МОВОЗНАВЧІ
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VEGAN GROUP INTEGRATION MODEL REPRESENTED IN MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE: INTERNET ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Vegan integration in the multimodal discourse environment. The analysis is based on two groups extracted from Twitter and Facebook, allow us to broaden our view of in-group integration and how it is represented in the language. The focus of attention is placed on the AGIL model of integration and how communicants express their thoughts during each of the stages. The time period for the collected database and the closeness of the group was checked for the impact on the integration model. This paper presents two approaches to the analysis of the content, based on categorization and structuring communication among group members.

Keywords: veganism, integration, multimodal discourse

У статті представлено дослідження, присвячене темі інтеграції веганів в сфері мультимодального дискурсу. Аналіз був проведений на двох групах користувачів, що функціонують в Твіттері і Фейсбуці, що дозволило більш комплексно зрозуміти механізми інтеграції, а також способи її вираження в мові. Стаття зосереджується на аналізі моделі AGIL і методах передачі повідомлень учасників на кожному етапі інтеграції. Автор перевіряє також можливість впливу часових рамок зібраного матеріалу і закритого характеру групи на модель інтеграції. Стаття представляє два підходи до аналізу контенту, засновані на категоризації і структуризації спілкування між членами групи.

Ключові слова: веганізм, інтеграція, мультимодальний дискурс.

Ten artykuł przedstawia badania na temat integracji wegan w środowisku dyskursu multimodalnego. Analiza oparta została na dwóch grupach, zebranych na Twiterze i Facebooku, co pozwoliło nam na bardziej kompleksowe zrozumienie mechanizmu integracji oraz sposobu jego reprezentacji poprzez język. Niniejsza praca skupia się na analizie modelu integracji AGIL oraz metod przekazywania treści uczestników w każdym z

etapów integracji. Autor sprawdza również, czy ramy czasowe dla zebranych baz danych oraz charakter zamkniętej grupy mają wpływ na model integracji. Artykuł przedstawia dwa podejścia do analizy treści, oparte na kategoryzacji i strukturyzacji komunikacji wewnątrzgrupowej.

Słowa kluczowe: weganizm, integracja, dyskurs multimodalny

Internet communication started to function as the main source for both information sharing and massive communication. Nowadays, it is one of the most dominant ways of socialization, due to its capabilities, free access and a variety of possibilities to express one's thoughts. This variety is represented not only in the elements that constitute to the discussion but also the pragmatic information encoded in the posts. Studies in multimodal discourse (internet), give us a possibility to understand communication as the basic mean of social interaction, broadening the view of sociological, psychological and linguistic knowledge about both verbal and nonverbal communication. It also highlights the importance of human interaction in general, to establish an agreement and fulfil the communication purpose.

This article focuses on the group integration and reconstruction of the integration model. The integration model was introduced in sociology, by Talcott Parsons in 1951. As the representant of functional structuralism, Parsons presents in his work: Toward a General Theory of Action: Theoretical foundations for the social sciences the four-fold model of integration (AGIL model) for any type of social structure with a desire to survive in the society. The social integration is completed by the development on four stages of AGIL model: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, latent pattern maintenance (Turner et al. 2004), all of which I discuss in the methodological part of my article.

I am more interested in the linguistic representation of the model rather than the sociological aspects of in-group communication. The main research questions are: what is the integration, model? how does it work? how it is represented in the language?

Internet discussion has formal aspects of representing reality as well as features specific to multimodal discourse. The former involves a technological means of communication which we can use in our favour, such as images, videos, pictures and hyperlinks which not only enrich the communication but adds a certain dynamic to the topics discussed. The latter encompasses multimodal approaches to the written discourse in which we can substitute the features of normal face-to-face communication, as well as specify the complexity of pragmatic and semantic meaning generated in the group communication.

The material used in my research is collected from two social webpages namely: Facebook and Twitter. We can distinguish these web pages as the main textual/visual communication tools available on the Internet, with Facebook being more prominent. In addition, these social networks mediate in social representation of the world in a dialogic or polylogue form (i.e.

multiparty discussion), with several topics represented at the same time. This feature is significantly visible in multimodal discourse since we can still follow the discussion or return to the previous post to remind ourselves about previous speaker view.

With internet communication being publicly accessible to all, a variety of social groups and topics appear to function socially. The pace of group formation is also increased in comparison to face-to-face communication. Among others, health and eco-friendly life attract more attention and participants, possibly due to the development of social culture and quality of life, thus my target groups are taken from this domain.

Groups are the representants of the vegan community, different to each other in terms of both nationality and time period in which data was extracted from the group, but in this study, the focus is placed on the linguistic aspects of integration, rather than gender and national differences represented in this type of discourse. Choice of these group is based mainly on the content production and popularity, having the substantial number of members these groups represent only the sample of the vegan community.

Multimodal discourse studies

The field of multimodal discourse research started to develop critically with the works connected to computer-mediated-communication. Researchers such as Herring (1999), Jansen (1995), Katz (1997) presented the methodology for studying the content available online. The contemporary researchers study the problems of stances Myers (2013), instant messaging and chats Baron (2010), the role of images Helen Bednarek Caple (2013), Ryan M. Milner (2013) and nationality representation online Törnberg and Törnberg (2016). The content was analyzed in large corpora of data Scollon and Scollon (2004), but the data collected in the form of large chunks of textual data focused on the syntactic and pragmatic structures without studying the particular speech representant. On the other hand, if the focus was placed on the interlocutor, the analysis incorporated only textual factors in the form of blogs, microblogging, emails or instant chat messages.

Multimodal discourse studies in the social environment (groups) require more than one approach for the content analysis. The discussion is carried by more than one participant, with several topics developed simultaneously, therefore simple categorization of content is useful just for data organization.

Methodology

I collected the data from Twitter and Facebook groups of vegans in the original form, including images, videos, memes and hyperlinks. The group extracted from Twitter is English language speaking group. With the specific dynamic of the page, the range of my data collection could be extended to two years, ranging from (24 Jan 2016-14 Jan 2018). During this period the group produced 82 posts. Posts are categorized in accordance with subjects or domain, all of which I represented in the mind map allowing the broader view.

Similarly, the group of vegans that exist on Facebook is the subject of analysis. The group include Polish speaking community with higher content production. The same method of categorization is applied for the analysis, however, with the substantially larger number of posts I did not represent it visually.

The main tools which I use in this research are divided into two groups. Each method providing the specific aid for my research, this includes data collection, erasing irrelevant posts, categorization, reconstruction of the integration model and analysis of the content.

The first one is the AGIL model (see Parsons, 1962), which serves as a guideline for posts categorization and analysis. The model includes four stages, crucial to the existence and successful communication among the group members.

The second tools category includes the grounded theory as the theory generating method and critical discourse analysis. In order to see the range of thematic variety the collected material is categorized in accordance with grounded theory. This involves data collection, open, axial and selective coding of the posts, Glaser (1967).

Group dynamics

The dynamic of the Twitter group allows us to study a wider time period, and group activity. As the platform with no restriction to the visibility of the content that is produced inside the group (anyone from outside the group can browse the posts), we can collect the data from a bigger audience. Having no restriction to the access, new members are involved in the conversation simply by adding their post to the group 'wall', however, in the analysis participants with low content production are automatically excluded from the research. This involves people who posted only once, their content being neglected by the group members or even ignored.

Groups in Twitter are open (unless moderator restricts it in some way), thus the number of participants in the discussion, as well as content production should be greater. This is not entirely true because the group dynamics allows other forms of participation in the content and discussion. These include sharing posts in other pages, liking, commenting or hash-tagging the post creator. The produced posts stay in the same way as they were added if only, they do not violate the webpage policy or the moderator terms. In twitter, the group moderator is usually the person which holds the access to more advanced options of the page and more importantly all posts appear on his 'wall', which is special updated environment and place used temporally for group communication.

Opposite to the previous dynamics, Facebook offers more strict rules of content publication and more attention is put to the overall outlook of the group. If the posts are not connected to the group range of topics, contrary or vulgar, they are deleted by a moderator. In the Facebook environment, the groups may have multiple moderators, checking if the content is in accordance with the group rules. With a considerable size of the group, this is crucial to

the normal functioning of the communication since the content to be read is too vast for one person.

Facebook can represent both open and closed group dynamics. If the group is open, participants involved in the conversation can represent no connection to the group agenda in any way, but just use it as an opportunity for discussion. Therefore, I picked the closed vegan group, which limited the possibility of collecting nonessential data.

Results

The AGIL model is particularly visible on the Twitter group, this may be possible due to the wider range of time period, used for the analysis. Therefore, the time period is one of the aspects for facilitating the interaction and representing the model. Because the group forming process can be increased in the multimodal discourse, the process of AGIL can be observed within months. Having this in mind, the data is also divided into the three phases of group communication. The phases represent the three different events of the group, connected to the change of members that participate in the discussion, thus we can see it as the group generations. Generations are introduced at the already developed stage of group communication, extending the domains of their predecessors and adding new subject into the discussion.

The adaptation stage of the Twitter group involves the creation of the group, where new members start to form the inside-group relations, establish their positions and basic topic through which they can relate to one another. This phenomenon is reflected in the language use and topics discussed inside the group. Using rudimentary statements and representing just the surface of the issues is common practice. The main topics discussed are environment, transition into vegan, food and connecting with vegan communities. All these topics are represented in the posts but only in the general, narrow sense. At this stage, language is simple and easy to follow, without any opinion or clearly presenting the stance. I identify this process in the first phase of group communication (the year 2016).

The second stage namely goal attainment introduces topics which are more problematic, connected to the group main domain of operation. By domain of operation, I understand the range of subject and fields, specific to the group, which is represented in posts and in-group communication. This stage forms the overall social identity of the group, with a personal contribution to the discussion. Because the group integration, which is the third stage of the AGIL model, is also represented in the short time (in contrast with the first stage), I decided to represent both stages as one. The third stage is the integration itself. The integration has a two-fold feature because, from the very beginning of the group formation, group members are connecting to one another. This encompasses the group members, but also newcomers added to the group dynamics in the meantime. Communicants integrate with the group since the very beginning, for at this stage it is represented in the language. We can see relations among group members, with the tendency to lead a

lengthy discussion about issues stated. Subjects introduced during these stages are vegan celebrities, animal rights and laws enforcement, promoting vegan food, recipes, and controversial animal violence. The more problematic the content gets the more participants are involved in the discussion, this may suggest that the group established a certain understanding of their identity, allowing them to interact as one strong social unit. Stages of goal attainment and integration are particularly visible during phase two, represented at the beginning of 2017.

The final stage of the AGIL model is latent pattern maintenance. I have chosen to enclose it in the last time period (third phase 2017-2018), due to the repetition of the topics, adding no more dynamics to the discussion. The pattern maintenance is represented in the posts which follow the same scheme, used and developed by the first and second generation of participants. Topics of the discussion are connected to animals which can feel pain, hunting practices, recipes and shops with vegan food, and bringing up vegan children.

After the prior categorization, I created originally 12 categories, which are general and represent the main post content. With open and selective categorization, the number of categories is limited to three: Identity, Aliens (non-vegans), and Environment. These three categories function as the basic model for the in-group communication, thus all posts belong to one of the given categories. With this starting point, other posts are categorized, each creating links and relations, extending the main category. These relations can be seen on the mind map in the attachments, representing all of 82 posts within the specific categories, and linkages (Fig.1 Relations and linkages).

The results in the vegan group on Facebook is somehow different. The first difference is the number of posts. During one week from the period (1-8 August 2018), the group members produced 538 posts which were categorized thematically and pragmatically. The most dominant subjects were connected to animals in general, everyday life, connecting with the group and services (i.e. good restaurants or hairdresser).

In contrast to the Twitter group, the substantial number of post and short time period does not allow for formulating or dividing the content in accordance to AGIL model. The possible reasons for this are the group being already in the last stage of the model which add no more dynamic to the conversation, and the data stretching only to one week. As we can see in the previous case study the time necessary for each stage of the model is longer (half a year at least). Therefore, this case study requires a different approach, with the use of grounded theory and discourse analysis of the leading person involved in the communication. With this dynamic the group integration is based on several communicants which add the major part of the content, executing a specific role in the group, incorporating the subjects within the same domain and creating the basis for discussion. If any new members are added to the group, the structure present inside the group is already advanced and easy to follow. Though, it is not easy for new members to get

through the content and become the person with a specific role. In this vegan group, the integration is formed not around one person and his or her wall. The group is more developed both in terms of in-group rules and policy of posting. Likewise, the number of moderators is larger.

The analysis of the data revealed the split of the group. The content represented a minor disagreement with the strict rules and policy of the group, thus some participants were against and formed their own group. This suggests a failure of integration and points out that keeping the group together is problematic. Another controversial issue is stated in the post presenting artificially made meat, in which vegan group is curious and positive about it: "niby jestem negatywnie nastawiony, bo prawie 2 lata nie jem mięsa, ale też w sumie jestem ciekawy"," Produkcja takiego mięsa nikogo nie krzywdzi, więc jestem bardzo mocno na tak…mam nadzieję, że dożyję". Within the studied data the major role in integration is played by four participants, with the main post contribution. These participants act as pillars that hold the group communication. Their interactions and post can be classified, forming the role in the group. The first communicant with the number of post exceeding others (50), is talking about relationships and stereotypical thinking about vegans. The group is led by this person even to subjects of homosexuals, and relationships with the same gender. Such topics could not be discussed unless the group is already fully integrated, otherwise, several different opposite views would be formed. The next participant with 18 posts, discusses issues relating animal help. If any member of the vegan group has a problem with animals or does not know how to provide aid, this communicant's posts stretch this subject. The last two communicants with the same number of post (17), relate to everyday life and services in the specific cities. These include appliances, health and other appearance-related issues. Surprisingly, with the database analyzed there are more themes connected to everyday life than being a vegan, it may be due to the progression of the group or to the narrow period for the analysis.

Conclusion

In order to see the full operating model of integration the case study should represent the wider time period. The multimodal discourse allows for more features, elements and possibilities for the discussion; thus, the integration is executed sooner. In this article, I studied two groups dynamics, with their own unique mechanisms and agenda. By the mechanism, I understand the integration and organization of the group. The analysis revealed that within the longer time period and open access group we can pinpoint the generations of the group, which represent participants coming to the group for a certain amount of time. After this time their contribution to the group is put to an end, but the ideas are continued by the next generation of communicants.

The first case study presented the open group dynamics which follow the AGIL model. During each of the four stages, the group developed and integrated their communication and in-group relations. At first, the group

members hide their opinion without clearly stating the stance, also the discussed topics are general and broad. Because the pace of adding content on the internet some stages of the AGIL model are established in an earlier manner. The subjects become more controversial and problematic in time, as the integration of the group develops. The evidence is represented in the lengthy discussions and forming the overall identity of the group. After establishing the integration, the group dynamics become static repeating the same schemes and patterns of linguistic representation of the issues.

The integration model of the Twitter group can be summarized in three categories: Vegan identity, Aliens (non-vegans) and Environment. These categorize act as a starting point for all the post, creating linkages and relationships between the similar, interconnected subjects.

The second dynamic represents a different model of integration. Due to the closeness of the group, more strict rules and moderators, the integration is represented differently. Facebook group is based on 4 participants that encourage and lead the discussion, each of them having a specific role in the communication. Their involvement is crucial for founding the group integration and assimilating new members. After the analysis of this group I can state that the specification of the AGIL model stage in the database representing a short time period is not possible, thus discourse analysis is a useful tool for studying the content.

The data revealed the split of the group members which were against the strict rules and policy of the moderators for expressing one's thoughts. The occurrence of this may suggest the failure of group integration. By studying the content, we can also stipulate which members produced the most content relevant for the discussion, and on this basis identify their role in the group communication. Because the progression of the group the discussion is connected more to everyday life than vegan identity.

Research on multimodal discourse can provide us with several crucial information not only for the field of linguistics but also psychology, sociology and communication studies in general. The advancement of the technology enables us to collect updated social examples which reflect real language in use, thus it worth to progress the study on the domain of multimodal discourse.
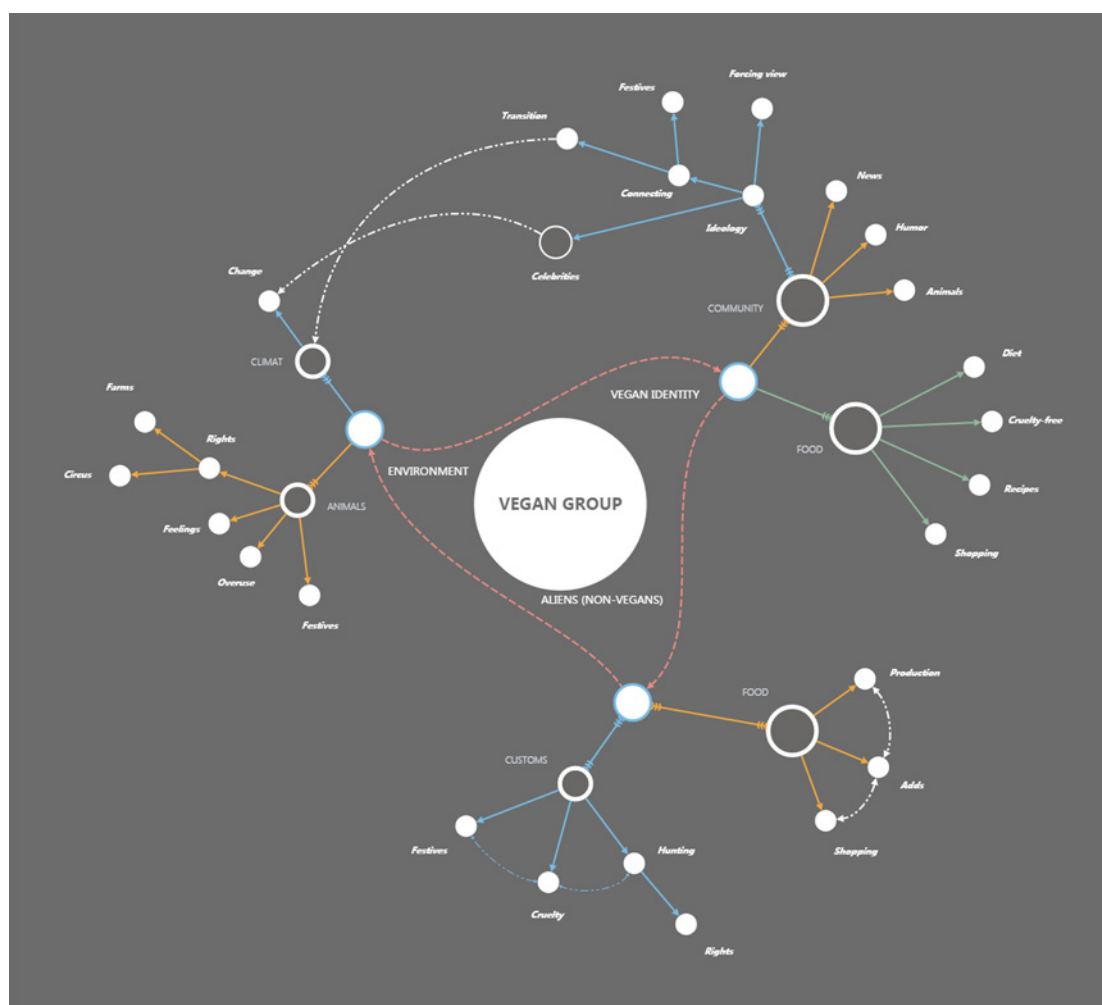
Fig.1 Relations and linkages

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