Comprehensive Analysis of Linguistic-Structural and Semantic Features of English Folklore in Social Networks

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A B S T R A C T

This article presents the outcomes of a study focusing on the advertisement posts in the English segment of Instagram as a manifestation of contemporary network folklore. The study delves into the definition of folklore, its various forms, characteristic features, and nuances. Given the current popularity of network folklore, the article identifies its unique attributes: variability, collectivity, frequent reproduction, formulaic nature, improvisation, among others. Based on these attributes, a classification of network folklore's forms of existence is proposed, encompassing crowd-sourced forms, polycode forms, and communicative forms.

Introduction. Within the framework of the modern cultural context, significant differences can be observed between contemporary manifestations of folk culture and their traditional and classical folkloric predecessors. These differences are driven by a range of contemporary cultural and social trends, such as globalization and the digitalization of society, which have contributed to the diminishing universal significance of traditional folk culture. As a result, the cultural landscape has become more complex, differentiated, and multi-layered. It is important to note that folk folklore is actively integrated into the virtual space, becoming an integral aspect of the social life of modern individuals. It permeates various areas of public life, from politics to artistic creation, socio-economic processes, and scientific research, giving rise to new concepts such as "network literature" or "netlit." Folkloric works in the online environment exhibit diversity and can be presented in the form of songs, epics, oral narratives, poetry, aphorisms, idioms, anecdotes, rumors, gossip, fixed speech constructions, unique expressions, jargon, and slang, as well as modern myths and legends.

The main **objective** of the present study is to analyze the concept of "network folklore," explore its various forms of existence, and investigate linguistic and structural characteristics using aphorisms found on the English-language platform Instagram.

The scientific significance of this study is determined by the in-depth examination of the linguistic characteristics of English-language network folklore at all levels of the language system and the identification of specific forms of its existence in the online environment.

This study examines folklore which, alongside traditional folk culture, encompasses the creativity of closed groups united by common interests, age, profession, gender, and other characteristics, such as school, military, tourist, etc. Such folklore serves cultural functions and contributes to both the cohesion and differentiation of groups [1]. Knowledge and use of folklore texts by a particular group become

instruments of identification and distinction from others, characteristic of certain subcultures, including online culture.

In the era of globalization of information technologies, researchers of folk creativity face questions about the nature of online folklore and its status within the framework of traditional folklore understanding. Key issues concern the suitability of the term "folklore" to describe online art, forms of its existence and dissemination in virtual space, as well as linguistic and structural peculiarities [2].

According to M.D. Alekseevsky, D.A. Radchenko, and O.V. Lutovinova, online folklore is characterized as folklore forms that predominantly or even exclusively exist and spread on the Internet. This definition emphasizes the unique aspects of online folklore while maintaining a connection with the real world, despite its virtual nature [3].

A.S. Kargin identifies three layers in modern folklore: the traditional layer, which maintains a connection with ancient traditions; a layer that adapts traditional texts and images to modernity; and a layer of innovations, often unrelated to previous traditions. Network folklore, or e-folklore, is included in this third layer and possesses unique characteristics of the network, such as intertextuality and interactivity, distinguishing it from classical folklore [4].

Network folklore has specific features, such as its explicit presence in online space and the use of emotional symbols - emoticons - to convey emotions, enriching written communication [5]. R.O. Jakobson's model of the communicative act, which includes sender, receiver, message, context, contact, and code, is also applicable to network communication [6]. V.P. Rukomoinikova emphasizes that mutual understanding on the Internet is achieved through a common cultural code among participants of online culture [7].

The interactivity of online communications, i.e., the ability for instant message exchange, makes virtual communication similar to oral. With the development of social networks and the emergence of new platforms, styles and types of virtual communication evolve. Various forms of chat emerge, including posts, hashtags, forums, polylogs, blogs, comments. These texts are characterized by a blend of different speech styles - from colloquial to scientific, with colloquial features predominating. Folkloric text in the network, despite its written form, is perceived as transmitted "from mouth to mouth" [8].

A significant feature of modern culture is the visualization of thoughts and ideas, with visual forms prevailing over verbal ones, especially online. Internet communication becomes emotional through the use of signs, images, symbols, videos, and photographs.

There are various forms of online folklore, depending on their creation: communicative (verbal), crowd-forms (massive), and polycode (non-verbal). Polycode forms are hybrids of linguistic code and other semiotic systems, including music, images, and symbols. These forms include internet memes, image macros, anime, short videos, demotivators, which are disseminated instantly for entertainment, provocative, or motivational purposes. The characteristic feature of crowd-forms is their dynamism and continuous updating, making them similar to folklore. An example of a crowd-form is the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, studied by S. Herring and U. Emig in their research "Collaborative authoring on the Web: A genre analysis of online encyclopedias." These forms are spread through hyperlinks and are available in search engines. Although they tend towards a written form, they retain folklore characteristics such as collective creation, traditionality (cumulativeness), and anonymity [9].

Communicative or verbal forms of online folklore follow the rules and structure of natural language. The main purpose of these forms is not only to convey information but also to stimulate communication and dialogue. This is achieved by eliciting a reaction or response from the audience. Among them are "chats, diaries, entries in guest books, tanka-style poems, hashtags, posts, and others" [10]. According to E.P. Belinskaya, each individual text in social networks is only "one link in the chain of speech communication"; "the statement is permeated with dialogical notes, the ignoring of which hinders the full understanding of the style of the statement" [Same][11]. The message creator (sender) seeks to adjust their message to the recipient (addressee), engaging in dialogue, considering their point of view and apperceptive background, or the background of the listener's perception [Same].

Within this research, particular attention is devoted to a verbal form of online folklore known as posts.

Posts are messages published on internet forums, communities, blogs, social networks, and various websites. They are disseminated by users through text copying, reposts, and gain popularity due to a large number of "likes."

| Category	Forms
Communicative forms	Posts; hashtags; comments; jokes; aphorisms; idioms; fixed speech patterns, etc.
Crowd-forms	Online encyclopedias; dictionaries.
Polycode forms	Internet memes; image macros; anime; photo caricatures; short videos; funny videos; demotivators (posters, posters); e-mail newsletters.

Fig. 1. Forms of e-folklore existence

Just like other verbal forms of folklore, posts serve as a means for dialogue between the author and other users. They fulfill functions of information exchange, stimulating feedback, and obtaining opinions from virtual interlocutors. Regardless of their content or purpose, posts aim to attract the attention of the interlocutor, using their form or content, and possess corresponding linguistic and structural characteristics. For example, attitude posts (from the English word 'attitude') express the feelings or emotions of the author, as in the following examples:

➢ "What a great way to start a Sunday morning in Denver Colorado THANKS MIKE" (Facebook user) [12].

➢ "Fantastic to be here in Northern Ireland speaking to our Conservative & Unionist family. I will never accept a deal that seeks to bind us in the EU's customs union forever, or which divides our United Kingdom. In everything I do as PM, I will strengthen our union of four nations" (Boris Johnson's Twitter post).

➢ "Mathematical Physics has no influence on social life so far. Or does the beer get cheaper? The structures of this complex world explains wadim's cups" (Science Slam Facebook account) [13].

➢ "My heart is heavy this afternoon upon hearing the medical examiner has positively identified the remains found in Arkansas last week as four-year-old #MaleahDavis" (houstonmayor Instagram account) [14].

A characteristic feature of attitude posts is their conversational style and imitation of oral communication, as evident from expressions such as "What a great way," "Fantastic to be here," "Or does the beer get cheaper?," "My heart is heavy this afternoon." In most posts, the use of hyperbole and emphatic devices can be observed, both in graphical representations (e.g., capital letters) and in lexical-grammatical structures (words such as "never," "forever," "everything," "THANKS MIKE"), which are typical of conversational style.

In this study, as an example of online folklore, we analyze the social network Instagram. Created in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, Instagram had over 1 billion monthly active accounts by 2019. The study examines the question of who the active users of this network are.
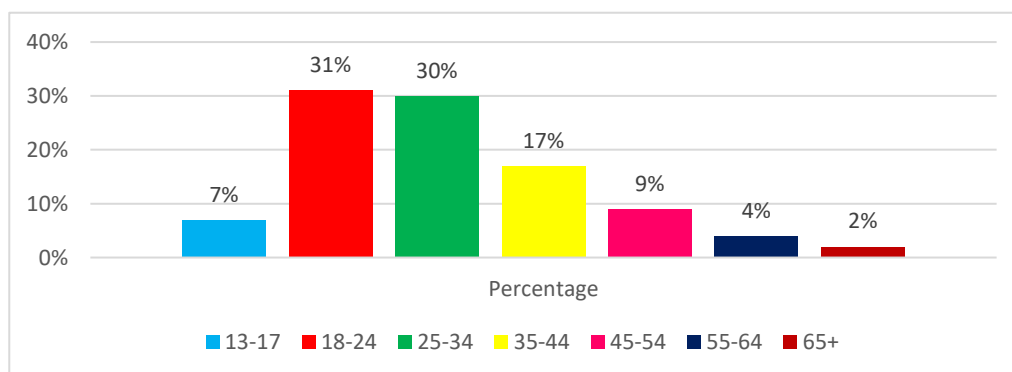
Fig. 2. Study of age categories of Instagram users.

Based on the data from the marketing research (according to Fig. 2), it can be observed that 61% of Instagram users fall within the age group of 18 to 34 years old. Specifically, 31% are users aged 18 to 24 years old, while 30% are aged 25 to 34 years old. It is important to note that the age structure of network users holds significant meaning: the majority of them are in an age range where the formation of linguistic identity is typically already completed. This means that network texts reflect the already formed linguistic competence of internet communication participants. Analyzing the age groups of users provides a key to understanding the identification function of folklore, which can play an important role in subsequent research to identify ways of identifying the first and second age groups through network folklore.

Posts on Instagram are often accompanied by photo or video materials. At the lexical level, a post can be brief, consisting of a single powerful word, but more often it includes several sentences. The genre and stylistic diversity of posts depend on the goals pursued by network users. In some cases, posts may be saturated with slang vocabulary and special symbols, while in others, they may be extremely correct and stylistically neutral.

The choice of specific phrases and techniques in posts is determined by factors such as the peculiarities of the communication channel, the message theme, the specific goal, the individual characteristics, and social roles of network users. The linguistic-structural features of Instagram posts at various language levels can be examined in detail using internet posts as examples, as they effectively demonstrate a wide range of linguistic means used in their creation.

Internet posts on Instagram are aimed at grabbing the reader's attention and enhancing text memorability. To achieve these goals, phonetic techniques such as alliteration, rhyme, assonance, and onomatopoeia are used, which contribute to the recognizability and memorability of the text.

Table 1 The linguistic means used on Instagram across different language levels can be observed through Instagram posts*

Language Level	Representation Features
Phonetic Level	Phonetic devices: Alliteration (Back to black! More is more.) Rhyme (Get refreshed, feel the adrenaline rush. When blue and green can definitely be seen!) Assonance (Fashion meets comfort.) Onomatopoeia (Bling! Bling! Beep-beep-beep).
Lexical Level	Adjectives in comparative and superlative degrees (Fresh, cold-pressed ingredients), Adjectives with positive connotations (Clarissa looks stunning), Compound nouns (summer must-haves, new handcrafted-shoe, streetstyle).
Semantic Level	Intertextuality (Roses are red, violets are blue), Polysemy (wanted), Metaphorization/anthropomorphism (Delicious jewellery pieces), Conversion (present), Neologisms (bullboxershoes, boho-glam heels, foodie).
Morphological Level	Nouns (Spotting Spring/Summer trends), Imperative verbs (Swing it!), Adjectives (Pretty in palm print), Pronouns (We are happy), Adverbs (We proudly present).
Syntactic Level	Exclamatory sentences (It's a wrap!), Interrogative sentences (Looking for a veil?), Simple and elliptical sentences, Anaphora (We love heels, we love colors),

	Antithesis (Ugly is pretty again!), Active and passive voice, Syntactic insertions (Perfect streetstyle with coffee-to-go).

At the lexical level, Instagram internet posts predominantly feature the use of adjectives and compound nouns. Adjectives often carry a positive connotation and are used in comparative and superlative degrees, contributing to the creation of an attractive product image and thus attracting consumer attention. Compound nouns in the English language are often formed by combining various words, creating new terms that quickly spread and become widely used. Instagram posts often generate neologisms, which is a key characteristic of the semantic level of network folklore. Additionally, intertextuality and metaphorization techniques are common in internet posts.

On the syntactic level, most statements in posts are exclamatory and interrogative sentences. Syntactic insertions, elliptical constructions, anaphora, and antithesis are frequently encountered. These techniques attract attention and enhance the memorability of the text.

Analyzing the linguistic-structural features of internet posts on Instagram, it can be concluded that they are aimed at recognizability, memorability, and reader interest. Although the first two characteristics are common to all internet materials, reader interest becomes crucial in internet posts due to the vast amount of content on the internet and the desire of each author to stand out. This aspiration influences the formation of characteristic features of all network folklore texts.

The main characteristics of network folklore echo those of classical folklore, including traditionality, anonymity, collective authorship, improvisation, and formulaicity, as well as reflecting common perceptions of contemporary realities. The distinctive features of network folklore include multimedia elements, mediated communication, interactivity, hyper- and intertextuality. Umberto Eco correctly hypothesized in 1995 that internet communication text represents a new nonlinear inter- and hypertext, a complex symbiosis of oral and written language, within which a new form of human communication emerges in virtual space, confirmed by the structural and lexical features of network folklore [16].

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