

**REPRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PRECEDENT  
PHENOMENA IN THE SOCIAL PRECEDENT TEXTS  
(Based on English and Russian Texts of the Internet-Culture)**

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**Key words and phrases:** cognition; concept; language; mental representation; precedent texts.

**Abstract:** The article is devoted to the analysis of the national precedent phenomena representation in the social precedent texts. The purpose of the paper is to show how the national precedent phenomena function in the social precedent text using English and Russian Internet precedent texts as a case study. A wide range of examples are given to prove that the national precedent names are used in the social precedent texts; and national precedent texts and folklore genres, in their turn, become the ground for lots of the texts that express the social group perception. An attempt is made to point out the vectors of choice for nominalization of socially-meaningful objects by the national precedent names and also explain the creation mechanism of the social precedent texts based on national precedent texts and folklore genres.

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It is believed that conceptual units can be expressed in different ways, for example, linguistic signs, texts or a system of texts. The word “text”, in this case, we understand as a result of the mental processes [1, p. 134]. According to E. S. Kubryakova, a text should be interpreted as “a source activating numerous associations and cognitive structures (from simple concepts to a much more complex mental spaces and possible worlds)” [2, p. 317]. Recent studies conducted by cognitive linguists prove texts to be an interpretation of human perception and experience. Such an approach makes a text a possible target of conceptual and cognitive analysis.

Taking into consideration interpretative nature of a text, special attention should be paid to precedent ones. According to G. G. Slyshkin any text can be considered precedent if it has “a great cultural value to a certain group of people” [3, p. 28]. Thus, universal precedent texts are known to any average homo sapiens, national precedent texts, consequently, to anyone belonging to the same nation and social precedent texts are famous within the members of one social group.

Despite being used within the limited group of people social precedent texts are greatly influenced by national world picture. In this article we are going to show how the national precedent phenomena function in the social precedent text taking English and Russian Internet precedent texts as examples.

The Internet precedent texts reflect the social worldview of people, who belong to professional spheres of Information Technologies (i.e. programmers, system administrators, etc.) and all kinds of users who are deeply involved into the Internet-culture and deal with IT products (i.e. gamers, net god, cracker, etc.). So the Internet

precedent texts in both English and Russian contain the same pro technical words and address to the same realities.

For example:

1. Q. How many *programmers* does it take to change a light bulb?

A. None. *That's obviously a hardware problem* [4].

2. – Что такое *хард*?

– Это то, что можно от души швырнуть об стенку.

– А что такое *софт*?

– Это то, что можно лишь обругать матом [5].

These Internet jokes include the words that belong to IT sphere (*programmers*, a *hardware issue*, “*хард*” from “*hardware*”, “*софт*” from “*software*”). The first joke describes the standard situation when a programmer, who writes software, refuses to do the simplest task if it is out of his duties. The point of the second joke is to make a difference between hardware and software (hardware is something you can throw against the wall; software is the thing you can only curse). Thus, both jokes belong to the Internet-culture and reflect its realities.

Despite of the social character of the Internet precedent texts lots of them have nationally specific features. That kind of features may have reference to names, facts that are widely known in the national culture.

For example, the abstracts from the jokes.

1. Signs You Might Be A Sysadmin.

You make more than all of the *MBA*s you know who actually finished college [6].

2. *Santa* is a System Administrator.

I was musing on similarities between *Santa Claus* and system administrators... [7].

3. Звонок на радио: Поставьте, пожалуйста, песню *Пугачевой* о том, как у нее завис Windows.

Ди-джей (после паузы): Я не могу вспомнить у *Пугачевой* такой песни! Можете напеть?

– Ну там еще в припеве: «Кликну, а в ответ тишина. Снова я осталась одна ... Сильная женщина плачет у Окна...» [8].

4. *Колобок* и не подозревал, что с его помощью будут выражать все возможные эмоции [9].

The words in italics perform national precedent phenomena – culturally specific language units, such as names, facts, events, etc. that have great importance in the national culture and are constantly mentioned in different types of discourse. So, *MBA* is an abbreviation for “Master in Business Administration”. A master's degree in business is a very prestigious type of education inherent to the English speaking culture. *Santa Claus* is a figure with western folkloric origins who is said to bring presents to the good children on Christmas. *Pugacheva* (Пугачева) is a famous Russian singer. *Kolobok* (Колобок) is a character from a children's fairy tale that is popular with Russian kids.

It should be mentioned that the choice of national precedent name for the nominalization of a socially-meaningful object has its logic. Researchers hold the similar view on the importance of subdivision into “friend or foe” for an archaic man. In the archaic worldview the opposition of “friend or foe” is interpreted also in axiological terms – in the form of opposition “good or bad” with a negative evaluation of everything that belongs to the “foe world” [10]. Thus, in the Internet precedent texts people who work in IT sphere belong to the “friend world” and tend to be represented by national precedent name with positive connotation. So, for example, *sysadmin* may be compared with such a positive image as *Santa Claus* (see the example above), or finds cognitive bonds with the national precedent name of *Tsar Saltan* in the Russian precedent text “The Tale of the Sysadmin and his son” (see the example below).

On the other hand, in the Internet precedent texts computer illiterate people are often denoted by national precedent names with negative connotation.

For example:

A list of redneck computer terms

Byte – What yer pit bull dun to cusin Jethro.

Cache – Needed when you go to da store.

Mac – Big Bob's favorite fast food ... [11].

In this joke computer illiterate person (redneck) is laughed at because he does not know the meaning of computer terms. So, byte as a unit of digital information in computing seems to be unknown and understood as a verb “to bite” that has a similar pronunciation. Spelling mistakes in the joke (yer, dun) are made intentionally to imitate illiterate speech. The word “cache”, as a component that transparently stores data so that future requests for that data can be served faster, is confused with the word “cash”. The association with the word “Mac” (a series of Unix-based graphical interface operating systems) is “McDonald's” – the largest chain of hamburger fast food restaurants. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary redneck is a white person who lives in a small town or in the country especially in the southern U.S., who typically has a working-class job, and who is seen by others as being uneducated and having opinions and attitudes that are offensive [12]. There are a lot of jokes about redneck in the national world picture. Thus seeing this word in the text a reader already expects the story about the funny and silly personality.

New Russians, as national precedent phenomena, are used in the Russian Internet precedent texts in the same function as redneck – to make laugh at computer illiterate people. So, New Russians is a term for the newly rich business class in post-Soviet Russia. It is perceived as a stereotypical caricature. According to the stereotype, New Russians achieved rapid wealth by using criminal methods. Having a modest education and social background, New Russians are perceived as arrogant, conspicuous consumers with poor taste. Money and status symbols are prominently displayed by the New Russian, in particular jewelry and luxury cars. This national precedent phenomenon finds reflection in lots of jokes.

For example:

Приходит, понимаешь, новый русский в компьютерный магазин, складывает пальчики и говорит:

– Ну-ка быстренько мне машину сварганьте: 600-й Pentium, малиновый монитор, сотовый модем, кожаного мыша, ну и в том же духе. Сели продавцы и думают:

– Три ЦП по 200 – будет 600, монитор покрасим, мыша обклеим, а вот где мы ему клавишу под такой растопыр найдем?! [13].

In the joke the New Russian comes to the computer shop to buy a luxury computer, a crimson monitor, a mobile modem and a leather computer mouse. The humorous effect is reached by mixing up the stereotypical symbols of wealth for the post-Soviet Russias, such as Mercedes-Benz 600 (600-й), a crimson jacket, a mobile phone, leather seats in a car, and computer devices. The idea is to buy not a simple computer but the upmarket. The sellers creatively find solution by adding two more processors which is equal to 600 (Три ЦП по 200 – будет 600), painting the monitor into the proper colour (монитор покрасим) and pasting the mouse with leather (мышь обклеим).

The world picture of a modern man differs from an archaic one, but the role of this archetypal opposition “friend or foe”, reflected in language and texts, is still significant. Thus national precedent names in the social precedent texts are used to hint a reader beforehand about who is considered to be “a friend” and who is “a foe” by that society.

Another type of national world picture influence is a reminiscence. Reminiscence is a kind of adaptation of a national precedent text suggesting replacement of some details in narration by the words representing social precedent phenomena.

For example: “Alice in Unixland” is a social remake of “Alice in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll.

“I’m looking for a *white consultant*”. Alice pointed in the direction she had been walking. “Did he go this way?” she asked...

Soon Alice came upon a large brown table. *The Consultant* was there, as was an apparently *Mad Hacker*, and several creatures that Alice did not recognize. In one corner sat a Dormouse fast asleep. Over the table was a large sign that read “*UNIX Conference*” [13].

The plot of the story is generally the same. Following the “White Rabbit” Alice meets different fantastic creatures such as Mad Hatter, and a dozy dormouse. The assembled creatures can not accept ordinary language, and so Alice experiences absolute bafflement. As it goes in remake the “White Rabbit” is changed into the “*White Consultant*”, “Mad Hatter” becomes “*Mad Hacker*”. *The sign “UNIX Conference”* explains Alice’s misunderstanding as people are talking using computer slang and terms that make their speech absolutely incomprehensible to anyone who is not involved in the sphere of computer technology, thus, producing humorous effect.

The similar tendency can be observed in the Russian Internet precedent texts. For example, “The Tale of the Sysadmin and his son” is a remake of a famous Pushkin’s “The Tale of Tsar Saltan”.

#### СКАЗКА О СИСАДМИНЕ И ЕГО СЫНЕ

Секретарши за компом

Заигрались вечерком.

– Каб мне бытъ женой *Админа*, –

Говорит одна фемина, –

*Я б сидела в Интернете*

Круглый год, как на диете.

– Каб мне выйти за Админа, –

Говорит друга фемина, –

*Я б узнала все пассворды*

и запомнила их твердо.

– Кабы вышла за Админа, –

Третья молвила фемина, –

*Я б ему за все дела*

*Программиста* родила [14].

In this example one can easily recognize the basics – the work of A. Pushkin in which three girls share their dreams of getting married the tsar. The plot and the style stay unchangeable, but characters and realities are adjusted to the social perception. So, the tsar is changed into sysadmin, the girls’ intense desires are focused on surfing online, finding out the passwords and giving birth to a programmer.

The use of certain national culture genres such as folk songs, chastushkas, etc. can be considered another type of social reminiscence.

For example, a Japanese haiku or its western analog is a short poem that is usually focused on nature and the place of humans in it. The western variant of haiku includes three (or fewer) lines of 17 or fewer syllables, a cut to implicitly contrast and compare two events, images, or situations. The form expresses much and suggests more in the fewest possible words [15]. The Internet precedent texts can be represented in the form of haiku and built around IT sphere. For example:

Stay the patient course.

Of little worth is your ire.

The network is down.

Be patient.

What is your anger?

The network is down [16].

This poem describes the situation of a network break. The task of the reader is to think about the logical and emotional connection between two parts – troubles with the network (the network is down) and the emotional background of the event (what is your anger?).

The Russian authors who write about IT sphere also address national folk culture for the stylistic forms. For example, *chastushka* is a short, witty, humorous poem of four sentences about some problem. The idea of *chastushka* is to show the situation in a comical way, to laugh at it and make it less emotionally intensive.

По ночам пишу я вирус  
В творческом экстазе.  
Для начальника тружусь –  
Подложу заразе! [17].

This *chastushka* describes the problem of bad relationship between the employee and the employer (the boss is called a bastard – зараза) and the ability of the employee to revenge by writing a computer virus (пишу я вирус, подложу заразе).

Thus, the analysis of English and Russian Internet precedent texts proves the influence of national world picture on the social one through the use of different national precedent phenomena such as names, events as well as remakes and adaptations of well-known opuses and folklore genres to social realities. So, national precedent phenomena becomes a basis for conceptual emphasis of the meaningful characteristics through the prism of associations.

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**Репрезентация национальных прецедентных феноменов  
в социальных прецедентных текстах  
(на примере англо- и русскоязычных текстов интернет-культуры)**

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**Ключевые слова и фразы:** когниция; концепт; ментальная репрезентация; прецедентный текст; язык.

**Аннотация:** Дан анализ репрезентации национальных прецедентных феноменов в социальных прецедентных текстах. Рассмотрены особенности функционирования прецедентных феноменов в англоязычных и русскоязычных социальных прецедентных текстах интернет-культуры. Большое число примеров подтверждает, что национальные прецедентные имена используются в социальных прецедентных текстах, а национальные прецедентные тексты и жанры, в свою очередь, становятся основой для выражения восприятия социальной группы. На основе проведенного исследования выделены векторы выбора национальных прецедентных имен для номинации социально значимых объектов, а также описаны механизмы создания социальных прецедентных текстов на основе национальных прецедентных текстов и фольклорных жанров.

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### **Repräsentation der nationalen Präzedenzphänomene in den sozialen Präzedenztexten (auf dem Beispiel der englischsprachigen und russischsprachigen Präzedenztexte der Internet-Kultur)**

**Zusammenfassung:** Der vorliegende Artikel ist der Analyse der Repräsentation der nationalen Präzedenzphänomene in den sozialen Präzedenztexten gewidmet. Das Ziel des Artikels besteht in der Demonstration des Funktionierens der Präzedenzphänomene in den englischsprachigen und russischsprachigen sozialen Präzedenztexten der Internet-Kultur. Die große Menge der Beispiele bestätigen, dass die nationalen Präzedenznamen in den sozialen Präzedenztexten verwendet werden, und die nationalen Präzedenztexte und die Genres werden Grundlage für den Ausdruck der Wahrnehmung der sozialen Gruppe. Aufgrund der durchgeführten Forschung wählt der Autor die Vektoren der Auswahl der nationalen Präzedenznamen für die Nomination der sozialbedeutsamen Objekte, sowie beschreibt die Mechanismen der Bildung der sozialen Präzedenztexte aufgrund der nationalen Präzedenztexte und der folkloristischen Genres.

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### **Représentation des phénomènes précédents nationaux dans les textes précédents sociaux (à l'exemple des textes précédents anglais et russes de la culture Internet)**

**Résumé:** Le présent article est consacré à l'analyse de la représentation des phénomènes précédents nationaux dans les textes des réseaux sociaux. Le but de l'article est l'examen du fonctionnement des phénomènes précédents dans les textes précédents anglais et russes de la culture Internet. Les exemples montrent que les textes nationaux précédents sont la base de la réception du groupe social. Les auteurs mettent en valeur les vecteurs du choix des noms nationaux précédents pour la dénomination des objets significatifs du point de vue social et décrivent les mécanismes de la création des textes précédents sociaux.

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