LINGUISTIC (IN)TOLERANCE OF THE HOST COMMUNITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN MIGRATION IN FRANCE

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Abstract

The paper outlines one of the key migration issues in area of concern that have emerged since 2016, namely: perception of migrants by the host community. The aim of this paper is to consider tolerant/intolerant statements as targeted verbal regulative actions that have a certain emotional and pragmatic impact on users. The research is based on a corpus of small-format texts in online French-language environment (social networks) between the years 2016-2020. The total number of posts and comments is 1,518. The study investigated the data from the perspective of the theory of discourse, pragmatics and psychosemantics. The methods of observation, description, interpretation, sampling and quantitative data collection techniques were applied. The analysis shows that social networks proved to be a pragmatically effective tool: the attitude towards migrants in France is changing for a worse. Online reports of intolerant speech behavior in relation to the modern migration situation have increased. The study revealed growing local aggression and hostility that may propagate more serious forms of conduct, such as xenophobia and racist violence.

Keywords: migration, France, Internet discourse, linguistics, host community, (in)tolerance

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, globalization and global migration-related issues have become especially relevant. Thus, problems related to the attitude toward migrants by the host society members arise. To denote the attitude of the host society toward incoming categories of people (e.g., migrants, various kinds of minorities, etc.), modern science uses the concept of tolerance. Tolerance herein is understood as toleration to various manifestations of otherness of a particular nature. Otherness, respectively, in the broadest context is defined as the discrepancy between the demonstrated behavior (including speech and what is culturally determined) existing in the norms of a particular society. The opposite phenomenon is intolerance, which can be seen as the intolerance to manifestations of otherness of one kind or another.

With reference to the constantly increasing flow of migrants in all over the world, the social demand for their integration into host societies has become more serious. The (in)tolerance- related issues toward migrants, both in terms of state (officially declared) and the personal position of the host society citizens, have become more pressing. To study the attitude of citizens toward migrants in the context of (in)tolerance, The study of social networks, as a popular means among the world communities for relaying existing opinions is the most promising one.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tolerance toward migrants implies the demonstration of a tolerant attitude toward the citizens of another state arriving in this or that country within the framework of labor, political or social migration. To a great degree, the tolerance toward migrants on the part of the host population depends on the goals of migration declared by the newcomers. Therefore, the attitude toward labor migrants, for instance, differs from that toward political migrants or even refugees. In addition, the attitude of the receiving side largely depends on the number of migrants and the accompanying internal political processes of their own state. Due to the World Bank the number of refugees was around 25 million people in 2017. Specifically, in France the number of refugees has increased from 174,756 in 1991 to 337,143 in 2017, showing a progressive increase of 150,000 since 2009. According to the UNHCR France is in 14th ranking position among countries which take the most refugees. That's the second place in Europe after Germany.

The crisis of refugees in the European Union (2018) has clearly shown how the attitude of citizens toward newcomers can change in the context of accompanying domestic political decisions in the short term. If the citizens of the European Union were well disposed toward migrants at the beginning of the refugee crisis and sought to assist the refugees on a voluntary basis, there is, currently, a prejudice against migrants and negative perceptions toward refugees in many European countries. Moreover, this occurs due to the fact that many internal political decisions were carried out in favor of migrants, while taxes were raised for the citizens in their own country, jobs were cut, etc.

Social networks represent channels through which large numbers of opinions are expressed in the framework of internet communication. Social networks are platforms for communication between users, not limited in the space-time continuum, as well as in thematic terms. Therefore, on these platforms, discussions can be conducted in different languages, users can leave messages to each other at any time, and each one of them can address other users. With the introduction of the auto-translation function of messages into the native language of the reading users in many popular social networks, communication has become even more open and not limited in terms of linguistic features. The most popular discussion threads might contain messages from different users in different languages, which are written to this user or that. Example 1, for instance shows a user's post in English, accompanied by a reply comment in Russian.

Example 1

The unrestricted format of communication in social networks also contains a number of informal rules that regulate the network culture of communication. Thus, some social networks officially regulate the number of characters in a message (e.g., Twitter), but the general trend of brevity has already become an integral part

of network communication. The use of iconic components of the network commentary such as emoji, graphical symbols, attached images, gif images, etc. has also become typical of modern social networks. The use of iconic elements is also viewed as a rule of netiquette, since it allows internet users to display the emotive component of their texts.

The study of small-format texts of internet discourse on the material of social networks allows us to study how representatives of the host society regard migrants in their society.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The data of the present paper were drawn from small format (up to 200 printed characters, including iconic ones) texts of internet discourse, compiled by users of social networks, such as Twitter. The choice of these platforms is dictated by a large number of users of these network platforms, as well as the widespread format of small texts, used by internet users to write messages, publish posts and comments. The main topic of the monitored texts was the issues of attitudes toward migrants in the context of (in)tolerance . To conduct the study, computer data processing programs such as WordStat, SPSS Statistics and Excel were employed. For the purposes of conducting a qualitative analysis of the collected data, the methods of observation, description, interpretation and sampling were applied.

Nowadays, the social network, Twitter, is one of the most popular in the world, ranking as one of the top 10 most visited web platforms. Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service that gives its users the chance to post and interact with messages, called *tweets*. The volume of messages on Twitter is formally limited to 200 characters per message. To overcome this limit, users make use of discussion threads, where each message is a response to the previous one. There are author's message threads on which other users comment in their own profiles, using the repost function, known as *retweet* within this social network or reply to the comments of users. We can say that in this social network, user activities such as comments, reposts/retweets and the number of views (reach) are more important than the number of reactions (likes).

Thus, in our study, we investigated comments of some users on Twitter for the period ranging from 2016 to 2020. We used the keyword search method to identify the range of issues on which posts are the subject of our research. To accomplish the task, we chose the keywords that characterize our request in this social network; they are: # *migrant*, # *migrants*, # *France*, # *migration*, # *refugee*. All the chosen words had a neutral semantic coloring and did not carry additional connotative meanings that refer to the section of general vocabulary. Furthermore, to select the most popular posts, we used the built-in algorithms for analyzing social networks and selected posts and comments that have the largest coverage in terms of the number of both views and reactions. The research corpus consisted of 1,518 posts and comments, each of which did not exceed 200 characters (including the iconic ones).

Example 1.

As we can see, figure 1 shows a post from a user, "*sondagedefrance*", who created a poll among users of the French-speaking segment of Twitter concerning user attitudes toward migrants and the specifics of media coverage of incidents associated with them. The translation of this poll geos as follows:

Do you think it is normal that the # French # media do not cover the case of a # Syrian # migrant attacking with a sword in # Schuttgart?

Yes

No

I have no opinion on this issue.

Analyzing this post, one can note that all significant words in this small-format text are highlighted with hypertext tags known as hashtags that make it possible to increase the reach of the audience viewing this message. Despite the small number of reactions/likes from users, the number of people, who participated in the poll, which was 731, indicated the popularity of this message. 88% of those people expressed solidarity with the author's position. At the same time, the discussion of the post made up a thread of 141 repost messages (retweets) by other users on their profiles.

Regarding the linguistic aspect, we can highlight the use of a lexeme that emphasizes the nationality of a migrant (# *Syrian*), as well as the use of the marker word # *migrant*, while written with a capital letter. In the context of (in)tolerance, it can be noted that the author of this message appeals primarily to the position, which is officially declared by the French authorities, represented in the French media. The fact that the author has not specified any particular users or news agencies indicates the presence of a generalized position regarding the policy pursued by the authorities in connection with the question raised.

Moreover, we can also see that the author declared his opinion on the issue of migrants and their assimilation into the host society with the help of indirect references, using the method of appealing to public opinion. In this way, users who voted for one option or another became main messengers of expressed ideas.

The post, which is considered by us in Example 1, is an instance of expressing an indirect position regarding the attitude toward migrants on the part of the host society. Consider the following examples.

Example 2

The literal transition of this post goes as follows:

" # France:" This is often completely irrelevant for those who say it, but very painful for those who are addressed to # ordinary racism rampant in the daily life of representatives of # minorities." "LeMonde: I am always reproached for the color of my skin."

Taking a quick look at this post, we can note that the user under the nickname, Richard, aimed at defending migrants and supporting the ethnic minorities. It is worth mentioning that the author here addressed the issues of racism, directly in relation to the issues of (in)tolerance based on ethnicity of migrants. For the promotion of his position, the author also used generalized hashtags indicating the region # *France*, the phenomenon # *racism*, as well as the subject to be addressed in this position # *worker* or social group # *minority*, without specifying a particular ethnic group or event. To reinforce his position, the author

referred to an article published in the authoritative French edition of LeMonde on racism issues with an included interview of a migrant living in France at the time of the interview. The peculiarity of this post, in contrast to the previous example lies in the use of the hashtag. It is interesting to note that the author also cited another authoritative source to express his opinion. This source discussed the use of strategies for indirectly expressing his/her own opinion on the issue under study. The use of appealing to other texts allowed the author to bypass the requirements of this social network for the small format of the text through introducing a quote or generalized position in the author's commentary and offering the user/reader to familiarize his/herself with the full text posted on another source by clicking on a link.

The following lexemes can become linguistic markers for determining the author's opinion on the issue under study. The author of the post used the verb *sévir*, which has the connotations *"to rage"* or *"to be furiously angry"* and supplemented it by the word combination *de manière insidieuse* - covertly, insidiously and deceptively. Therefore, it can be observed that the author of the message also pointed to the image related to this problem of attitudes toward migrants that is poorly covered, despite the fact that the issue is quite serious for the society. The discrepancy between the officially declared position and the existing order of things was also emphasized by the author through the use of above-mentioned tokens.

Example 3 reflects a different position of users regarding (in)tolerance toward migrants.

Example 3

The author of the message expresses the following position: *"Great # integration, but no # Assimilation ... (iconic image, expressing laughter). This minor migrant arrested for theft in Limoges doesn't speak French at all, but he's sharp with cursing and swearing. F**ck."* Swearing lexemes are censored.

This message is linguistically divided into two semantic parts. The first part was an expression of the author's position and the second one was a quote from an official source (media source). The author opposed the concepts of integration and assimilation as formal and actual inclusion in the society of the host country in relation to migrants. The first part of the text was written using a sarcastic speech model, which allowed the author to give a negative connotation with regard to the issue under consideration. The use of the iconic element was attributed to the model of sarcastic utterance and it carried a negative reaction of the author to the existing situation. The second part of the message contained a quotation from a media source and included evaluative elements through the use of the lexemes of swearing, robbery, as well as the use of censored invective vocabulary.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC MARKERS OF (IN)TOLERANCE TOWARD MIGRANTS

This section deals with the quantitative analysis of linguistic markers of (in)tolerance toward migrants in the

host society. In order to conduct this quantitative analysis of (in)tolerance toward migrants on the part of the host community, the calculations in table 1 have been made.

Table 1. Posts dedicated to attitudes toward migrants

Estimated component	Number of comments	Percentage for the period
Positive	86 (2016 - 38 2017 - 13 **2018 - 11** 2019 - 8 2020 - 16)	5.6%
Negative	1402 (2016 - 164 2017 - 203 **2018 - 219** 2019 - 369 2020 – 447)	92.3%
Neutral	30 (2016 - 15 2017 - 9 **2018 - 4** 2019 - 2 2020 - 0)	2.1%

Table 1 shows that the number of posts dedicated to attitudes toward migrants increases between 2016 and 2020. It can be explained by the peak of the migrant crisis in Europe which falls on 2018. However, the fact that the number of posts with negative assessments is growing helps us to conclude that this crisis is still in the development stage and in the near future, the issue of attitude toward migrants on the part of the host community may be aggravated.

It can be also noted that the number of posts posted on Twitter, declaring a negative assessment of migrants or the actions of the authorities related to resolving the problem with migrants is constantly growing in both quantitative and percentage terms. Furthermore, one can see that a decreasing number of users are taking a neutral position in relation to migrants, which indicates that there is a tendency to exacerbate social disagreements regarding the attitude toward migrants in the French society. In addition, the number of posts with a declaration of a positive opinion about migrants increased significantly in 2020 though the trend before that was negative.

The analysis of lexicogrammatic categories used in the analyzed texts was made use of. Therefore, table 2 lists the lexemes that are often used to denote migrants:

Table 2. Use of lexemes to refer to migrant/frequency

Lexeme	Frequency / 1518 Post and Comments
Migrant	964

Refugie (refugee)	522
Clandestin (clandestine)	328
Paillasson ()	401
Étranger (foreigner)	132

Table 2 exhibits the use of vocabulary with a pejorative coloration, including, paillasson (it is possible translate it as "sneaky") and clandestin (clandestine). The use of these lexemes is frequent in terms of the posts under consideration as they appear in 30% of the analyzed texts. Moreover, in the same posts, several lexemes denoting a migrant can be used at once. The use of the lexeme étranger (foreigner) is the rarest one while the most common one is the neutrally colored word migrant. It is worth bearing in mind that different types of comments in addition to their frequency were taken into our consideration (See table 3).

Table 3. Use of different types of comments/frequency

Comment type	Frequency/1518 Post and Comments
Text	1473
Cited	918
Iconic	522
Poll	488

Table 3 shows that the text format is dictated mainly by the type of social network. Twitter is a social network in which users carry out activities using microblogging services. This means the format of the text is a small text format. It is also common to use quotes from other users to create thematic discussion threads, as well as from other publications.

The use of iconic elements of the commentary is also quite frequent and includes both the use of special text elements (emoji) and images (attached pictures), which are used to emphasize the emotive richness of the text. Stylistic devises were also tackled (see table 4).

Table 4. Stylistic devices

Stylistic reception	Particular/1518 RT
Sarcasm Oui, Bienvenu en # France! On a presque rien à manger, mais nous sommes trop élégants pour en parler en public # Yes, Welcome to #France. We are starving out her, but we are too elegant to speak in public	218
Citation Quelle belle citation de l'IOM: "The migrant crisis continues unabated. By better understanding the risks facing these people, we can do more to protect them." Et moi? Un FRANÇAIS ORDINAIRE? Je suis protégé?	1309

Great words by IOM "………………". And what about me? Ordinary FRENCH GUY? Am I protected?	
Appeal Bravo à # Macron: "La France ne peut pas accueillir tout le monde …." Dieu merci, il a dit ça! # Macron, Well done : "France can't accept everybody…" Thanks God, he said it !	679
A rhetorical question # Migrants : réduire ou pas réduire ? # Migrants: reduce or not reduce?	111

Table 4 shows a number of stylistic devices that are more frequently used in comments. It is worthwhile mentioning that the users are more likely to make use of citations from other users' or third-party publications, using reference links, as well as appealings to Emmanuel Macron, for example, to address their questions regarding attitudes toward migrants.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The current issue of migration in the global aspect is one of the most serious issues in the modern society. Migration flows continue to increase and society is becoming more and more mobile, which intensifies relocation processes. Issues of attitude toward migrants on the part of the host society are often decisive. They also reflect the attitude of citizens to the implemented internal policy of the state regarding migrants and its own citizens.

Speaking of the attitude of the French as representatives of the receiving society toward migrants, it should be noted that their attitude toward foreigners arriving in the country has changed into a negative direction recently. According to the public survey by France Inter in 2020, the reasons for this change are the 2018 European refugee crisis and existing internal political problems such as the rising rates of unemployment, the education crisis and the health crisis, which became worse during the pandemic in 2020

The change in the attitude of the French to migration issues is clearly evidenced by the number and quality of posts published on the social network, Twitter, and dedicated to the integration and assimilation of migrants. We can say that the majority of messages devoted to the issues of attitudes toward migrants are intolerant and appeal to the solution of domestic problems of citizens and touch on criticism of the government regarding the policy being implemented in respect to French citizens themselves and to migrants as well. To declare such a position, users often use reference links to official sources and turn to officials, such as the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron.

Thus, the data analysis reveals that negative attitudes expressed online may contribute to a social climate that condones racism and xenophobia.

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