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Internet meme as a creative type of polycode text
(Based on Russian memes about the Covid-19 pandemic)

Abstract
This article aims to identify the features of internet memes as a genre of polycode text creation and methods for achieving creativity. Russian internet memes related to the COVID-19 pandemic were selected by continuous sampling from authentic contexts of the Internet space using the keywords *мем, пандемия, ковид, коронавирус* (=*meme, pandemic, covid, coronavirus*) in the period from January 2021 to May 2022. A total of 450 units were selected. The analysis of the structural and lexico-semantic features of the selected units using the descriptive method, contextual and structural analysis, statistical methods enabled to identify three major ways of Internet meme formation and determine the frequency of occurrence of each of them: photoshop (83.6%), the use of hyperlinks (20.4%), transformations of the verbal component at the phonetic, morphological and lexical levels (5.8%). The results obtained enable to interpret the internet meme as a special kind of polycode text characterized by hypertextuality, symmetry, the ability to creatively transform images and text as well as by the ability to transform certain language units on different levels of the language.

Keywords: internet memes, polycode text, verbal component, nonverbal component, creativity

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