DAYDREAMING OF INTERNET USERS ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE'S LOVE RELATIONSHIP AS A VIRTUAL VS REAL HYBRID

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the study is to characterise shipping as a new communicative reality in youth virtual culture based on the analysis of linguistic facts – neologisms. Lexical innovations are considered as evidence of the emergence and spread of new communicative realities. The text analyses the conceptual content of borrowed words which function in the Russian language while forming one thematic group: the verb *shipperit* ('to ship'), as well as the lexemes associated with it (derivatives, analogues). The group of borrowed words, which was absent in the Russian 20 years ago, signifies the fact that the Internet users create a phantom reality in accordance with their own experiences. Namely, they fantasise about the romantic relationships of famous bloggers, public figures or characters in comics, films, and books. It is emphasised that the analysed words belong to the vocabulary of the new 'digital' communication and characterise the behaviour of Generation Z (Zoomers). The relationship between mental action ('fantasise') and speech act ('write about my fantasy on social media') seems to be inseparable. The actions of adolescents become a link in the chain of online communication, as bloggers embody these ideas and maintain the game to retain and expand their audience. Users with the same fantasies find each other and unite in groups (fandoms). Quasi-reality creates new communication links.

KEY WORDS:

fantasy in communication, mental construction of reality, pairing, psychological phantom, relationship, romantic relationships of media characters, virtual communication

1 Introduction

New communication formats, which are being fixed in society in connection with the development of the Internet, require understanding from the humanities standpoint. On the one hand, globalisation processes erase the boundaries created by man: economic, political, national, cultural and linguistic. On the other hand, these boundaries are becoming clear and visible again, especially during periods of crisis and in the

context of sanctions, anti-COVID restrictions, as well as a radical breakdown of local traditions and increasing competition in various spheres – science, education, trade, etc. Information technologies play a decisive role in the clash of traditions and innovations, since they provide a space for various forms of communication – a space that is huge, poorly structured, and difficult to monitor. *"The development of technologies and Internet networks leads rather to the consolidation of homo ludens – 'man the player'."* Online communities and groups give rise to the pursuit of likes and subscribers.[1]

The choice between globalisation and glocalisation does not lose its relevance at all cultural levels. At the macro level, the participating players are states and international structures. At the micro level, the participants are people, native speakers and bearers of local culture, who find themselves at the crossroads of cultures and languages. People master new models of behaviour, often without looking at them critically and without checking them for compatibility with the cultural environment to which they belong. It is no coincidence that scientists are concerned about the state of values of future generations: *"The abundance of information generates cognitive distortions, and, since adolescents do not always have formed criteria for selecting information and principles of working online, this will significantly change the interests and values of young people in the future."*[2]

People's behaviour depends on their way of thinking, predetermined by the social norm of a certain cultural community. Focusing on the environment, people make up an idea of the existing rules, learn a conventional model of behaviour, and then replicate it. The mechanism of social reproduction consists of the fact that each subsequent generation remembers and repeats the patterns of behaviour fixed by the previous generation. But the growth of globalisation processes causes the communication formats to evolve. This is especially evident during periods of fundamental changes in communication practices. The changes are so significant that scientists recommend that state security agencies recognise these changes and restructure their work in accordance with them, for example: *"Better account for the speed, ubiquity and mobility of human interaction in the evolving communication environment."*[3] *"Dynamics of social change, and the social construction of reality, lie at the root of contemporary security problems."*[4] Objects and phenomena of the communication sphere have their own names, and the study of such words can shed light on the state of socio-psychological reality. Language and society cannot be isolated from each other; they change together.

The theoretical basis of the research is sociolinguistic theory, the concept of interaction between language and society and the methods for the studying of language in the society. The theoretical relevance of the research is as follows: (1) the development of interdisciplinary scientific research; (2) improving the understanding of social phenomena through linguistic data; (3) verification of the results of sociological and psychological research by attracting the potential of linguistic analysis; (4) development of tools for the lexicographic description of neologisms in the language.

2 Theoretical Framework

Words serve as an objective form, a 'package' of meaning that discretely reflects reality. Therefore, it is necessary to study words in order to establish the scope and content of concepts: *"Traditional theories conceptualise language as a way to index referents, a shortcut to access meaning, or a way to access meaning through words associations."*[5] Words that indicate communicative phenomena are interesting in the way they capture the content of social relations – both long-existing and new. In this case, the linguistic tool allows

us to see the close connection between language, thinking and social behaviour. People acquire new models of behaviour in society, which means that they think differently than people in different or previous social conditions. Hence, the changed worldview finds expression in language – not only in the text, but also in the word.

Text and word are considered by scientists as carriers of information of varying degrees of objectivity. Text can express any opinions – it captures both objective and subjective information. At the same time, a one-word unit is an exponent of a connected, integral meaning, regardless of the opinion of the person using this word in speech. *"Associative fields and 'free' textual links reflect individualised knowledge (...) it is (...) determined by the changing tastes and opinions of individuals (...) Analysis of the linguistic usus (typical compatibility, derivational links, etc.) provides objectified data that express a certain attitude that is understandable to all native speakers."*[6] Thus, people can express their opinions through the text – consciously, in detail, with arguments. But no less (or maybe more) indicative is the speaker's choice of a certain word – a choice that can be sometimes unconscious. Accordingly, a researcher can analyse the reasoning about not only communication, but also the word and the meaning behind it. Words are often viewed as **objective indicators of social processes**.

For example, at the discourse level, the ratio of words in different texts can serve as a basis for conclusions about the differences in worldviews of the authors of these texts. Thus, Marisol del Teso Craviotto studies the distribution of the words *woman*, *man*, *work* in four magazines (US women's magazines *Good Housekeeping, Cosmopolitan, Working Woman* and *Ms.*) and concludes that they *"are used in ways that reveal the magazines' position towards women and femininity"*.[7] Analysis of a metaphor (internal form of a word) often serves to identify ideas about society. For example, Tatiana Safonova explores comparisons of countries to gardens, and migrants to pests: *"The metaphor of migrant as pest has a painful history of being used by the Nazi regime, but despite its bad reputation, it is still in demand."*[8] Finally, the conceptual layer itself, which is embodied in lexemes and phraseological units, is a constant subject of research not only in linguistic works, but also in philosophical, anthropological, ethnological and sociological publications. Cliff Goddard focuses on the analysis of the compatibility of the English word *culture* (*police culture, Barbie culture, argument culture, culture of complaint*, etc.) in order to clarify its concept: *"Though it is sometimes observed that the meaning of the English word 'culture' is highly language-specific, its precise lexical semantics has received surprisingly little attention."*[9] Reflection on the conceptual fund of the language often results in the development of a wide variety of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and reference books, which ensure the correctness of communication and mutual understanding between the addresser and the addressee.

It is especially relevant to observe the **changes** accumulating in vocabulary, in the word meanings, in evaluative and pragmatic meanings that are caused by social changes. The researcher moves towards understanding reality (in particular, its socio-cultural parameters) through linguistic data. We call the subject of our research "social vocabulary" – words that use social phenomena as the referent. International linguistics uses the term "social meaning", which indicates social semes and connotations in the meaning of a linguistic unit: *"The term 'social meaning' identifies the constellation of traits that linguistic forms convey about the social identity of their users – for example, their demographics, personality and ideological orientation. A central topic of research in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, this category of meaning has traditionally escaped the scope of semantics and pragmatics."*[10] These research positions converge in the zone of the extralinguistic content of the word. This zone is a focus of interest not only for linguists, but also for all humanities researchers regardless of their specialisation, if they are concerned about the state of future generations affected by globalisation, which has brought humanity both communication advantages and social cataclysms. Thus, the virtual environment forms new behavioural attitudes among young people, one of which has become

1   VODOLAZOV, G. G., GLINCHIKOVA, A. A., DEEVA, N. V.: Neo-Humanism as a Response to the Challenges of the XXI Century. In *Power*, 2020, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 219.
2   VODOLAZOV, G. G., GLINCHIKOVA, A. A., DEEVA, N. V.: Neo-Humanism as a Response to the Challenges of the XXI Century. In *Power*, 2020, Vol. 28, No. 1, p. 220.
3   GILMORE, C. W., OSIAL, R. R.: The Fourth Estate Is Dead, Long Live the Fourth Estate: A New Military Mindset for a Rapidly Evolving Communication Environment. In *Public Relations Review*, 2012, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 208.
4   EYRE, D. P., LITTLETON, J. R.: Shaping the Zeitgeist: Influencing Social Processes as the Center of Gravity for Strategic Communications in the Twenty-First Century. In *Public Relations Review*, 2012, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 179.
5   BORGHI, A. M. et al.: Words as Social Tools: Language, Sociality and Inner Grounding in Abstract Concepts. In *Physics of Life Reviews*, 2019, Vol. 29, p. 120.

6   BEREZOVICH, E. L.: *Russian Toponymy in the Ethnolinguistic Aspect: Space and People.* Yekaterinburg : Librokom, 2009, p. 31.
7   DEL TESO CRAVIOTTO, M.: Words that Matter: Lexical Choice and Gender Ideologies in Women's Magazines. In *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2006, Vol. 38, No. 11, p. 2003.
8   SAFONOVA, T.: What Metaphors Hide: Pest Control and Anti-Migrant Sentiments in a Hungarian Village. In *Laboratorium*, 2020, Vol. 12, No. 3, p. 5.
9   GODDARD, C.: The Lexical Semantics of Culture. In *Language Sciences*, 2005, Vol. 27, No. 1, p. 51.
10   BELTRAMA, A.: Social Meaning in Semantics and Pragmatics. In *Linguistics and Language Compass*, 2020, Vol. 14, No. 9, p. 1.

the subject of attention in this study. The linguistic index of this behavioural attitude is a number of words that function today in the speech of Russian-speaking youth: 'to ship' (шипперить), 'shipper' (шиппер), 'shipping' (шипперинг), 'pairing' (пейринг), OTP (ОТП), 'canon' (канон). They characterise the actions of Internet users in relation to other participants of virtual communication. Further, we will address the communicative phenomenon behind these linguistic facts. The phenomenon is based on fantasy, fiction.

Since this type of communicative behaviour was formed in a virtual environment common to the modern global world, it is obvious that it also characterises other cultural strata. The German language also borrowed the English verb 'to ship' in the form of *shippen*.[11] In English-speaking subcultures, there is the abbreviation OTP (One True Pairing), which means perfect pairing between two fictional characters: *"Topanga and Cory are my One True Pairing in Boy Meets World"*.[12] Hereinafter, the spelling and punctuation of Internet users are preserved. It is no coincidence that French researchers express concerns about multiple cases of adolescents mixing real and virtual reality: *"The digital non-human, personified by the illusion of pixelated images, can, under certain conditions, be confounded with the other realities: the external and the psychological."*[13] Thus, the phenomenon under consideration is not unique to Russian culture.

3 Socio-Cultural Conditions for the Appearance and Functioning of the Word 'to Ship' (шипперить) in the Russian Language

Digitalisation has now reached all levels of society, affecting children most of all. In Russia, today's 15-year-olds have never known a world without gadgets (in Europe and America, the digital generation is somewhat older, now they are young people in the 20 – 25 age group; such people are called *Generation Z, Homeland Generation, Zoomers, New Silent Generation, digital natives*). This predetermined the patterns of their behaviour within their social group: *"A person's identity is hence not necessarily stable, as people belong to several groups at the same time, and vary their behaviour depending on the particular group they interact with. A core concept in this sense is 'community of practice', a term coined to describe 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly'."*[14] One of the notable features of Generation Z is that it is easily influenced: **the consumption of Internet content makes them feel positive emotions**. This is proved, for example, by studies of impulse purchases made by young people (especially women) on *Instagram*: *"Advertisements, opinion leaders and user-generated content act as stimuli (S) in evoking positive emotions (O), which subsequently trigger impulse purchases (R) in Generation Z females."*[15] This means that an analytical rational approach to Internet materials is irrelevant for this generation, since 'Zoomers' do not consider Internet surfing to be an activity aimed at solving discrete work tasks. Internet communication occupies such a large place (and time) in their lives that emotional perception of information comes first. It is not the action that is important, but the state. For Generation Z, Internet communication is more important in terms of maintaining emotional well-being than intellectual work. Emotionality of Internet users is encouraged and developed through social media.

Online communication spawned a cult of **watching someone else's life**. By constantly being in such communication conditions, adolescents found themselves immersed in the interactive world – a reality that they modify and expand by building on their fantasies. The new verb 'to ship' and its derivatives are expressive lexical markers of this tendency in the speech of modern adolescents:

- *"To be honest, I ship Shen with Yunlan more. More interesting couple than those two"* ("Честно говоря, я больше шипперю Шэня с Хун Лянем. Более интересная пара, чем те два", 2021);
- *"Your reaction to being shipped with someone"* ("Твоя реакция на то, что тебя с кем-то шипперят", 2020);
- *"You are most likely new to this fun world of shippers"* ("Ты, скорее всего, новенький в этом весёлом мире шипперов", 2020);
- *"Clinical shippers form small groups, and within these groups they feel great"* ("Клинические шипперы объединяются в маленькие группки, и внутри этих группок прекрасно себя чувствуют", 2009);
- *"Oksimiron noted that he finds the creativity of fans funny and calls them shippers. 'Mysterious young girls (I originally thought they were gay men, but I was wrong) inventing a world in which Gnoyniy and I are in tragic love with each other like in chivalric romances', — he explained the term, assuring that he 'diligently studied the phenomenon'. So let them ship! This is usually just a joke you can laugh at and make fun of the shipped people. The best advice is to completely ignore all statements on this topic – the less reaction there is to these words, the faster shippers will lose interest in you and will find new 'victims'. And to confuse them completely, you can ask your friend to play along and say 'Yeah, we're dating, so what'?"* ("Оксимирон отметил, что находит творчество поклонниц смешным и назвал их шипперами. 'Загадочные юные девушки [я изначально думал, что геи, но ошибся], придумывающие мир, в котором мы с Гнойным влюблены друг в друга трагической любовью из рыцарских романов', — объяснил он термин, заверив, что 'усердно изучил феномен'. Да и пусть шипперят, это же обычно просто означает прикол, над которым можно смеяться и подтрунивать над героями шипперинга. Лучший совет — полный игнор всех высказываний на эту тему — чем меньше реакции на эти слова, тем быстрее у шипперов потеряется интерес к этой теме, и они найдут новых 'жертв' на эту роль. А чтобы они совсем не поняли, что происходит, можно попросить подругу подыграть и сказать 'Ага, мы встречаемся, и что'?", 2018),[16] etc.

These are adapted borrowings from the English language, correlated with the English word 'relationship' – romance, intrigue, romantic relationship. The words belong to the newest modern Russian youth jargon, and at present they are not yet recorded in any Russian language dictionary. The analysed verb шипперить ('to ship') has an analogue with a reconstructed infinitive: шіпить. In Internet publications, it is often used in personal forms:

- *"I can't) I ship Aiden and Jodie. then I found out who he is... well damn... I still ship them"* ("Я не могу) я шиплю Айдена и Джоди. потом я узнала кто он… ну балин… я все равно их шіплю", 2013);
- *"That feeling when my friend and I cosplay Cleo and Emma and ship them too"* ("То чуство когда с подругой косплеили Клео и Эмму и тоже шіпим их", 2016).[17]

In the most general version, the content of the word 'to ship' can be represented as follows: it denotes the fantasies that someone is in love with someone. At first glance, there is nothing specific in this phenomenon for the current historical moment. Psychologists testify that fantasies of this kind take place in the minds of every person. Sociologists and ethnologists confirm that the very phenomenon of gossip – talking about other people being allegedly connected by romantic relationships – is familiar to any society. However, once we take a closer look at the word and at the peculiarities of its functioning, it turns out that its definition should be clarified significantly.

11   MAYER, V. S.: Netflix Streaming Platform Neologisms as Markers of Modernity. In *Bulletin of the Volgograd State University. Series 9: Research by Young Scientists*, 2020, Vol. 16, p. 40.
12   Remark by author: Author's archive.
13   In French original: *"Le non-humain numérique, personnifié par l'illusion des images pixellisées, peut dans certaines conditions se confondre avec les autres réalités: extérieure et psychique."* In: VLACHOPOULOU, X., GONTIER, É., MISSONNIER, S.: Psychose et (Con) Fusion Homme/Machine: Des Réalités Virtuelles Inquiétantes. In *Annales Médico-Psychologiques, Revue Psychiatrique*, 2015, Vol. 173, No. 8, p. 721.
14   ZENNER, E., ROSSEEL, L., CALUDE, A. S.: The Social Meaning Potential of Loanwords: Empirical Explorations of Lexical Borrowing as Expression of (Social) Identity. In *Ampersand*, 2019, Vol. 6, p. 1.
15   DJAFAROVA, E., BOWES, T.: 'Instagram Made Me Buy It': Generation Z Impulse Purchases in Fashion Industry. In *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 2021, Vol. 59, p. 2.

16   Remark by author: Author's archive.
17   Remark by author: Author's archive.

4 The Referential Meaning of the Word 'to Ship', Its Derivatives and Analogues: A Communicative Plot

Even if we agree that fantasising about a love affair of certain third parties and discussing possible connections between these people has always taken place in any society, it is necessary to note that **there has never been a one-word designation for such fantasies and conversations in the Russian language**. The words *fantasize, discuss, gossip, tattle* have very broad meanings that do not have assumptions exclusively about the love relationship of other people as their referent; they all denote mental and/or speech actions aimed at constructing any events from one's own or someone else's life. The word *to ship*, on the other hand, has romantic relationships as the central and only subject of attention: *"Shipping is when you see two people and think, hope that they are together. You really like this couple. You start writing about them, imagining their dates, etc."* (Шипперство – это когда ты видишь двух людей и думаешь, надеешься, что они вместе. Тебе очень нравится эта пара. Ты начинаешь про них писать, представлять их свидания и т. п.*, 2019).[18]

The semantic structure of the word assumes an actor – exclusively an Internet user who observes the life of other users. Thus, the referent of the analysed verb is an online phenomenon, an element of a new 'digital' communication. In the word 'to ship', the 'fantasy' seme is enlarged. Not a suspicion, not an assumption (hypothesis), but a dream constitutes the semantic foundation of the word. A person performing an action of the verb 'to ship' does not guess the current state of affairs, but dreams and constructs a non-existent scenario, creating an **emotional phantom**. According to our observations, it is mostly girls who fantasise in such way, which is consistent with the data of studies on a sample of Spanish adolescents. It is interesting that *"fantasy proneness was associated with Neuroticism, Openness, Agreeableness, and low Conscientiousness".*[19] Apparently, it is adolescents with such traits who show a special interest in the life and relationships of other participants of virtual communication and tend to come up with their own versions of such love affairs.

The action indicated by the analysed word is characterised by **object orientation**, which is grammatically embodied in the category of transitivity: *"I ship (who, who with whom)"* (шипперю [кого, кого с кем]"*). Let us note that of the two supposed analogues of this word, one does not have transitivity (we cannot say *"I fantasise who"*), while the other has it (*"I discuss who"*). However, the second analogue ('to discuss') is much more distant semantically from 'to ship' (which does not mean 'to discuss'; here the discussion is secondary, since it is a stage following fantasy or coinciding with it on the terms of synthesis – see further). The verb 'to ship' has a denotation associated with the creation of a mental product – an idea which involves the construction of a relationship model between any people, such as **well-known users of social media, characters from comics, digital games, films, cartoons, as well as digital influencers**. Thus, in view of the fact that the semantic model of the transitive verb (S [Subject] *ships* O [Object]) assumes the presence of a subject-object action (where S – social media user, O – social media user with a wide audience or character from a video game or other media), the word could appear only in the context of a new technologically organised communication and does not have any functionality at all outside the virtual environment.

Finally, people 'dreaming' about two other people becoming a couple do not remain alone with their fantasies. They **share such fantasies publicly** in chats and forums. Moreover, people share them not only with other fans, but also with the very objects of their fantasies – bloggers – by directly and purposefully addressing them in the comments to their social media posts. Since fantasising has a continuation, we wonder if it is enough to define the denotation of the verb 'to ship' only with the 'mental' verb 'to fantasize'. It is necessary to pose a control question: is access to speech communication mandatory or optional? Is the one who only

fantasises, but does not talk about it on social media, still a shipper? Material extracted from Internet texts does not provide an answer to this question, simply because any Internet context that appears in natural speech (which is not reflective and which does not contain metalinguistic considerations) with this word, by its very origin, realises the function of announcing fantasies to the public. However, it is quite possible to assume that adolescents – users of social media – dreamily imagine other people's romantic relationships and do not announce their fantasies on social media, share them only with friends in a personal conversation, or do not tell anyone about them at all.

The derivatives of the analysed verb must not be overlooked. The noun шиппер ('shipper') is derived from this verb, marking the role function of the Internet user and denoting 'the one who ships'. In the Russian language, there has never been a special designation of a person who implements such communicative role, so it is also an absolute innovation. There is no Russian analogue for the nouns шипперство, шипперинг ('shipping'), denoting a communicative phenomenon of modern reality – the Internet users' expression of their fantasies about the desired romantic relationship between other participants of virtual communication. In both cases, contextual implementations of lexemes highlight the role function in online communication (which presupposes public action – announcement), not the psychological component of 'fantasising'. Thus, when bloggers say *my shippers, for my shippers*, they focus on a certain category of people who make up part of their audience, who have requests which bloggers can satisfy or ignore. The relationship between mental action ('fantasise') and speech act ('write about my fantasy on social media') is synthetic and inseparable, since the entire chain of actions and their consequences forms an integral communicative slot, which is inherent in Internet communication and which has a complex of components (psychological, mental, verbal, operational).

5 Psychological and Online Effects of the Fantasy Phantom

As we have already mentioned, Internet users who create fiction do not keep it to themselves – they share their fantasies. This action has its consequences in the form of an unfolding chain of online interactions. For example, bloggers who are connected to each other in their followers' fantasies often **embody these fantasies**, using the opportunity to increase the number of followers and expand their audience. The bloggers' feedback is also a psychological effect linking the categories 'curiosity of Internet users' and 'creativity'. Similar processes were recorded by researchers of handmade websites: *"A field study of artisans selling handmade goods online found that experiencing specific curiosity predicts greater next-day creativity."*[20]

Bloggers' responses turn the psychic reality of their fans into fact, even though the temporary love relationship they arrange is fictitious or illusory. The analysed phenomenon can also continue another way: users with the same fantasies find each other and unite in groups (fandom – 'fan-dom'): *"Arton is a fandom (a group of people interested in a common topic), in which Anton Shastun and Arseny Popov from improvisation on TNT are shipped (brought together). I am their shipper"* (Артон – фандом (группа людей заинтересованна общей темой), в котором шипперят [сводят] Антона Шастуна и Арсения Попова из импровизации на ТНТ. Я вот их шиппер", 2019).[21]

In such communities, the creative component of the phenomenon finds its deepest expression, for example: *"In the comments under the rapper's posts, the shippers' creative works soon appeared"* (Oksimiron liked girls' fantasies about his gay romance with Gnoynyi, 2017).[22] Internet users create a wide variety of creative products based on their fantasies: musical works, works of art (stories, novels, poems, etc.), drawings, comics, films, etc. Thus, the action described by the verb 'to ship' is a link in the communicative chain of virtual communication, its organic part, generated by this environment and generating new connections

18   Remark by author: Author's archive.
19   See: SANCHEZ-BERNARDOS, M. L., AVIA, M. D.: Personality Correlates of Fantasy Proneness among Adolescents. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2004, Vol. 37, No. 5, p. 1069-1079.

20   HAGTVEDT, L. P. et al.: Curiosity Made the Cat More Creative: Specific Curiosity as a Driver of Creativity. In *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 2019, Vol. 150, p. 1.
21   Remark by author: Author's archive.
22   *Russian National Corpus*. [online]. [2021-04-08]. Available at: <https://ruscorpora.ru/new/search-main.html>.

within the global Internet community. Let us note the emotional and psychological effects of the analysed phenomenon. The shipping strategy brings emotional satisfaction to the performer of this role. Above all, imagining someone else's romantic relationship allows adolescents to experience the pleasure of the creative component of the process. According to the study of the psychology of creativity: *"If a person perceives himself as creative and his behaviour as creative, then these evaluations are statistically significantly related to life satisfaction, psychological flourishing, positive emotions (...). It was found that there are statistically significant associations between happiness and creativity."*[23]

For Internet users, it is important to evoke a reaction from their environment, to turn from silent invisible observers into noticeable participants in a certain chain of Internet events. Affected by shipping, bloggers outline an action plan to embody shipping fantasies expressed by their followers and fans in order to expand their audience – that is, bloggers become influenced or obey someone else's will. The catalyst function is very attractive to the observers, as through this type of activity they can influence other Internet users, who are more famous and successful than them. It also brings observers a sense of satisfaction. The shippers also receive certain advantages, such as an increased number of followers or increased traffic to their personal pages, which brings them positive emotions. According to studies of the category 'happiness' in relation to users of social media: *"More well-connected users write happier status updates."*[24] *"Social media environments can transform and reinforce life experiences, influencing self-concept and providing happiness."*[25]

6 Conclusion

The analysed word and the concept behind it should be considered as evidence of the significant socio-cultural shift in the communication of Generation Z representatives. Having analysed the word, we cannot assert a change in the consciousness of a certain person (a native speaker), or a change in the worldview 'within' one linguistic personality, but we can recognise the change of generations: the younger generation differs from the older in terms of their worldview. 'Digital natives' relate the analysed word and the corresponding concept with the communicative reality, which they consider as a common, acceptable model of behaviour. Conversely, 'digital immigrants' (people born before 1980) find this communication trend surprising: they need clarification of the content of this word, and, most likely, they will never be able to psychologically change enough to master this word. They will neither interiorise the concept it denotes nor include shipping in their active models of behaviour; they will not experience feelings close to those that an adolescent feels when observing someone else's life.

A group of lexemes has formed around the word шипперить ('to ship') in Russian. It is composed of derivatives, analogues and designations of individual components of this communicative phenomenon: шипперинг, шиппинг, шипперство ('shipping'), шипить ('to ship'), шиппер ('shipper'), пейринг ('pairing'). The latter word denotes the creation of a history of fictional romantic relationships, as well as a creative sample – the plot of a work written by a shipper: *"you can think of so many pairings in a minute that, damn it, you'll out-ship the whole fandom!"* ("ты можешь за минуту столько пейрингов задумать, что, блин, ты весь фандом перешипперишь!", 2020).[26] ОТП (OTP) denotes a pair of characters engaged in a fictional romantic relationship; an abbreviation of the English phrase One True Pairing, for example: *"Well, sometimes I write funny tweets about my OTPs, I read what's going on there"* ("Ну, иногда пишу смешные твиты про свои ОТП, читаю, что там происходит", 2020);[27] канон ('canon' – characters in a romantic relationship confirmed by the film's plot, opposed to characters who are not connected by a romantic subplot in

the film), фандом ('fandom' – a community of fans of something or someone, including couples or characters that fans see in romantic relationships in their fantasies). The listed linguistic units are jargon – they are not usually present in media texts. However, if they are present, they are mentioned exclusively in metalinguistic assertions containing reflection on modern speech and communication, that is, they are isolated from the general stylistic tonality of the journalistic text.

Based on the analysis of the discursive uses of the lexeme, its derivatives and analogues, we reconstructed the following communicative plot: the verb шипперить ('to ship') means the mental action of users of social media, namely their fantasy about the possible romantic relationships of other participants of Internet communication (real people or digital influencers), as well as characters from digital games, cartoons and the like, which is continued in its public speech action (message), and the product of which can be embodied in the form of intranet activity – for example, the creation of communities of fantasising users or the game-like implementation of the created relationship model by real participants of Internet communication or by developers of virtual characters of online communication.

The majority of shippers belong to the age category of adolescents, who are prone to sentimental manifestations, which, however, are integrated into other psychological needs of a representative of the digital generation: activity in public online communication, desire to expand their zone of influence in that space and to assert themselves. The discussed communicative phenomenon and its designations could have appeared in Russian culture only under the conditions of globalisation, which is provided by information technologies, and under the influence of the basic trends of the era – the development of online communication, the dominance of visual culture, and the close intertwining of different realities.

In these circumstances, the following factors influence the studied phenomenon:
- access to long-term, regular observation of the events of someone else's life; access to media content – films, etc.: if there was no Internet, which provided the opportunity to observe someone else's life, then the prerequisites (basic conditions) for performing an action (finding people by interests and observing the life of people on social media) would disappear;
- emotional dependence of the Internet user on regularly organised participation in online communication: Generation Z cannot imagine itself outside the digital environment, without access to the Internet through portable devices. The dependence on such access has become the subject of research and no longer requires proof (but requires studying the consequences). For adolescents, detachment from the forms of communication provided by information technology means exclusion from their reference group;
- interactive format of virtual communication, which is mastered in close connection with other types of reality (non-digital reality + virtual reality + psychological reality): 'shipping' of cartoon characters, digital influencers and other media constructs, not just 'real people', would never occur without this factor;
- mental construction of reality: the main action of the verb 'to ship' has a foundation in the psychology of adolescents, with their hyperemotionality, need for empathy, and other age characteristics conducive to play techniques and the creation of a product of the collective imagination;
- group format of virtual communication: Internet users are focused on demonstration, self-expression, extroverted behaviour, active participation in online interaction within communities of interest; the action of the verb 'to ship' is completed only if people find a platform to express their fantasies, share them publicly;
- focus on self-realisation, manifested in creativity and in the desire to occupy a leading position in the number of contacts: in the conditions of online communication, a competitive environment develops within the group of communication participants; they strive to take their place, to seize a certain zone of influence, to influence other members of the group, especially those who are famous. Shipping is one of the self-promotion tools.

When the border between the real and virtual worlds is faintly visible, adolescents willingly **construct phantom extensions**, trying to use **interactive tools** and deciding to interfere in someone else's life. The lack of positive emotions in the routine events of one's life is compensated by creating emotions through inclusion

23   DIRŽYTĖ, A., KAČERAUSKAS, T., PERMINAS, A.: Associations Between Happiness, Attitudes towards Creativity and Self-Reported Creativity in Lithuanian Youth Sample. In *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 2021, Vol. 40, p. 1.
24   BLISS, C. A. et al.: Twitter Reciprocal Reply Networks Exhibit Assortativity with Respect to Happiness. In *Journal of Computational Science*, 2012, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. 389.
25   BEREZAN, O. et al.: The Pursuit of Virtual Happiness: Exploring the Social Media Experience Across Generations. In *Journal of Business Research*, 2018, Vol. 89, p. 455.
26   Remark by author: Author's archive.
27   Remark by author: Author's archive.

in someone else's life events, expanding them with one's fantasies. The analysed word шипперить ('to ship') is one of the markers of **the phantom empathy** of social media users, which raises concerns about the possible substitution of non-digital reality with virtual reality. Adolescents are immersed in a constructed reality that exists outside them and without them, causing their need to be not only an observer, but also a 'director', a Creator. The quasi-real environment (fantasy world) acquires objectivity and 'materialises'. It is transformed into non-digital reality at the level of creating communities, as well as at the level of simulation, when bloggers retaliate with efforts to 'play out' fictional romantic relationships with their communication partners.

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