special one-semester course; prepared to enter; Small groups;	Northern; need of additional training; improve their Russian language skills; foreign students; an intensive Russian course; Experienced teaching staff and high-quality education; Modern language teaching methods and learning facilities; Free Wi-Fi, computer classes and multimedia resources; Adaptive, social, and cultural events; International Discussion Club; provide training for foreign citizens and stateless persons; Reasonable tuition fees;	seeking to study at a Russian university; Comply with the Order; requirements;

Based on the above, as well as on the examples of lexical units given above, it can be argued that the lexical means that create the required holistic image of the university and the services it offers to the target audience are significant for creating a positive image of the university. As the analysis shows, the wider and more diverse the target audience, the more cautious the English-language websites' authors are about the choice of evaluative and emotional vocabulary.

Thus, as a result of the comparative linguosemiotic analysis of three English-language university websites, the lexical means that universities use to create a positive image of the university among potential students can be identified. To do this, it is important to analyze the ratio of evaluative, emotional and neutral vocabulary.

The Russian university uses a large amount of emotional vocabulary. Norwegian university uses emotionally coloured constructions to show friendly attitude and care about international students enrolled there. Cambridge University avoids the use of emotionally evaluative language in the content of its website. But all this does not mean that it does not use means to create a positive image of the university at all.

To conclude, it is recommended that higher education institutions continuously stylise the sections of the English-language portal with specialists in the languages and cultures of the countries from which students are being recruited.

REFERENCES

1. Арутюнова, Н. Д., Дискурс / Н. Д. Арутюнова // Лингвистический энциклопедический словарь. – М. : Сов. Энциклопедия, 1990. – С. 136–137.
2. Гриценко, Е. С. Глобализация и маркетизация: рыночная метафора в различных видах дискурсивных практик / Е. С. Гриценко // Практическая лингвистика. – 2013. – № 4 (46). – С. 184–191.
3. Карасик, В. И. Языковой круг: личность, концепты, дискурс. – М. : Гнозис, 2004. – 390 с.
4. Катинская, М. В. Лингвистическое моделирование имиджа. Монография / М. В. Катинская. – Благовещенск : Изд-во АмГУ, 2012. – 168 с.
5. Кронгауз, М. А. Семантика : учеб. для студ. лингв. фак. высш. учеб. заведений / М. А. Кронгауз. – 2-е изд., испр. и доп. – М. : Издательский центр «Академия», 2005. – 352 с.
6. Тимофеев, И. Н. Электронная интернационализация: англоязычные интернет-ресурсы российских университетов (2020 г.) / И. Н. Тимофеев [и др.] : доклад РСМД № 57/2020 ; Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). – М. : НП РСМД, 2020. – 60 с.
7. Англоязычная версия официального сайта ФГАОУ ВО «Северный (Арктический) федеральный университет имени М. В. Ломоносова» – Режим доступа : <https://narfu.ru/en/>. – Дата доступа : 13.04.2021.
8. Англоязычная версия официального сайта НИУ «Высшая школа экономики» – Режим доступа : <https://www.hse.ru/en/>. – Дата доступа : 13.04.2021.
9. Англоязычная версия официального сайта Университета Осло [Электронный ресурс] – Режим доступа : <https://www.uio.no/english/>. – Дата доступа : 13.04.2021.