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EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to bring to your attention an academic journal aimed at introducing well-renowned scholars and specialists to the best of their Russian colleagues' scientific papers.

Research done by Russian scholars has long remained largely unknown to the international community. Rather than the language barrier, this was due to the legacy of the ways and the self-isolation of the Soviet Academia. With a new wave of talented researchers, contemporary Russian science is undergoing a rapid transformation, and we at the Safe Internet League would like to contribute to advancing and promoting their research.

To this purpose we are presenting a choice selection of scholarly papers by Russian authors, translated into English, published, and sent to the most renowned and reputable international scholars according to SSRN (Social Science Research Network) Author Rank.

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THE THEORY OF FINANCE: A NOVEL FINANCE MODEL BEING FORMED ON THE INTERNET

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Abstract. The present paper argues that the present Internet conditions favour an entirely new finance model. Understood to soon supplement the existing ones (classical finance, corporate finance, and Islamic finance), it is argued that the new model will be defined by the destructive effect it is to have on the contemporary financial infrastructure of most countries, and the advent of the 'future money value exceeds its present one' principle.
Keywords: theory, finance, model, new, development, future, Internet.

1. Introduction

The present paper aims to determine the most likely path to be taken by global finance that is now exposed to the rapid expansion of the Internet as a new sector of public and economic life. The original hypothesis underpinning its work argues that a novel finance model is being formed on the Internet, an Internet finance model.

The structure of finance is generally recognised to include three fundamentally different models according to which finances are organised: classical finance, corporate finance, and Islamic finance (see Table 1). The latter, it should be noted, ought to have been given a different term, since, theoretically, there could be other models of religious finance (as a more fitting general term), i.e. Judaic and Christian (based on Torah and the Bible, respectively). Despite the fact that only the latter developed into a functioning model (giving its name to the general principle of finance conducted in accordance with religious prescriptions and prohibitions), potential new Judaic, Christian, and other types of finance, if they, too, come into practice, would call for the more general term to be adopted.

The differences between the three models boil down to the following fundamentals. The classical finance model, which came about when money first began to be issued, regards its value as unaltered by the passage of time – that is, the value of a hundred dollars today is equal to the value of a hundred dollars due to be collected in a year's time.

The corporate finance model, which developed during financial markets boom, regards money as losing its value with the passage of time.

Finally, the Islamic finance model, which came about with the rapid rise of Islamic economies, prohibits interest on credit as one of its core principles, setting it apart from the other two models.

Still, the three models are all united by their underlying assumption that there is a single issuing centre (a central bank) and a strict state control over finances, so it is possible to say that these three models constitute a more general centralised finance model.

Table 1. Key features of finance models.

№№	Parameters	Existing models			New model of finance: Internet finance
		Classical finance	Corporate finance	Islamic finance	
1.	Origin	Money being first issued	Development of financial markets	Rise of Islamic economies	1. Independent access to the Internet 2. Independent issuing of money
2.	Single issuing centre	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3.	State regulation of finances	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
4.	Interest credit	Yes	Yes	No	Both possible
5.	Future value of money	Unchanged	Lower	Unchanged	Greater
6.	Aim of running a business	Maximising profit	Maximising capital value	Maximising the capital of an 'immortal soul'*	Maximising personal freedom of action (supposedly)
7.	Criteria of good business performance	Income exceeds expenses	Income exceeds capital maintenance costs	Prosperity increased within limits defined by religion	N/A

* The term (suggested by the author of the present paper), though not strictly academic, refers to the aim of a Muslim businessman's activities, attempting to maximise family and public wealth while strictly observing the numerous religious prescriptions and prohibitions.

It should be noted that in each case a new model only comes about at the time of a sudden boom in one of the spheres of a society's economic or political life. The historic rapid growth of financial markets brought about such developments as investment alternatives, giving, as a result, new meaning to the purpose of business-making (maximising one's profit). The sudden rise of Islamic economies made Muslim governments and businessmen ponder the correct (in religious terms) ways of investing their savings.

It is, therefore, logical to wonder what novel financial developments might be brought about by the explosive growth of the Internet[1] and its phenomena? The hypothesis that prompted the present study was a natural result of trying to find an answer to that question.

2. Prior studies

The search for other papers on the subject, conducted at the Social Science Research Network website (ssrn.com) by using the keywords 'Internet finance', yielded a total of 6 articles, which, given that a search for 'finance' and 'Internet' presented 19 261 and 10 022 articles, respectively, is very little.

The only article coming close enough to dealing with the present paper's subject matter (Ping, Chuanwei, 2013) argues that Internet technologies such as mobile transfers, social networking sites, Internet search engines, and cloud computing will bring about a paradigm shift in the financial sector, ushering in a new mode of financial activities which the paper calls 'Internet finance'. The paper features a model of how resources might be distributed in these new circumstances. Unfortunately, while pursuing the right avenue of research, its choice of online financial instruments to be analysed was limited to mobile transfers only, just one of the many services found online.

The second article (Best, 2005), though tagged as exploring 'Internet finance', only dealt with causes of the dotcom bubble and the fallout of its collapse in early 2000s. The remaining three articles (Hasen, 2012; Brusoe,

1 In 2014 the Russian sector of the Internet grew by 30%; http://www.interfax.ru/russia/416717

2010; Hasen, 2008) analysed the way in which the Internet influences the US laws on campaign finances and the new way of financing political campaigns.

In addition to that, a search of the Russian-language eLIBRARY.RU Online academic library was conducted using the relevant Russian keywords for 'Internet' and 'finance', yielding 6 articles, which, as was the case with ssrn.com, is very little, given that the number of papers dealing with 'finance' and 'Internet' was 19 261 and 28 698 articles, respectively. For the record, attempts to refine the search by adding keywords like 'theory' or 'model' gave no articles at all.

Of the papers mentioned, only three were at least partially relevant to the present paper's subject matter. The first of these (Morozova, 2014) advocated increasing election turnout by allowing Russian expats to cast their votes online.

The second one (Valent, 2010) analysed the results of an online poll entitled Do you endorse voluntary certification (including that of online services)? The answer, apparently, was yes.

And the last one (Vyrkovskiy, Makeyenko, 2012) predicted that online newspaper editions would soon cease to generate enough revenue to run as a standalone business or to justify abandoning paper editions.

It should also be said that there are great many papers describing the goods and services to be brought about by new technologies[1]. However, while visualising future developments in the quality of life, they offer no help in understanding possible change in the relationship between individuals and businesses.

Summing up their conclusions, one can say that, while not addressing the theoretical new model of finance developed with the help of the Internet, they, nevertheless, recognise the fact that it is already offering alternatives to traditional services, which will sooner or later bring about a qualitative shift.

3. Methodology

Whether the original hypothesis is, indeed, plausible will be established by analysing the current state of affairs, with the Internet already steadily replacing offline financial services with online equivalents, and the practical impact of some of the ambitious Internet projects to be realised.

4. Current state of affairs

Already there is a whole set of online financial services that had traditionally been the monopoly of banks and financial institutions. Here are five of the most substantial ones.

Firstly, an individual can obtain digital currency (virtual money like Bitcoin or Litecoin), being issued in a decentralised manner, its purchasing power determined solely by the balance of supply and demand – in essence, one of the most important functions of a central bank.

Secondly, digital payment systems allow individuals not only to transfer funds to third persons online, but also to manage their accounts, make payments, and exchange currency – in effect, acting as non-banking financial companies.

Thirdly, an individual can make use of P2P (peer-to-peer) microfinance platforms where credit users and creditors are able to meet and transact deals regardless of their place of residence and other conditions. A deal can involve sums of up to several thousand dollars, usually for a couple of months only – an alternative to microfinance organisations.

Fourthly, there is the phenomenon of crowd funding, a service helping individuals to raise funds with an unlimited number of people for solving a particular task or implementing an investment programme. The availability of such a service chips away from the client base of commercial banks and financial companies.

Finnaly, there are shared economy platforms offering shared use of individuals' property, resources, time, and skills, turning them into 'micro-entrepreneurs'. Some estimates claim the shared economy projects are

1 The ultimate presentation of which could, arguably, be found at http://www.futuretimeline.net/

providing part-time employment for 10 million individuals worldwide[1], that is, providing citizens with jobs – in effect, replacing the state.

All of this paves the way for entirely virtual commercial banks – the first of which was, indeed, established in China on January 5, 2015[2]. The bank conducts its business 100% online by making use of face recognition technologies.

Also noteworthy are other Internet projects such as online voting systems that in the distant future have the potential to directly compete with national parliaments. For example, a number of governments running participatory budgeting schemes determine spending priorities for parts of their budgets through online voting[3].

In addition, there are no technical barriers for projects like, for example, a virtual interbank lending market that could bring together short-term liquidity of most international banks, or a virtual Forex exchange market that could incorporate all the Forex markets worldwide. Moreover, there are no technical barriers to creating virtual stock markets capable of issuing IPOs.

All of the above signals that there already is a substantial opportunity on the Internet for replacing services currently being provided by offline financial institutions.

5. Ambitious near-term Internet projects

There are currently five known major projects that have the potential to transform user interaction, including financial interactions, on the Internet.

The first is the project to provide every person with free Internet access anywhere in the world. Facebook and Google[4] are known to be planning to use high-altitude balloons and unallocated parts of radio spectrum for that purpose. Also, SpaceX is known to be planning to launch some 700 telecom satellites[5] capable of providing free Wi-Fi access anywhere on the planet.

Secondly, there are projects to move Internet servers of some companies to airplanes and ships located in international waters[6] This can potentially further develop into moving servers to the Earth's orbit.

Thirdly, Internet giants are planning to issue digital currency.

Fourthly, there are projects to construct storage superfacilities capable of storing data on every online activity forever.

The fifth is the push to create a quantum computer, a development that will make encryption obsolete (at least for those not armed with a quantum computer themselves).

Also noteworthy are projects to create automated voice recognition, replace mobile with IP telecom, and the wide availability of cheap quality online education opportunities.

Taken together, these existing projects and those to be soon realised ought to generate a seismic shift in the area of services.

6. Consequences of further Internet development

6.1. The advent of free and open Internet access will mean that consumers, aiming to secure their finances, but also their anonymity and privacy, will prefer free orbital Wi-Fi to paid domestic landlines. Aiming to secure their independence and freedom from state control, website owners would likewise opt to host their sites

1 http://ilenta.com/news/internet/news_5216.html

2 http://www.vestifinance.ru/articles/51616

3 http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/

4 http://lenta.ru/news/2014/09/06/facebook/

5 http://top.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/08/11/2014/545e174bcbb20f49da3e7cbd#xtor=AL-[internal_traffic]--[rbc.ru]-[main_body]-[item_8]

6 http://www.rg.ru/2012/03/20/torrent-anons.html

on Internet servers located outside any national jurisdictions. One can then expect that, in all probability, most landline (and, eventually wireless) Internet access providers and datacentre owners will then go out of business, and state authorities will lose their control over online communications and website content. In particular, law enforcement agencies will no longer be able to intercept communications and gather evidence, or block websites hosting illegal materials. The official Russian Internet blacklist will become obsolete.

In a situation where a computer signal gets sent via Wi-Fi directly to a geostationary satellite above, and then, through other satellites, to a server barge drifting in the Pacific, most states will no longer have any instruments or means whatsoever to control their citizens' communications. Consequently, a wide range of activists, from volunteers and opposition politicians to extremists, terrorists, drug dealers and paedophiles, will set out to undermine the state and the society with impunity.

6.2. Against the backdrop of a significant lapse in state control of the Internet, there will be additional incentive to use virtual currencies as a further step towards greater personal freedom on the Internet. Incidentally, this notion of the Internet as an ungoverned self-regulated space has a lot of traction with a certain portion of Internet users.

Virtual currency will become especially popular with small and medium-sized business, as well as private individuals. If technology enables transactions to happen immediately (instead of over a period of 10 minutes, as is currently the case with Bitcoin), then, given the decreased state control, using currencies like Bitcoin will become a reliable and secure means of reducing one's tax base. This will cause the entire turnover, previously in national currencies, to be redirected online.

Increased virtual currency use will result in decreased velocity of national currencies. This, perhaps, is best illustrated by a simple example. Imagine an economy where there are two manufacturers: a manufacturer Z making food products and a manufacturer S making clothing. Over a year Z purchases 100 roubles worth of clothing, while S purchases the same 100 roubles worth of food. With a money supply of 50 roubles, the velocity of money would amount to 4.0 ((100+100)/50). Once other means of paying for goods and services, i.e. Bitcoin, become available, the amount of purchases in terms of goods will remain the same, while the rouble turnover will drop to a level that ensures zero income: Z and S would purchase, say, US dollars, convert them into bitcoins, and use the latter to conduct their payments. And their counterparties, having purchased the roubles, would eventually put them up for sale, further affecting the rouble's exchange rate. It is, in all probability, the central bank that would be forced to buy them back, irretrievably spending its gold and foreign exchange reserves. Let us suppose the resulting rouble turnover falls down to 100 roubles, with a velocity of 2.0. It will mean that all the unused rouble stock will end up on the central bank's balance sheets as a dead weight. Moreover, the unofficial and the criminal sectors of the economy will also switch to online currencies, further decreasing the demand for roubles.

In such a situation the central bank has two main options: either to write down part of the rouble stock or, which seem more probable, to offer credit at a high enough negative interest rate. One should remember that in classical and Islamic finance models the value of money doesn't change over time, while corporate finance regards 100 roubles today as worth more than the same 100 roubles due to be collected in a year's time. However, the situation described above, while making the value of money also variable, it turns it into the exact opposite to that of the corporate finance: a 100 roubles due to be collected in a year's time would worth more than the same 100 roubles invested (deposited) today.

Ultimately, the spread of online currencies means that some countries will find their national currencies facing rival currencies, something human history has never witnessed before, and central banks will have to compete hard for individuals and businesses to use their particular currency, arguing its security and stability of exchange rate. It would require not business but policy changes aimed at increasing efficiency of governmental bodies, the legality of power transition and its continuity – the essential factors in boosting confidence in a currency.

One can also surmise that smaller countries with relatively small money supply and gold and foreign exchange reserves will in effect lose their national currencies altogether, because it might happen so that to satisfy domestic needs it suffices to conduct all the transactions in a virtual currency like bitcoins.

A substantial budget deficit, brought about by a fall in tax revenues, will become a reality. A fall in revenues means cuts in spending, the pain of which a society will feel all too well. Still, it is conceivable that Internet users would themselves start raising funds (in bitcoins, for example) necessary to fulfil certain statutory goals of publicly owned institutions (schools, hospitals, maternity centres, museums, etc.). All in all, one can expect a change in budget spending regarding both its targets and the amounts spent. For countries with a large welfare budget, this is bad news promising mounting social tension.

And should the central bank, instead of writing off excess stock of money or offering it as cheap credit, choose to lend to the state to cover the deficit left by falling revenues, this will result in rising prices, inflation, and a further drop in the national currency's exchange rate.

6.3. Business requires stability. If digital currencies manage to deliver it, there will be a new, very powerful impulse to globalisation. The fact that national segments of the Internet cannot technically isolate themselves from the rest of the network will only help that. Storage superfacilities capable of storing data on every online activity forever will make it possible to create detailed profiles of every Internet user regardless of their nationality;. This will be in demand among businesses wishing to develop marketing strategies and politicians looking for political strategies. Great precision in forecasting a client's reaction to this or that marketing move would help substantially improve sales performance and properly diversify sales across different regions. In addition, individual marketing strategies aimed at selling goods to a particular customer known to the retailer by their IP address becomes a real prospect.

However, stability can be compromised with the arrival of a quantum computer capable of paralysing any online currency platform, breaching security mechanisms of any bank, exchange, or tax haven, identifying personal data of any individual, and decrypting classified data of any nation state. There will obviously no longer be any bank secrets (from governments). An Internet user armed with a quantum computer will essentially make himself or herself a super-administrator over the whole Internet. That would require them to assume a number of obligations aimed at placating the rest of the users. A government possessing a quantum computer will obviously be able to ensure its currency's future.

Despite the threat posed by supercomputers, the prospects for Internet development are huge indeed. With universal worldwide access, one can expect IP telecom to replace mobile phones and, consequently, mobile carriers to go bankrupt. Other developments might include mass access to cheap quality education marketed by top international universities, anonymous Internet browsing (not having to disclose one's personal data), and logging into websites via voice and face recognition. All of the above will result in an upsurge in Internet user base and the amount of time spent online.

7. Conclusions

Active development of the Internet in the very near future is likely to result in:

1. A revision of the concept of 'national sovereignty': the state losing control over its citizens' activities on the Internet, the citizens abandoning national currencies, unfettered mass tax avoidance calling into question the very existence of many of the nation states. Expect national boundaries to get redrawn worldwide.
2. The formation of a new model of finance characterised by decentralised emission of money, the dying out of most national currencies, decreased budget spending partially replaced by private funding, and the new investment paradigm of 'money due to be collected in the future value more than those currently in possession'.
3. New financial conundrums, including how to control the money stock and liquidity in the banking system in the new circumstances, how to collect taxes and set the budget, how to evaluate risk and profitability of investment.

Given the fact that national segments of the Internet cannot technically be isolated from the rest of the network, some states will try to effect countermeasures like forcing users to go online under real names (entering ID details), making it more difficult to make purchases online by limiting what shipments can cross their physical borders, setting up Wi-Fi jamming stations, criminalising online currency, and, as the last

resort, sinking server-basing ships and shooting down satellites. Still, these measures might fall short of stamping out the Internet's potential for development which is driven by demand from billions of citizens of the world. Therefore, it seems more expedient to start preparing for the inevitable and learn to live in the new circumstances.

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GENDER IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE BEHAVIOUR OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING INTERNET USERS (INTERNET CHAT ROOM AND BLOG USERS)

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Abstract: The present paper lists gender-specific speech markers employed by English-speaking Internet chat room and blog users, as observed in 2 500 contextualised situations. Masking one's gender identity is found to be achieved by employing opposite gender-specific linguistic means.
Keywords: Internet-mediated communication, online linguistic identity, gender, gender-specific speech markers, gender identity masking.

1. Introduction

Online interaction is a form of indirect communication distanced and mediated by a digital network that is itself creating a special kind of environment for speech generation and reception and text exchange. Devoid of eye contact, users participate in online communication (and chat room and blog communication in particular) only through constructed identities. It is possible to create this kind of Internet identity by self-presentation, but the only material means of self-presentation (or, rather, self-expression) available on the Internet is one's name – username – and language behaviour.

Nevertheless, given the peculiar nature of the online environment, besides genuine self-presenting and creatively constructing one's online image, the Internet offers a chance of adopting an entirely new social image distinct from the original one, including of one's gender identity. This prompted the present paper to analyse the most efficient components of gender self-presentation employed by English-speaking chat room and blog users and to find the best way of masking the gender of online linguistic identities in English-language online chat rooms and blogs. The importance of studying the issue of potential reimagining of one's identity and decoding their gender identity is backed by the acute need for ensuring that the Internet remains a space of stability and tolerance.

2. Prior studies

There are numerous works by linguists both in Russia and internationally on gender-marked language behaviour in English. However, the analysis of the papers reveals that there were no prior attempts at conducting a comprehensive study and classification of gender-marked features of online communication used in English-language chat rooms and blogs in particular.

Here are some of the more notable works in more detail.

The most comprehensive study of the differences between the masculine and the feminine style of social interaction is J. Holmes' Women's Talk: The Question of Sociolinguistic Universals (1993). Differentiating between the stylistic features, the study notes that men and women differ in their use of language: women pay more attention to emotional (interpersonal) aspects of communication, more often than men they employ linguistic forms that underline solidarity, communicate in a way that supports and bolsters solidarity; men, on the contrary, aim to support and bolster their own power and status (especially in official situations); women employ standard forms more often than men of the same social strata [Holmes, 1993].

Also dealing with male and female styles of communication are D. Tannen's You Just Don't Understand:

Women and Men in Conversation (1990), and The relativity of linguistic strategies; rethinking power and solidarity in gender and dominance (1994). These works argue that women value sympathy and support and interact to share their concerns and to find assistance, while men prefer to be experts, problem-solvers [Tannen 1990, 1994].

The respective authors, therefore, draw general conclusions that male and female communication differs in aims (Holmes) and style (Tannen) without addressing the use of particular linguistic means or taking into account the specific nature of online discourse.

Analysing male and female language behaviour online is S.C. Herring's Gender differences in CMC: Findings and implications (2000). The study finds no essential difference between gender manifestation in real-world and online communications, noting the identical use of empty phrases, swear words, expressions of gratitude or apologies, rudeness or politeness, and the possibility of expressing laughter in online interaction (Herring, 2000). Similar to the above, it does not find online communication to feature gender-specific speech markers.

The present paper believes that attempts to draw conclusions about the means, which an Internet communicant can use to construct their online gender identity and the ways one can be ascertained by merely analysing the aim of male and female communication or its stylistic features, while ignoring the inherent lexical and grammatical peculiarities, are essentially deficient.

Dealing with lexical, syntactical, stylistic, morphological, and semantic features or feminine and masculine speech behaviour are Differentiation in Male and Female Speech Styles (O. Goroshko, 1999), and Gender Differences in Language Use: An Analysis of 14,000 Text Samples (M.L. Newman, C.J. Groom, L.D. Handelman, J.W. Pennebaker, 2008). Both studies use experimental data (obtained though observing college students) to reveal features of male and female written and oral speech. However, neither analysed English-language online chat rooms or blogs as specific situations or took into account the peculiarities of online interaction.

3. The study

The data used in this study comprised a selection of 2 500 complete male and female linguistic situations taken from English-language online chat rooms and blogs. The aim was to determine characterological lexical, syntactical, stylistic, morphological, semantic, phonetic and graphic differences between feminine and masculine verbal behaviour in chat room and blog interactions.

Male and female blog and chat room situations were further analysed with regard to their vocabulary structure (use of 'buzzwords', neologisms, invectives, interjections, adjectives (evaluative, quantitative or parametric), adverbs, personal pronouns (especially the first person singular), parentheses, various types of questions, semantic hyperbolae, and semantically depleted words), syntactic structure (preference for co-ordination or subordination, active or passive voice, gerund, complex object, or ellipsis), graphical presentation (acronyms or other types of abbreviation, typeface highlighting, visual distortion or phoneticization of spelling).

The resulting peculiarities were matched into two major groups – male and female online speech peculiarities. These were further characterised by the nature of their use in chat rooms and blogs. Some were found not to be 100% transferrable from blog into chat room usage, as illustrated in Table 1 (See Appendices).

Incomplete correlation between male/female markers used in chat room and blog examples indicates that the nature of gender identity manifestation online is influenced by the specific situation and the environment of the communicative act itself.

To corroborate the findings and establish possible ways of masking one's gender identity, a survey was conducted among English-language chat room and blog users. The aim of the survey was to confirm or to refute the findings, with a positive result meaning the latter are true, and that it is possible to mask one's gender identity online by using opposite gender-specific speech markers.

The respondents were selected from among the frequenters of www.spinchat.com and chat.lycos.co.uk (native English speakers aged 18 to 57 with a university degree or undergratuote students). The number of individuals who duly filled out the questionnaire and answered the survey questions was 30: 12 men and 18 women. The data was continuously sampled from semantically complete linguistic situations taken from Internet

chat rooms and blogs such as http://laughteriscatching.com, http://amptoons.com, http://sharideth.com, http://www.artofmanliness.com, http://number-thirty.livejournal.com, www.chatplace.org, http://mashable.com, http://www.spinchat.com, https://blogs.njit.edu, http://discussion.theguardian.com, http://4simpsons.wordpress.com, http://chat.lycos.co.uk, http://www.boscouk.blogspot.com, http://blog.jugglingfrogs.com, http://grownandflown.com, http://perezhilton.com, http://www.britishbeautyblogger.com, http://www.disputingblog.com, http://www.dirjournal.com, http://www.fourhourworkweek.com etc.

Selecting the samples, analysing them, generalising the findings, preparing the questionnaire, conducting the test survey and arranging its results took 8 months (September 2013 to April 2014).

The interviewees were tasked with establishing the gender identity of communicators within the given situations, while arguing their case by indicating the specific features they believed to be characteristic of feminine or masculine behaviour. The results are presented in Figure 1 (see Appendices).

The comparison the of the original findings with a test survey carried out among non-specialist English speakers confirmed the presence of male and female speech markers in online chat room and blog interactions found by the original study. Notably, female interviewees more easily and reliably detected male speech markers, while male respondents were more consistent in noticing female markers. The phenomenon was observable throughout the study and is itself a proof of marked difference between masculine and feminine speech behaviour.

4. Conclusions

1. Gender identity of English-language chat room and blog users can indeed be established from their speech behaviour. In a particular situation, the specific lexical, syntactic, stylistic, morphological, semantic, phonetic and graphical features listed in Table 1 (see Appendices), as well as the general style of discourse, can act as markers that help interpret an individual's gender identity.
2. The analysis of the language characteristic of a particular gender revealed that blog situations feature more gender-specific markers than chat rooms ones. This led to the conclusion that gender manifestation by communicators, as well as their online gender identity itself, is situational. This is most striking in blogs featuring input from male and female users of equal educational level which subject matter creates a level playing field while offering more time for writing posts or comments than synchronous chats.
3. Results of a text survey hint at possible ways of masking one's gender identity by employing the aforementioned markers characteristic of opposite gender communicators.

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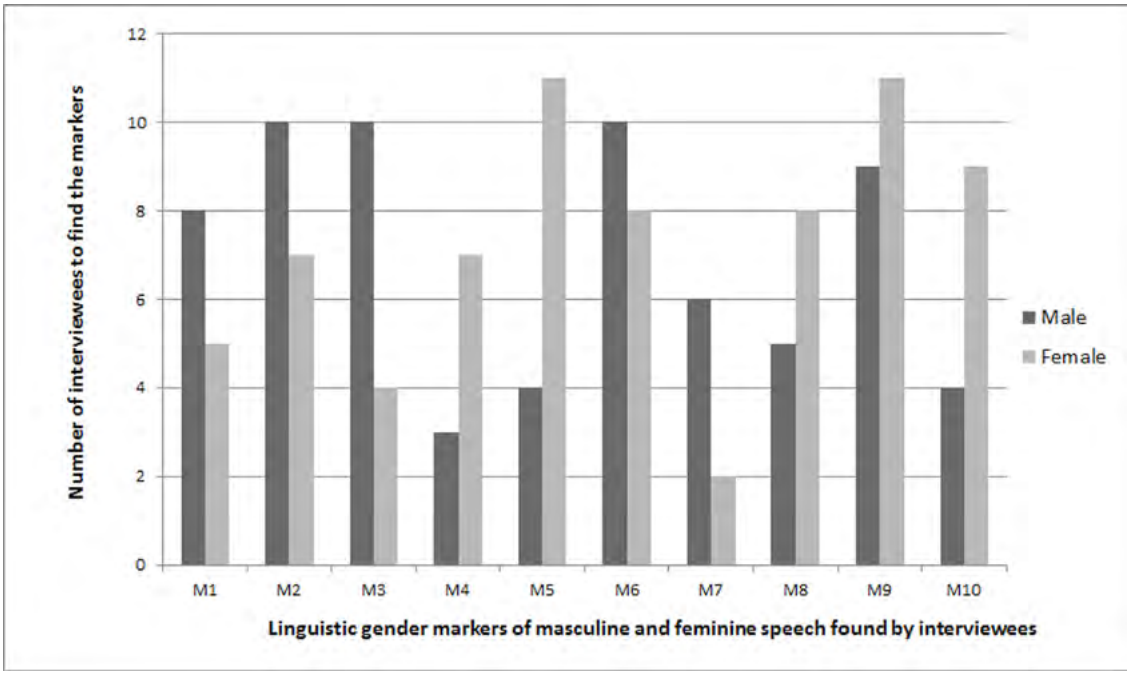
6. Appendices

Table 1. Peculiarities of speech characteristic of masculine and feminine language identities present in English-language chat room and blog use, as established by the study

	Peculiarities of speech in chat room usage	Peculiarities of speech in blog usage
Feminine language identity	– Expressions I mean, I think, Sort of, Well, Just, I suppose, You see, You know. – Constructions I wonder if, It seems to me, My impression is, I wouldn't mind. – Gerund. – Polite expressions, words of apology, requests (Excuse me, I do apologize, I'm sorry). – Metaphors, fixed phrases. – Intensifier words with partially lost meaning facilitating exaggeration: awfully pretty, awfully jolly, terribly nice, terribly tired. – Semantic hyperbolae. – Ellipsis. – Graphical distortion of text (no1, 4ever, heLLooOooOoo, booooring).	– Adverbs ending in –ly. – Modal words (clearly, obviously, apparently, certainly, surely, well, only, simply). – Evaluative adjectives. – Metaphors, fixed phrases. – Expressions I mean, I think, Sort of, Well, Just, I suppose, You see, You know. – Gerund. – Constructions I wonder if, It seems to me, My impression is, I wouldn't mind. – Intensifier words with partially lost meaning facilitating exaggeration: awfully pretty, awfully jolly, terribly nice, terribly tired. – Passive voice. – Semantic hyperbolae. – Ellipsis. – Tag questions, interrogatory constructions used to urge the interlocutor without actually using the imperative. – Polite expressions, words of apology, requests (Excuse me, I do apologize, I'm sorry).
Masculine language identity	– Appeal to other people's views. – Invectives, slang words. – Rhetorical questions. – Textual cohesion. – Lack of figural expressions. – Contractions (dunno, gotta, kinda, hafta).	– Active voice. – Appeal to other people's views. – Quantitative or parametric adjectives (huge, big, low, quick). – Invectives, slang words. – Imperative. – Rhetorical questions. – Textual cohesion. – Lack of figural expressions.

Figure 1. Basic criteria used by male and female interviewees to assess gender identity of communicators in given English-language chat room and blog situations



- M1 – evaluative adjectives;
- M2 – polite apologies;
- M3 – graphical distortions, phonetisization;
- M4 – quotes;
- M5 – abbreviations;
- M6 – description of one's feelings and emotions;
- M7 – propensity for unsolicited advice;
- M8 – hyperbolae, metaphors as embellishment;
- M9 – invectives, slang words;
- M10 – orders.

METHODOLOGY FOR CONDUCTING FOCUSED INTERVIEW ONLINE: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract. The term 'online focused interview' (or focus group) is commonly understood to refer to, primarily, marketing research or small-scale group analyses of online conference users. The potential scope for applying this empirical sociology technique, however, is much wider, including both basic and applied research. Making use of the Internet to organise a focused interview makes conducting a research a substantially less complex procedure, without affecting its quality or reliability of findings. If adapted to modern information technologies, this technique offers wider and more in-depth ways of applying the focus group method to labour and HR management, psychology, sociology, and marketing. The present paper provides a step-by-step analysis of the online focused interview technique through a comprehensive case study of a pilot sociological study conducted on the Internet.
Keywords: IT, communication, social studies, focused interview (focus group), opinion, quality, service, social services

1. Introduction

Academic studies of social processes and phenomena, and social studies in particular, aim to reflect and interpret important aspects of the real world, and, therefore, must provide relevant data that meets all the criteria of the modern age, one of which is following the latest technological advances.

As P.A.Sorokin's classical definition puts it, 'The subject matter of sociology is, on the one hand, the human interaction, and, on the other hand, the phenomena arising therefrom'[1]. Significantly, the kinds of relationships and phenomena that occur among individuals nowadays, and the processes arising from them, have shifted into a new, online plane. Cyberspace creates new forms of personal relationships and communication flow, providing greater opportunities for social interaction.

The progress in digital technologies helps to streamline the process of information sharing. In turn, a significant portion of methods employed in social research relies on analysing the process of sharing a particular kind of information: by interacting with the object of the study (the respondent), the subject (the researcher) receives information regarding a certain opinion.

Given the previously stated requirement of following the latest technological advances, the present research aims at facilitating adaptation of social research methods to modern information technologies by developing efficient methodology of their application. One such method whose scope of application can benefit from this specialised methodology is the focused interview (focus group).

2. Prior studies

Systematic application of focus groups was pioneered and described by Merton, Fiske and Kendall, who researched the effect of watching propaganda films on groups of interest. The method was originally described as follows:

1. The persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a particular situation;

1 Сорокин П.А. Система социологии / П.А. Сорокин. – М. : Эксмо, 1993. Т. 1. С. 57.

2. To understand it more fully, the situation has been provisionally analysed by the social scientist. Through this analysis he has arrived at a set of hypotheses, to be tested at the data collection and analysis stage;
3. The social scientist develops an interview guide providing criteria of relevance for the data to be obtained;
4. The interview is focused on the subjective experiences of persons exposed to the pre-analysed situation, recalling what Merton termed 'retrospective introspection' or 'retrospection'[1].

Nowadays the focus group became a sort of group discussion technique based around the participants formulating, substantiating, and arguing their opinions, thus providing the moderator, who put the original questions to them, with their reactions, as well as sharing information with each other. An important condition of setting up and running a focus group is that there must be no previous social contact between the participants.

Thus, the focus group is a qualitative social research method allowing one to

- Study the manner in which an object is perceived by individuals representing different socio-demographic groups;
- Develop original scientific ideas and concepts;
- Observe the trends in stranger interaction;
- Note the degree to which interviewees are able to independently describe their intrinsic motives.

'The focus group is a sociological interview based on using real group dynamics in artificially created groups to reveal the peculiarities of a certain social group's perception of an object of research.'[2]

Some of the erroneous principles accounting for focusing on the wrong things in an interview, analysed by Donahue, include: 'Focusing on the source of information: the tendency of some interviewees to judge the source, not the information itself.' The focus group is aimed at discussing a topic, which should make its participants to not only argue, but also develop their opinions through discussion and criticism.

The methods of conducting social studies are under active development, drawing on modern technological and informational capabilities. Currently, the professionals, both practicing and academic, single out various types of online focus groups and other related qualitative social study techniques. Here are some of their main variants:

The online chatroom-based focus group (chat). Interviewees can speak out simultaneously; the discussion is automatically logged and is readily available to the researcher in textual form.

The online conference-based focus group (forum). 'Unlike in a chat, the forum interview means each participant periodically, depending on their availability, visits the study webpage and answers the questions at the time of their choosing (usually 1-2 times per day depending on the length of the project and the number of questions per day). A forum interview usually takes 3 to 5 days (or longer, depending on the object of the study) during which the participants answer the questions, perform tasks, etc. The number of participants can reach 20 to 30. Therefore a single online forum interview can replace 3 or 4 offline focus groups. The format enables creating sub-groups of participants and assigning them separate tasks.'[3]

Online blogs are currently particularly popular with researchers in marketing and commerce (consumer anthropology). As described by a team of scientists under I. Sinyayeva, the technique means that 'each participant, apart from answering the moderator's questions, is running an individual blog (to which only them and the moderator have access), writing down their thoughts on the subject (tasks) of the study. If asked by the moderator, they can also record events from their private lives related to the subject. Such blogs can be part of the forum, or constitute a separate project.'[4]

The individual online interview (expert poll, in-depth interview). A private real-time discussion with the moderator provides comfortable psychological environment for the respondent, facilitating more frank and

1 Мертон Р., Фиске М., Кендалл П. Фокусированное интервью: Пер. с англ. / Под ред. Белановского С. А. – М. : Институт Молодежи, 1991. – С. 12.

2 Дмитриева Е. В. Фокус-группы в маркетинге и социологии / Е. В. Дмитриева. – М. : Центр, 1998. – С. 56.

3 Батыгин Г. С. Лекции по методологии социологических исследований / Г. С. Батыгин. – М. : РУДН, 2008. – С. 168.

4 Маркетинг в коммерции: учебник: для студентов / И. М. Синяева, С. В. Земляк, В. В. Синяев. – Москва. : Дашков и К°, 2011. – 543 с.

in-depth answers.

Despite the variety of techniques for conducting studies using modern technologies, there are a number of generalised pitfalls. In particular, the 'Online research and social study techniques. New horizons, new (and the not so new) difficulties' by Devyatko analyses 'the problem of low reliability of Internet-mediated interviewee input due to lack of direct contact between the researcher and the informant.'[1]

The widely used online focus group techniques cited above diverge greatly from the traditional method in that

- There is no moderator;
- The information is text-only;
- There is no non-verbal information flow.

The proposed novel procedure for conducting online focus groups would not only bring the researcher as close as possible to the benchmark of the traditional focus group, but also decrease the risk of producing false information.

3. Methodology

To understand the main aspects of organising and conducting an online focused interview, one has to appreciate the technicalities of trying to apply the method, as illustrated by the results of a specific social study.

Providing a testing ground for the new method, the study in question deals with the issue of quality of services. Given the fact that serving customer interests is the primary goal of their operation, public opinion is an important factor in developing criteria for the performance of social services providers. Therefore, to test the methodology, a study must analyse how customers asses the quality of social services provided to them.

Describing the main aspects of setting up a focused interview must include details of all components of its organisation.

Form of interaction: the information space of a social network. This is the major novel feature of the method. A focus group must consist of strangers who nevertheless share a common attribute.

Depending on the goal of the study and the relevant common characteristic, the researcher builds a specific framework of informants. For an interview to be representative, in most cases it is enough for the sample group to come from the population of a community or a municipality broken down into a number of spatially proximate communities. Yet, many studies require the original population to encompass a wide enough geographical region. In such cases a focus group becomes too labour intensive to set up and too expensive to run.

Present-day realities offer a way of minimising possible expenditure on organising a focused interview by using modern information technologies. The Internet is full of various kinds of content and functions. Skype, in particular, is an online and client software product that allows text, voice, and video communication between users. It also allows one to make conference calls offering simultaneous verbal and non-verbal contact between several users at once.

This makes using focus groups in certain kinds of spatially challenging social studies no longer a problem.

The specific form of interaction determines other aspects of organising a focused interview, like the number of participants in a focus group, eight: the optimal number of informants under the given conditions. A small enough group allows the discussion to run with minimal order and organisation issues.

The territorial attribute defining the spread of the original population, a single region: in a region, the social services framework is run by single administrative body of the government, a ministry. Consequently, all social security providers in a region are working according to a common set of principles.

1 Шашкин А.В., Девятко И.Ф., Давыдов С.Г. Онлайн исследования в России 2.0. / Сборник статей под ред. Шашкина А.В., Девятко И.Ф., Давыдова С.Г. – М. : РИЦ «Северо-Восток», 2010. – С. 21-32.

The group is homogenous; it consists of users of social services rendered by a provider. For maximum reliability of information, the group must include users of all types of standard social service providers available in the region.

The number of discussion groups is two. The original population, that is, the number of citizens in receipt of services through social security providers is 5 000, while the number of standard social services providers (one per each type, as defined by the GOST R 52880–2007. Social security. Types of social security organisations servicing senior and disabled citizens) is 12. Using statistics, informants are chosen to be pairs of users of the Integrated Social Services Centre, Juvenile Social Rehabilitation Centre, Family and Child Assistance Centre, and Multiservice Centre types of social service providers, and a single user per other type of organisation, bringing the total number of participants to 16.

In addition, when choosing informants one must also take account of municipality representation. The number of municipalities is 22, that is, no more than one participant per municipality.

An important element of organising a successful focused interview is choosing the right venue. There are numerous requirements which have to be met in order to provide comfort and usability. However, the method of online focused interview makes such requirements obsolete. The venue of the interview is the cyberspace.

The length of the interview, 90 minutes, is determined by the time, which the discussion of the topic guide questions is expected to take.

The interviewees were chosen from among the customers of an Integrated Social Services Centre, using the following criteria:

- Sex (a focus group needs both male and female participants);
- Age (20 to 60);
- Sociability, level of participation in a discussion;
- Access to Skype;
- Representing the structure of social service providers' user base (senior citizens, disabled persons, family members suffering hardship).

The moderator was a journalist, editor of a periodical on issues of social security and social services. The discussion was also attended by an expert in non-verbal communication, facial expressions, and body language, reading non-verbal information communicated by the participants (another novel feature of the proposed procedure).

The focus group was run on the basis of a topic guide developed for the subject of the study (see Appendix 1). The results were processed using discourse analysis methods.

4. Conducting the study and analysing the results

Conducting the study by setting up an online focus group produced a particular kind of atmosphere for the informants, one in which the contact with them was mediated through cyberspace. Forming the results of the study are the theses concerning the issue of social service providers' quality of service.

Undoubtedly, dealing with the question of social service providers' quality of service first requires defining the category of quality of service itself.

The latter, as understood by the informants, is a system of characteristics enabling one to analyse the outcome of a service rendered, work performed, or goods produced with a view to evaluating it. Moreover, the participants recognise that this concept applies to all spheres of public life, especially to the services sector.

'For me, quality is what enables me to assess something in order to decide if it's OK or not, useful or otherwise, good quality or bad quality.'

According to the interviewees, previously they only encountered the concept of quality of service when accessing private sector service providers, like the hairdresser's, the repair shop, etc. Which, they explained, was due to social services being provided primarily by the state, free of charge. With its vast infrastructure, the state dominates the sector, especially in rural areas. This monopoly means quality is not a factor at all.

Some informants were satisfied with the way they had been served by the centre's specialists, others were indifferent because the nature of their cases was formal and did not require extensive interaction with a specialist. It is worth noting that no interviewee expressed negative personal opinions of any centre specialist they approached.

'I liked the girl that handled my papers. First of all, she smiled as was polite. Secondly, she took me through all the other kinds of benefit payments I did not even mention, and told me not to miss the chance to apply when I once again need assistance. We had a conversation, she even wished me a happy birthday, because it happened to be the day. That was very nice of her.'

'A specialist like any other. Wasn't rude to me, didn't interrupt. What else do you need? Yes, I believe I would like her to service me again.'

The customers viewed quality of service offered by the Integrated Social Services Centre's through both its specialists' personal qualities (politeness, ability to listen, empathy) and through their perception of the result of their applying to them for assistance (what they wanted to achieve by applying). These subjective criteria made the interviewees judge the quality of services rendered to them by the centre's specialists as good. Firstly, the specialists were adhering to standards of professional ethics. Secondly, since most citizens know little of their rights and entitlements, any extra help (apart from the usual processing of benefit payments, tax cuts, subsidies, etc.) is a pleasant surprise for them.

The interviewees emphasised they thought it highly important for social workers to be personally interested in the quality of the services provided by them, as a measure of their performance (especially in welfare services). Nevertheless, some noted that one must carry out their duties regardless of subjective aspects, including specialists' motivation.

The latter view is valid; however, when dealing with the subject of social services one must acknowledge that the conduct of a social worker can have a positive influence on the actions, feelings, self esteem, and the general psychological well-being of the customer – something that cannot be achieved through formal interaction only.

'If a person's committed to his work, he's doing it a lot better, and that makes everyone happier. I'm happier with such a man, feeling a lot better.'

'You can tell if a man's putting his heart into his work – if course, I can tell if a man is interested in helping me, if he's willing to do what it takes, or not.'

Nevertheless, most informants were positive a specialist's quality of service is influenced not by their personal commitment, but by circumstances beyond their control: the kind and the extent of the service offered by the state.

The informants acknowledged their own role in regulating social service providers' quality of service: an organisation must have user feedback. Should they experience any breach of code or wrongdoing from one of the specialists, they ought to report that to people in charge of the organisation, and to other bodies (the judiciary or the relevant Ministry).

'If we're provided the service, naturally we want it to be rendered well, in full, and on time. Our opinion has to count, so that other customers could enjoy good quality of service, too.'

The interviewees also thought it desirable for third parties (above all, the Ministry) to conduct opinion polls among the customers of social services providers. The questionnaire must include questions about possible violations, rudeness, or denial of assistance, and also their expectations regarding specific services.

'I think having opinion polls, with the results going to the authorities, is a good way of monitoring specialists' performance and preventing mistakes.'

Queried what kind of questions they would like to see, had they been asked to assess the performance of Integrated Social Services Centre specialists, the interviewees came up with the following criteria:

- Are there complaints from clients regarding specialists' work?
- Are there incidents of rudeness or carelessness among the specialists?
- Are there incidents of clients unreasonably denied assistance?
- How does the assistance rendered compare with customer expectations (applying for a service, clients must specify the kinds of assistance they expect to receive).

As noted by the informants, in retail and utility sectors, with the myriad of similar businesses offering the same services (enabling customers to choose the one they think best for them), quality of service is key to a business' success.

By contrast, the social services sector (which, apart from social security organisations, includes educational, health, and other service providers) distinctly lacks the kind of choice offered by private sector organisations. Two factors account for this.

One is that social service providers are working to solve problems in the society, not to make a profit. The resulting lack of financial incentive affects the number of potential specialists in that field and their job motivation. Absence of competition from independent service provider organisations not run by the state results in the latter dominating the social services market. And market theory stipulates that lack of competition affects quality of service.

Still, the informants note that, despite the lack of stimulating competition, the quality of services provided by the majority of organisations in the sphere is good. This largely depends on the personalities of the specialists employed in this field. However, the lack of basic legal literacy, which makes most customers (used to having to solve their problems by themselves) pleasantly surprised by any offer of state assistance, is also a factor.

It should be noted that one of the functions of a social service provider is to inform the citizens of the types of assistance on offer; so, with time, legal literacy and awareness of an individual's right to specific kinds of assistance in the society is growing. The next stage of this process is that the citizens will become actively involved in improving the quality of services provided to them.

5. Conclusions

Based on the information gained from the study representing opinions of users of social service providers, the results can be condensed into the following conclusions:

1. At the moment, the majority of specialists using the Internet as an information space are marketing specialists. New tools extending their repertoire are mostly coming from empirical sociology. Nevertheless, one can see that taken as a practical activity, marketing research is aimed at pursuing distinctly commercial, not scientific objectives. It is, therefore, necessary to extend the application of the present method to applied and basic research.
2. Transcribing the material obtained through online focused interviews, that is, informant opinions, one can see that the material is representative and scientific. In particular, it provides comprehensive reliable data that goes far beyond the kind provided by narrow marketing studies.
3. Ensuring the reliability of opinions communicated by the informants taking part in this king of study (as a focus group in particular) are the following factors:
    - There is a plurality of opinions more or less different from each other;
    - Individual participant opinions are extensive and well-argued;
    - The participants draw on individual private/professional experience relevant to the line of the study, the course of the discussion or the conversation.
4. Apart from expressing their opinions on existing phenomena of processes, the informants offered their own solutions to a number of specific issues. Firstly, they offered to fully involve themselves in the process of controlling quality of service. Secondly, the interviewees proposed to enhance official quality of service guidelines with four separate criteria of their own.
5. It is noteworthy that the online study offers both comprehensive results and minimal participant recruitment expenditure. Therefore, the method of online focused interview is not only representative, but also financially viable and cost-effective.

6. Its adaptability and versatility makes the online focus group applicable not only to social studies and marketing research, but also to academic research in business and labour management, psychological testing, etc.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1. The topic guide

The moderator and the expert in non-verbal communication, facial expressions, and body language both introduce themselves and get acquainted with the participants of the interview.

1. We're all constantly hearing about 'quality' nowadays. This concept has permeated nearly every sphere of public life, from engineering and economics to welfare and culture. What do you think 'quality' means?
2. Are you familiar with the notion of 'quality of service'? If so, where did you encounter it? (Should the interviewees not mention social services in their replies, ask them about the quality of social services they are provided to).
3. There are various social services organisations serving you, but all of you are, in one way or another, customers of the Integrated Centre, the primary social services provider. Please tell me if any of you happened to access other social services providers.
4. What kind of assistance did you require?
5. What was your opinion of the specialists handling your case? Should you have to seek further assistance, would you approach the same specialist again?
6. Can you tell me about the quality of the service you were provided with? What, in your opinion, accounted for that level of quality of service?
7. Let us now discuss the Integrated Social Services Centre. Can you please tell me how long you have been a customer of this particular organisation?
8. Where did you learn of its existence? Who recommended it to you?
9. How satisfied are you with the quality of services you are provided with? How do you explain it?
10. Are you happy with the individual specialists handling your issues? Please elaborate.
11. How important, in your opinion, is a specialist's motivation, and how well can you tell if a specialist is personally interested in providing you with quality services?
12. If asked to assess the performance of its specialists, what, in your opinion, could be the criteria one might use to judge the quality of services offered by the Integrated Social Services Centre?
13. What, in your opinion, is the input social service provider clients can have in improving its quality of service? Should they offer to participate in improving the official quality of service guidelines?

Thank you for taking part in this interview!

USING THE BLOGOSPHERE FOR MONITORING SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract. The present paper presents blogosphere analysis as an alternative method of monitoring small and medium enterprise performance in Russian federation subjects. The study, carried out using publicly available online tools, reveals the main challenges facing SMEs in the Siberian Federal District of Russia, with the most widely discussed topics being the tax system and enterprise support programs.
Keywords: monitoring, blogosphere, social networks, small and medium enterprise, federal subject classification.

1. Introduction

The goal of the present study is to set out a method of monitoring small and medium enterprise performance through both statistical (including correlation and cluster analysis) and alternative means (blogosphere analysis). The proposed method is expected to make analysing SME mesoscale performance analysis more effective.

Coined in 1999 as a joke by an Englishman named Brad L. Graham, the term blogosphere was subsequently re-introduced by William Quick. Initially used by bloggers reporting on the US war in Afghanistan, the term went on to spread outside the warblogging community. With the information society gaining prominence, since 2002 blogosphere analysis has become a staple of opinion surveys.

Recently, there has been an increased interest in the use of monitoring at different levels as a means of addressing various economic problems, with new organisations engaged in monitoring various aspects of life appearing almost daily. Using blogosphere analysis in addition to standard statistical tools to monitor SME performance allows one to instantly gauge user reaction to reforms, detect weak spots, and quickly address development issues.

2. Research into small and medium enterprise performance

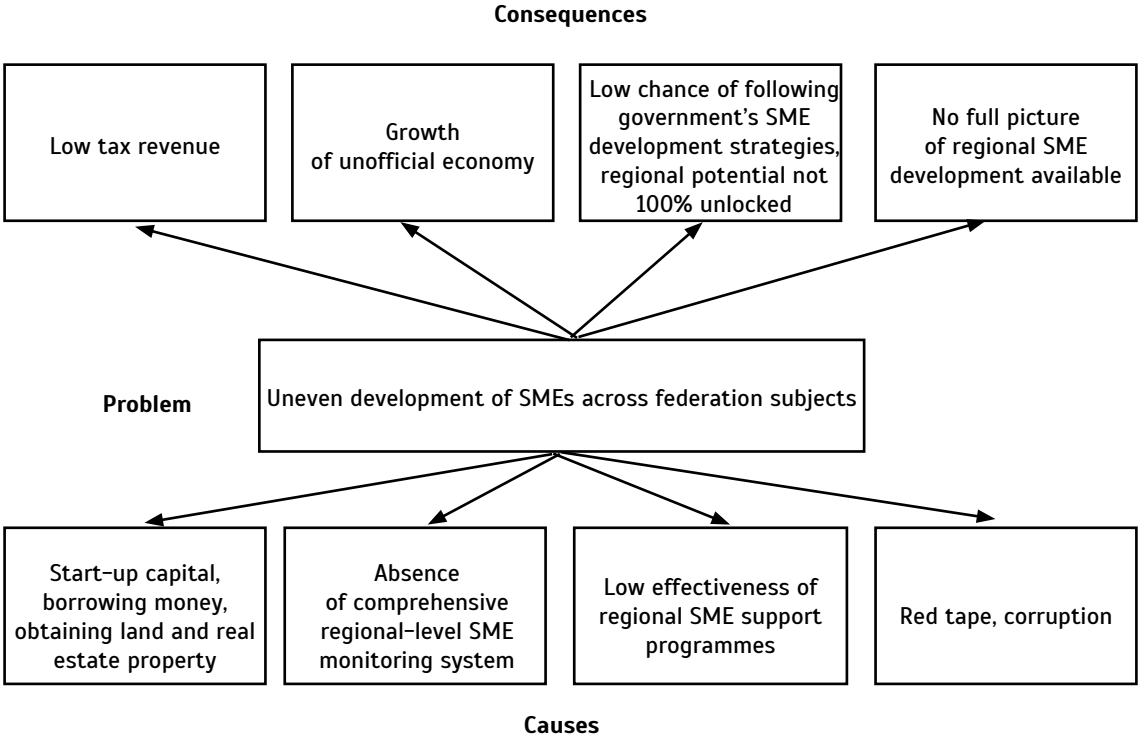
Late 2000s saw SMEs becoming a point of interest for the government. With Russian SMEs responsible for just 15 to 25 per cent of the country's GDP (compared to over 50% in most of the developed nations), President Putin tasked the government with bringing the figure up to 60–70%. The current figures indicate that small and medium enterprises still have a long way to go towards boosting the country's economic growth [6].

According to World Bank Group's 2014 Doing Business rating, Russia is a lowly 92nd out of 120 countries in terms of ease of doing business [5].

Using the Internet for doing business is beyond many Russian entrepreneurs' understanding. According to the survey figures, less than 35% of Russian citizens use the Internet on a daily basis.

The causes and consequences of Russia's geographically uneven SME development, identified with the help of the logical framework approach, are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Uneven development of SMEs across Russia's federation subjects: problems tree chart



Issues connected with taxaction, administrative burdens, real estate, bank loans, and support programs must be addressed by the local governments.

But the lack of a comprehensive monitoring system can be addressed by developing a system that would integrate both qualitative and quantitative indices of SME performance.

One of the causes of uneven regional SME development, detected by the authors of the present paper was the absence of a comprehensive regional-level SME monitoring system, which means no full picture of regional SME development is available.

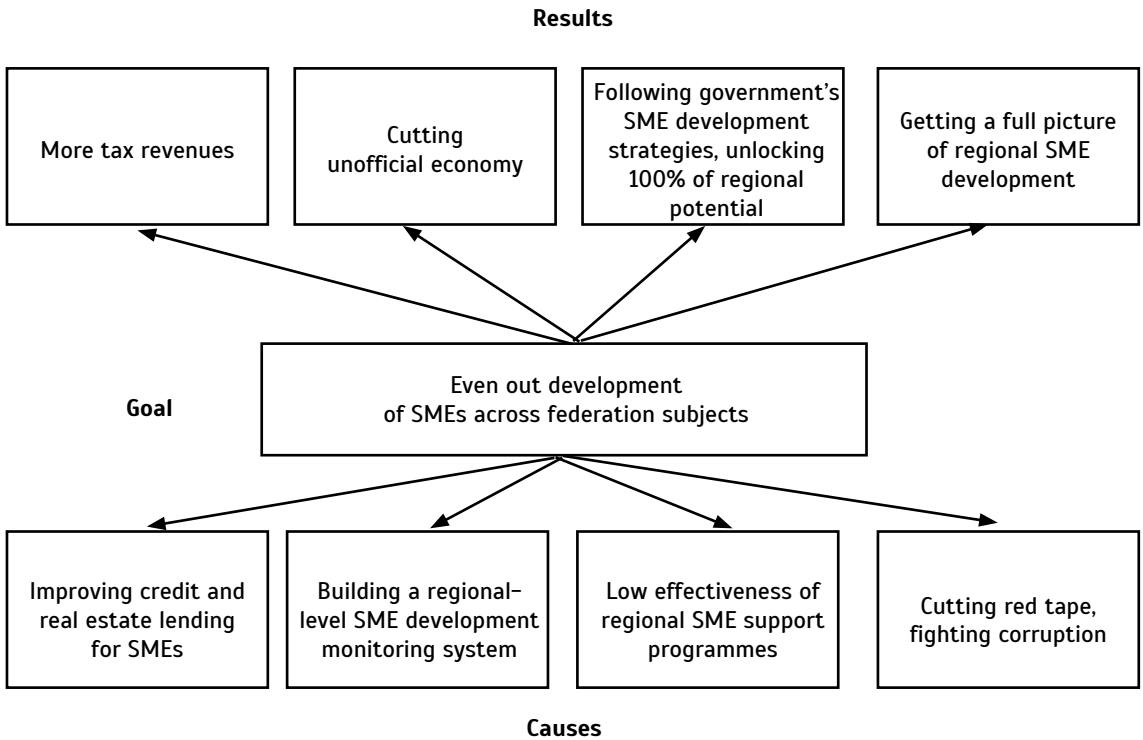
It is possible to monitor small and medium enterprise performance at both federal (national) and regional levels. The main sources of information about business activity are as follows:

1. Federal State Statistics Service's official reports on business activity [10];
2. Small and Medium Enterprises in Russia statistical digests;
3. Unified Interdepartmental Statistical Information System's website offering the relevant figures on demand [1];
4. Regional websites on SMEs offering information on latest reforms, as well as regional statistics;
5. Chamber of Commerce and Industry's official website publishing SME performance monitoring data;
6. OPORA ROSSIYI's Conditions for doing business in Russia annual reports on SME performance according to entrepreneur surveys [15];
7. Federal State Statistics Service's 2012 Continuous Reading of SME performance data [14];
8. Federal Web Portal for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises' statistical figures [16].

Most of the above assess SME performance using quantitative (statistical) data. To obtain a complete picture of conditions for small and medium enterprises, a monitoring system must include analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. There are federal-level figures based on qualitative data, the so-called OPORA Index. However, reporting on only 30 of the regions, it does not provide full qualitative data for assessing mesoscale SME performance. There is, therefore, a lack of data on mesoscale SME performance.

Using the logical framework approach, Figure 2 features the above problems tree chart transformed into a goals tree chart.

Figure 2. Actions needed to even out development of SMEs and their results



An alternative means of detecting problems would be blogosphere analysis. The term, as was mentioned earlier, came into prominence after 2002. In many aspects of life, both in Russia and internationally, blogosphere analysis has become an instrument of choice. As argued by Inna Kouper in Conversations in the Blogosphere: An Analysis «From the Bottom Up», an article on blog interconnections, the blogoshpere constitutes a small world capable of influencing the international community [17].

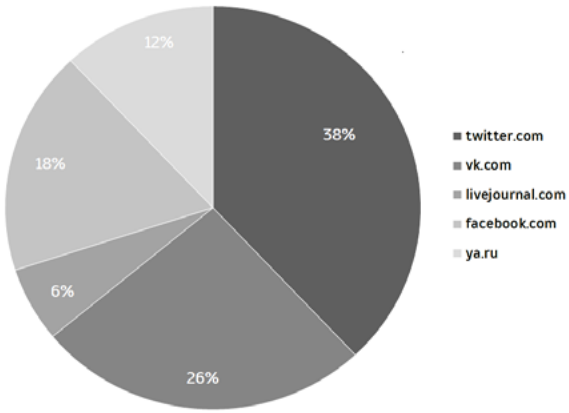
Many major international and Russian companies place a lot of emphasis on monitoring their network traffic. Foreign companies stress the importance of this kind of control [18] [19]. However, only a small number of companies engage in analysing the blogosphere to assess the appeal of their products.

Blogosphere analysis can also be used to assess SME performance. Some of the methods here are borrowed from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Monitoring SME Performance in the Russian Federation by Analysing the Blogosphere report [7]. The parameters used in the analysis were as follows:

- Assessing the tone of the message;
- Analysing search engine queries;
- Finding out the platforms most widely used for discussing SME issues.

Figure 3 presents online platforms most widely used for discussing SME issues, with their respective share of total SME-themed discussions online, according to total discussions figures per platform.

Figure 3. Blogs and social networks most widely used to discuss SME issues



The no.1 platform for discussing SME issues is the microblogging website Twitter, used for posting individual comments and suggestions regarding SMEs. Using the Topsy [13] online tool for assessing the content of microblog entries across a period of 30 days, 1500 comments were found to mention SMEs, with around 50% expressing a positive attitude. The no.1 issue discussed was the contributions SMEs have to make to minicipal budgets. Most Twitter users think it is bound to hinder SME development. Users were supportive of reports of regional programmes aimed at encouraging the lending to SME.

The analysis of the tone of the comments made on blogging and social networking websites gave the following results: 28% of comments were negative, 32% were positive, with the remaining 45% neutral in tone, meaning, as is the case with Twitter, the number of positive and negavite comments was roughly equal. Below are the SME-themes search query figures for the Siberian Federal District. The search queries fit the causes of uneven regional SME development referenced in Figure 1. The figures were obtained using the Socialmention online tool [12]. Table 1 lists the top 10 queries.

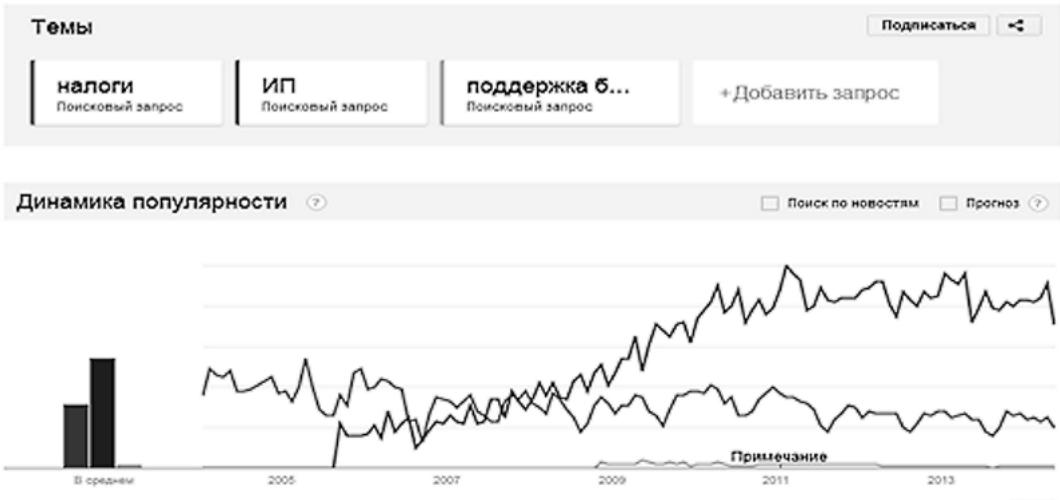
Table 1. Search engine queries in the Siberian Federal District:

Subject	No. of queries	Popularity
Sole proprietorship	23,50729	1
Business support	16,64316	2
Taxes	12,17677	3
Small business	9,873061	4
Start-up	9,732017	5
Medium business	9,402915	6
Quitting a business	5,171603	7
OPORA	4,701457	8
Credit	4,701457	9
State registration	4,090268	10

The high number of queries indicates that users are not finding the information offered by official regional websites on SMEs adequate. In particular, analysing the related blogosphere search queries for the top 3 subjects (sole proprietorship, business support, and taxes) reveals that users are unable to find sufficient information on how to start a business, taxation, and business support programs.

Blogosphere analysis is incomplete without a study of trends. Below is a screenshot of Google Trends discussions dynamics for 2006–2014 for the Siberian Federal District.

Figure 4. Search engine queries trends



There is a noticeable rise in the number of people researching sole proprietorship. Taxes remain a popular subject although gradually less so.

The comparison of the goals tree chart (Figure 2) and the blogosphere analysis data shows that a system for monitoring SME development would facilitate access to up-to-date compresensive data on regional SME performance and a more complete implementation of the government's SME development strategy.

Wrapping up the literary part of analysing the issues currently facing SMEs, it is clear that the goal undertaken by the present study is timely because of

- A lack of information on SME performance on meso-level;
- Regional monitoring system having no qualitative analysis component.

A detailed description of the proposed monitoring method follows.

3. Methodology

The proposed method of monitoring SME performance across federal subjects of Russia involves the following stages:

- Analysing the blogosphere to detect current regional SME development issues (see Part 2);
- Researching the relation between SME performance and economic growth;
- Evaluating regional SME development.

3.1. Researching the link between SME performance and economic growth

Despite the importance of researching the link between SME performance and economic growth stressed by international studies (Joce C. Farinas, Lourdes Moreno) [2], the existing monitoring projects overlook the aspect. The study cited above offers three possible variants of the link:

- Direct correlation between SME growth and economic performance of a region (so that weak performance results in weak SME growth, while stimulating SMEs would make the local economy grow faster);
- Inverse correlation between SME growth and the economic performance of a region (given that high-performing regions see lower individual economic activity because citizens who can comfortably sustain their living standard through regular income see no point in setting up private businesses);
- No correlation between SMEs and the economic performance of a region (so that SME development is not linked to local economy performance in any way).

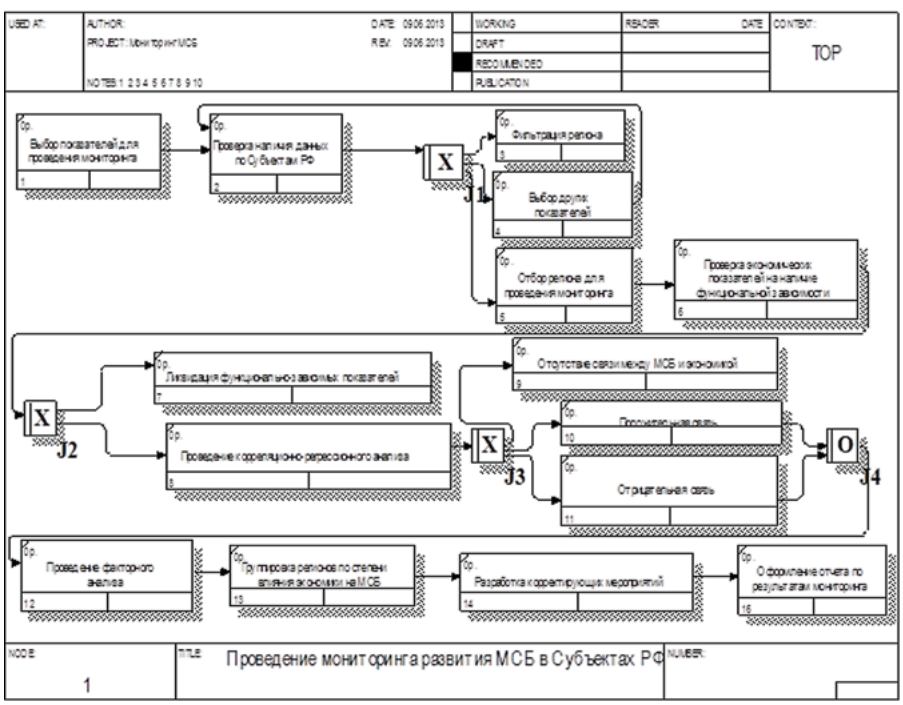
This methodology has previously been tested to assess the two-way relationship between economy and entrepreneurship in 21 country, though Russia was not among them. Also, the exercise involved entire countries, not their regions. It is appropriate to apply this method to the study of a federal subject of the Russian Federation.

The statistical analysis was performed using the scientific, analytical, and statistical data on the state of SMEs, SME development predictions, information on government programmes for supporting regional SMEs, as well as studies into the link between SME performance and economic growth.

Figure 5 represent the study process in IDEF3 notation (using the ERWIN Process Modeller software). The functional structure implies creating a software implementation of the proposed monitoring method with reports on its practical results.

1. Choosing economic indices to be monitored
2. Checking the data's availability per region
3. Filtering the regions
4. Choosing alternative indices
5. Choosing a region for monitoring
6. Checking for indices functional dependency
7. Eliminating functionally dependent indices
8. Regression analysis
9. No correlation between SMEs and economy
10. Direct correlation between SMEs and economy
11. Reverse correlation between SMEs and economy
12. Factor analysis
13. Grouping the regions by how strong the economy influences SMEs
14. Developing remedial actions
15. Preparing a report summing up the findings

Figure 5. Proposed monitoring system's functional structure



To assess the correlation between economic and business performance two kinds of indices were used: the indices of economic performance and the indices of SME performance:

- SME (excluding microenterprises) turnover;
- Per capita income per region;
- Average monthly wages paid;
- Number of specialists with higher professional education;
- Workforce numbers;
- Internal R&D expenditure;
- Private-sector technological innovations expenditure per region;
- Innovative goods, works, and services per region.

Table 2 presents correlation matrix of functionally independent indices relationship (compiled with the help of the SPSS statistical tool)

Table 2. Correlation matrix

Корреляции

		число	врп	колвопт	экономич
число	Корреляция Пирсона	1	,895**	,732**	,701*
	Знч.(2-сторон)		,000	,007	,011
	N	12	12	12	12
врп	Корреляция Пирсона	,895**	1	,710**	,614*
	Знч.(2-сторон)	,000		,010	,034
	N	12	12	12	12
колвопт	Корреляция Пирсона	,732**	,710**	1	,957**
	Знч.(2-сторон)	,007	,010		,000
	N	12	12	12	12
экономич	Корреляция Пирсона	,701*	,614*	,957**	1
	Знч.(2-сторон)	,011	,034	,000	
	N	12	12	12	12

The 60 federal subjects of Russia were broken down into clusters by the level of SME development (for complete results see Appendix 1). The regions selected were found to exhibit direct correlation between business development and SMEs.

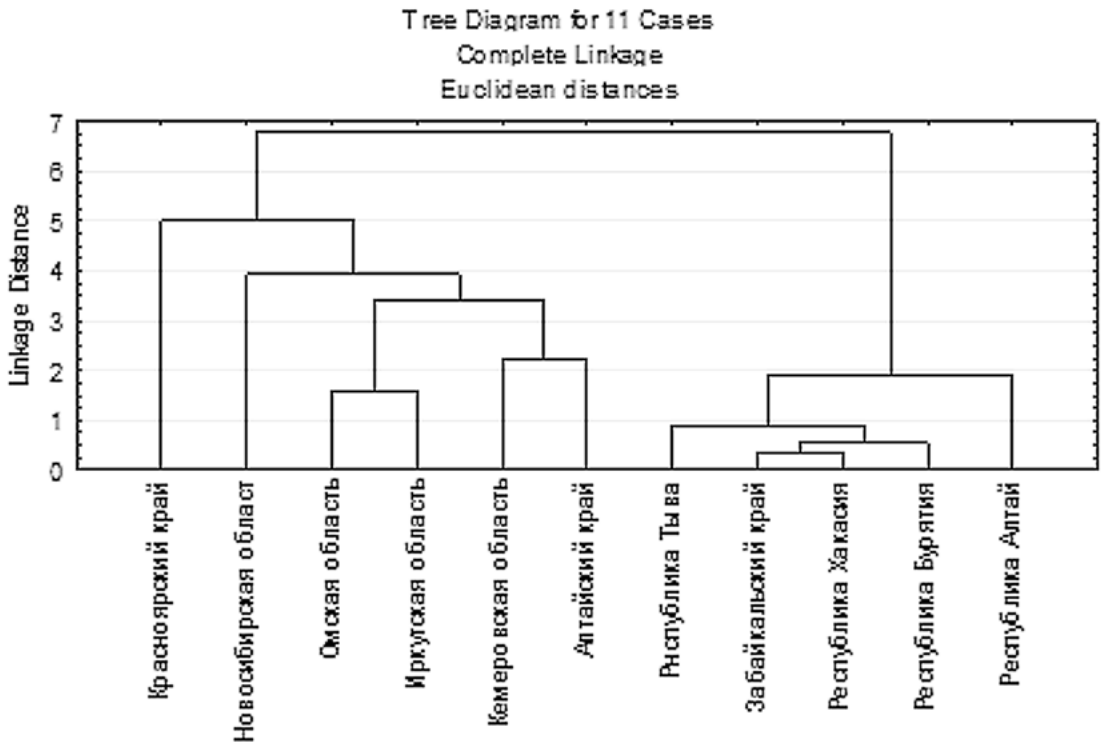
3.2. Level of SME development in a region

The statistical measures used to assess the overall direction of SME development in a region were as follows:

- Number of enterprises;
- Average workforce;
- SME turnover (in thousands of roubles);
- In-house goods shipped, works performed and services rendered without subcontracting (VAT and excise duties not included);
- Capital investment in new and imported fixed assets (in billions of roubles);
- Nominal average monthly wages paid.

Figure 6 presents a tree diagram of cluster distribution for regions of the Siberian Federal District (done using the Statistica software package).

Figure 6. Tree chart



Krasnoyarsk region, Novosibirsk region, Omsk region, Irkutsk region, Kemerovo region, Altai region, Republic of Tuva, Zabaykalsky region, Republic of Khakassia, Buryat Republic, Altai Republic.

The first group includes regions with the highest statistical indices, topped by the Novosibirsk and the Kemerovo regions.

The second group includes regions with the lowest number of SMEs and average workforce figures. This means SMEs in the Altai Republic, Zabaykalsky region, Buryat Republic, and Republics of Tuva and Khakassia are less well developed.

4. Results

1. Blogosphere analysis can be used as a preliminary monitoring step for quick detection of regional SME development issues and assessing the effectiveness of proposed support programmes.
2. The analysis of the blogosphere in the Siberian Federal District revealed the most widely discussed issues to be sole proprietorship, taxation, and support programmes. Supplying the users with detailed and up-to-date information on the subjects through regional SME support websites would facilitate private sector development both regionally and across Russia.
3. There is a positive correlation between local economic development and SME development (above 0.6). Cluster analysis of 60 federal subjects made it possible to group them into three brackets according to local SME development. The one with a high degree of economic and SME performance included Moscow, the Sverdlovsk, and the Novosibirsk regions.

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6. Appendices

Appendix 1. Federal subjects of Russia by SME development

Cluster 1 – High SME development regions	
Altai region	Krasnoyarsk region
Republic of Bashkortostan	Perm region
Chelyabinsk region	Nizhny Novgorod region

Republic of Tatarstan	Novosibirsk region
Samara region	Moscow region
Rostov region	Sverdlovsk region
Krasnodar region	St. Petersburg
Tyumen region	Moscow

Cluster 2 – Medium SME development	
Kaluga region	Kaliningrad region
Tver region	Vladimir region
Arkhangelsk region	Tula region
Penza region	Republic of Udmurtia
Ryazan region	Voronezh region
Smolensk region	Saratov region
Ulyanovsk region	Omsk region
Chuvash Republic	Irkutsk region
Leningrad region	Volgograd region
Tomsk region	Yaroslavl region
Khabarovsk region	Kemerovo region
Belgorod region	Primorsk region

Cluster 3 – Low SME development regions	
Republic of Tuva	Kurgan region
Republic of Altai	Republic of Mordovia
Magadan region	Amur region
Kabardino-Balkar Republic	Republic of Mari El
Kamchatka region	Orel region
Republic of Dagestan	

LINGUISTIC ICONISM IN ACADEMIC AND ONLINE DISCOURSE

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Abstract: The present paper reviews major avenues of research into linguistic iconism, revealing key problems and establishing the degree to which this sphere of academic studies is represented online. To solve these problems, a universal information environment (an international website) for academic, educational, and innovative efforts in studying linguistic iconism is proposed. The number of academic centres and schools devoted to the problem already established in Russia (in St. Petersburg, Pyatigorsk, Biysk, Perm, Saratov, and Ufa), the paper argues, makes the country the optimal base for launching the project. Contemporary Russian academic theories of linguistic iconism contend that the linguistic sign is non-arbitrary and motivated, reinvigorating the iconic theory of the origin of the language, modelling the proto-conceptual iconic language space, and fuelling software developments aimed at phonosemantic and colour and graphical analysis of language (Russian, English, Tatar, and Bashkir).
Keywords: linguistic iconism, phonosemantics, Internet project, organising international academic cooperation and exchange of information, onomatopoeia, interjections, vocal gestures, ideophones

1. Introduction

The goal of the present study is to analyse key problems in linguistic iconism studies, review the available online resources dealing with these problems (phonosemantics, sound symbolisms, ideophones, onomatopoeia, vocal gestures, interjections, zaum, auditory–graphemic synaesthesia, auditory–chromatic associativity, etc.), and also to try to solve these problems by creating a specialised Internet project.

Currently, this branch of knowledge has no single universal designation: phonosemantics (M. Magnus, R.W.Wescott, S.V.Voronin), phonosemics (R.W.Wescott), linguistic iconism, sound symbolism (in the USA, A.Abelin), mimologique (in France), mimology (turkology), expressive symbolism, and phonetic symbolism (E.Sapir), etc.

But its main problem is the critical view the Academia has towards the concept of linguistic iconism, and, most of all, its primary motivation (non–arbitrariness) of the linguistic sign thesis, the iconic theory of the origin of language, and the notion of the link between the sound–form and the meaning of the linguistic unit. As, for example, demonstrated in the recent International Journal of Linguistics (Macrothink Institute, USA) article by P.K.Agrawal [Agrawal 2014].

The main argument aimed against the subject is Ferdinand de Saussure's principle of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign: 'No–one disputes the principle of arbitrariness... It dominates the whole of linguistics; its corollaries are infinite.' [Saussure 1977:101]

Nevertheless, there are numerous proponents of linguistic iconism in Russia and internationally, autonomous and isolated (despite one of the main principles of phonosemantics being the principle of linguistic universals that are impossible to uncover without coordinating the efforts of as many researchers in as many languages as possible).

2. Methodology

The analysis of the current state of research into linguistic iconism was done in three stages: first, conducting a conceptual analysis of the available research into the subject; then performing a qualitative analysis of

how well the relevant ideas, schools, and avenues of research are represented and promoted online; and then drawing up plans for an academic project to solve the issues uncovered.

3. Prior studies

The idea of linguistic iconism spans millennia. Among the most frequently quoted examples are the Ancient Greek concepts of θέσις (Aristotle, Hermogenes) and φύσις (stoics), works by French classicists (Charles de Brosses, Antoine Court de Gébelin, Charles Nodier), English empiricists (Thomas Hobbes and John Locke), the world-renowned philosophers of the language (Giambattista Vico, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Johann Gottfried Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Heymann Steinthal, Wilhelm Wundt, Hermann Paul), etc.

There are numerous definitive Russian-language works detailing the history of phonosemantics in Russia and internationally [Журавлев 1974; Воронин 1990; Genette 1976; Михалёв 1995; Левицкий 1998; Magnus 2001; Шляхова 2003, 2005; Прокофьева 2007; Колева-Златева 2008, etc.].

In the most general terms, the history of linguistic iconism studies comprise several major trends (see Appendix 3 for references):

1. The idea of the loss of phonetic motivation over the course of the evolution of language (W.Wundt, W.Oehl, E.Cassirer, R.Paget, H.Paul, J.van Ginneken, G.Revesz, H.Werner, H.Bayley, G.Fano, M.Jousse, G.W.Hewes, A.A.Leontyev, I.N.Gorelov, A.M.Shakhnarovitch, G.E.Kornilov);
2. A cautious view of unconditional Saussurean arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and the promotion of the concept of phonetic iconism (O.Jespersen, E.Sapir, G.Bonfante, F.Kainz, E.Coseriu, M.Wandruszka, R.Jakobson, S.Ullmann, A.Martinet, M.Grammont, M.Chastaing, I.Fonagy, B.Malmberg, G.Genette, В.В.Левицкий, R.Wescott, P.K.Aggarwal);
3. Experimental psycholinguistic research into synaesthesia of graphemes and sounds in various languages (E.Sapir, D.Uznadze, S.Newmen, W.Kohler, I.K.Taylor, J.H.Weiss, J.-M.Peterfalvi, L.E.Marks, A.P.Zhuravlev, L.P.Prokofyeva);
4. Experimental research into grapheme-colour synaesthesia (H.L.Hollingworth, V.Weischer, M.Asano, K.Yokosawa, G.Beeli, M.Esslen, L.Jäncke, C.D.Blair, M.E.Berryhill, D.Brang, R.Rouw, V.S.Ramachandran, S.Coulson, S.Day, C.B.Mills, S.R.Metzger, C.A.Foster, M.N.Valentine-Gresko, S.Ricketts, M. R.Watson, K.A.Akins, J.T.Enns);
5. Biolinguistics (D.J. Linden, A.H.Chisholm, W.H.Thorpe, P.J.B.Slater, Th.A.Sebeok, J.P.Scanlan, I.M.Pepperberg, D.K.Patterson, I.M.Pepperberg, P.Marler, P.Lieberman, V.D.Ilyitchev, Y.A.Soprokin, E.N.Panov, O.L.Silayeva, V.P.Morozov, V.S.Shevyakov) – the study of human-animal communication, justifying the onomatopoeic theory of the origin of language [Силаева 1998];
6. The problem of the origin and evolution of language (A.Carstairs-McCarthy, J.L.Dessalles, J.R.Hurford, P.MacNeilage, Oudeyer Pierre-Yves, Ruhlen Merritt);
7. Phonosemantic lexicography (X.Amanuma, R.D'Elia, T.Fujita, T.Gomi, H.Kakehi, M.Leiris, M.Magnus, P.Miles, H.Newman, M.Sadasivam, N.Thun, M.Dewson, C.Whissel) etc.

The avenues of research most actively pursued by Russian linguists are:

1. Justifying phonosemantics as a separate discipline, defining its categories, laws, and characteristics [Воронин 1982];
2. Uncovering phonosemantic universals in sound symbolism and onomatopoeia across different language families (V.M. Illitch-Svitytch, A.M.Gazov-Ginzberg, S.V.Voronin, A.B.Mikhalev, S.S.Shlyakhova, O.V.Shestakova, N.V.Drozhaschikh, L.P.Prokofyeva, Y.B.Trofimova, T.M.Rogozhnikova);
3. Justifying the iconic theory of the origin of language (A.M.Gazov-Ginzberg, S.V.Voronin, A.B.Mikhalyov, N.V.Drozhaschikh, S.S.Shlyakhova);
4. Justifying the proto-conceptual iconic sphere of language: the phonosemantic field theory [Михалёв 1995, 2009], the iconic sphere of language [Дрожащих 2006], the phonosematic world-image [Шляхова 2005];
5. The occasional phonologisation of noises in multi-structural languages and the manifestations of iconism

in psycholinguistic experiments [Трофимова 2009, 2011];

6. The consistency of onomatopoeia, interjections, vocal gestures, zaum, (delirium- or trance-induced texts, transrational languages of Russian Futurist, OBERIU, and Post-Modernist poets, children's quasi-languages, etc.), and its basic role in the origin and evolution of language [Шляхова 2005; Кустова 2010; Шаронов 2008];
7. Lexicographic recording of phonosemantic words [Шляхова 2004, 2011; Шаронов 2005, 2008; Шестакова 2012];
8. Auditory-chromatic associativity (grapheme-colour synaesthesia) [Журавлев 1974; Прокофьева 2007; Шляхова 2014; Рогожникова 2011, 2012, 2013];
9. Developing the software for phonosemantic analysis of the English, Russian (V.Shalak, L.P.Prokofyeva, T.M.Rogozhnikova), Tatar and Bashkir (T.M.Rogozhnikova) and other languages.

Currently there are established scientific schools and academic centres in Russia and internationally that have no scientific links. In Russia there are several centres of research into linguistic iconism (see Appendix 2), but the Academia does not view them as proper scientific schools, despite the continuity, systemacity, and multiplicity of research into linguistic iconism conducted there.

In western Academia, numerous bibliographic lists (see Appendix 3) have been compiled without any Slavic-language input, indicating that Slavic-language phonosemantics is isolated from the context of international scholarship, and that Russian scientific schools suffer from inadequate presentation and promotion, including on the Internet.

The most complete bibliographic list of available works and websites on phonosemanticity S.V.Voronin, V.V.Levitskiy, A.P.Zhuravlev, B.M.Galeyev, S.V.Klimova, A.B.Mikhalyov, S.S.Shlyakhova, L.P.Prokofyeva et al.) that are hard-to-access yet clearly in demand by Western scholars.

4. Problems in linguistic iconism studies

Reviewing the available literature on the subject reveals many works on phonosemanticity and allows one to single out the following problems in linguistic iconism studies:

1. Many linguists reject the idea of motivation of the linguistic sign and the significance of primary motivation in the origin, evolution, and present-day functioning of language;
2. Lack of definitive works on phonosemanticity in different languages;
3. Absence of terminological coordination and societies and websites involved in summing up the findings, which makes it impossible to correlate identical pieces of research and their findings;
4. The Russian-language studies are carried out without taking into account Western achievements in the sphere; Russian and international researchers oblivious of each other's works (similarly owing to the lack of dedicated Internet resource);
5. Lexicographic challenges: absence or lack of specialised dictionaries of different languages; insufficient and unsystematic recording and etymological analysis of phonosemantic words; fuzzy labelling; absence of criteria for comparison in bilingual dictionaries;
6. Bias towards research in various forms of synaesthesia, including its interpretation in language (sound symbolism), and lack of research in onomatopoeia, interjections, vocal gestures, etc.

In terms of organisation and supply of information, one should stress the following key problems:

1. Lack of Russian-language professional associations;
2. Small circulation of specialised literature on the subject, which is hard to obtain even for Russian researchers, not to mention their Western colleagues;
3. Illegal distribution of Russian-language studies bypassing the authors and violating their rights;

4. Weak scientific ties between researchers in linguistic iconism both domestically and internationally (see Appendix 1).

5. Online scholarly resources

There are numerous specialised websites in the West, presenting the findings of local scholars (see Appendix 4). The analysis of their content helped identity the following challenges:

1. There are no websites in Russia that offer research citing a wide range of other specialised resources. For example, there are at least three websites on synaesthesia hosted in Russia: one by A.Sidorova-Dorso, one by the Prometey Joint Scientific Research Institute, and one by L.P.Prokofyeva. Each project features the original avenue of research and methodology adopted by that particular researcher or a group, sometimes failing to provide horizontal links. It would be better to coordinate these efforts within a single website that could offer the most complete picture of the state of research on each particular problem.
2. Russian and international websites on linguistic iconism are presenting individual aspects and avenues of research into the subject, mainly in synaesthesia and phonosemantics, whereas researchers worldwide should focus their efforts on creating a single website that would reference other resources.
3. Most websites are user-, not researcher-oriented. Some are visibly heavy on the marketing side. For example, the American Synaesthesia Association website offers membership to individuals aged above 18 who are willing to fill out the form and pay an annual fee of at least $50, with life membership costing $5 000. Also, member organisations enjoy tax rebates on distribution and popularisation of materials on synaesthesia.
4. Western-based scholars also have no consolidated websites even within their countries, and are running websites representing individual researchers or university centres instead. Enjoying the greatest degree of consolidation are the centres of research into synaesthesia: the American (S. Day), Australian (P.Higgs), British (S. Baron-Cohen), Belgian(H. Heyrman), Chinese (J. Simner), French (V. Burela, I. Schönenberger), Italian (C. Santoli), Dutch (C. van Campan), Japanese (Nobuyosi N.), German (H.M. Emrich) and other synaesthesia associations.
5. A substantial amount of consolidated information on research into linguistic motivation is available on M.Magnus's personal website that offers an extensive list of books, websites, and email addresses of association members, as well as unabridged versions of many of the English-language works, etc. However, following the death of the owner, the website is no longer maintained, with many of the links no longer working.

6. Problems of online representation

Analysing websites dedicated to the problems of linguistic iconism reveals the following problem areas:

1. Absence of Russian- and Slavic-language professional communities and their representation online;
2. Absence of consolidated specialised websites in Russia and internationally;
3. Illegal distribution of Russian-language studies bypassing the authors and violating their rights.

7. Possible solutions

The most effective way of solving the aforementioned problems is to create a specialised website. There is a project, complete with the concept and the content, developed by a group of researchers from Perm aiming to organise long-term international cooperation in the field of information and scientific activities (see Appendix 5).

Its main goal is to unite the efforts in studying linguistic iconism in different languages and to disseminate reliable scientific knowledge in phonosemantics and related sciences in Russia and internationally.

Its methodology is based on the principle of genetic non-arbitrariness, motivation of the linguistic sign:

'Saussure's unitary principle that "the linguistic sign is arbitrary" has exhausted its potential as a universal basic principle... superseded by a new, binary principle that "the linguistic sign is both non-arbitrary and arbitrary" at the same time.' [Воронин 1999: 130]

The link between the sound-form and the meaning of a word is lost in the process of semantic and phonetic evolution: the linguistic sign is no longer motivated, it acquires new meanings unrelated to its sound-form. Originally non-arbitrary, the motivated sign becomes arbitrary, non-motivated.

The project's principles state that it must be

1. Scientifically competent,
2. Open to the public free of charge,
3. Used only for personal, informational, scientific, educational, or cultural non-profit purposes,
4. Upholding its contributors' copyright, hosting their works strictly with their permission, free of charge,
5. Consistent in publishing the materials in accordance with its editorial classification and the system of horizontal links,
6. Up-to-date, interactive, and open to feedback.

The project is timely as it:

1. Organises and widens international contacts, organises information and scientific activities in linguistic iconism studies;
2. Disseminates reliable scientific knowledge in phonosemantics;
3. Creates the most comprehensive, accurate and accessible permanent scholarly resource on phonosemantics;
4. Creates a joined multinational scientific product;
5. Integrates Russian-language research into the international scientific context,
6. Can increase citation index figures.

The project is novel as it

1. Presents an original scientific and informational online resource on linguistic iconism;
2. Results in a joined international scientific product, basic multi-aspect phonosemantic electronic dictionaries;
3. Lays the foundation for a breakthrough large-scale electronic database of phonosemantic means in various world languages;
4. Establishes a dedicated scientific journal.

This Linguistic Motivation Forum website will consist of two modules:

I. The information module, comprising the following sections: History of Phonosemantics, Faces of Phonosemantics, Library, Phonosemantic schools and centres, Bibliography, Reviews, Photos, Conferences, Affiliated websites, Links, 'Folk Phonosemantics', etc.

1. The Library
   - Contains an up-to-date all-inclusive publicly available body of materials (studies, dissertations, articles, dictionaries, reviews, etc., including rare ones) on linguistic motivation by Russian- and Slavic-speaking (Polish, Belorussian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Udmurt, Komi-Permyak, English, and other languages) researchers; already having secured the permission of authors of some 450 works;
   - Makes use of the electronic format to 1) extend the range of materials from traditional works (articles, studies, dissertations, etc.) to abstracts, reviews, informal documents, working papers, handwritten wordlists, etc.; 2) extend documents semantics by incorporating text, images, video, databases, external links, etc.; 3) provide access to small circulation and rare materials; 4) facilitate popularisation of Russian scientific achievements internationally.
2. The Bibliography will include reference lists grouped by: the language of the study; the subject language; the problems and aspects of the study; author's name.

II. The research module will comprise a specialised scientific journal and an online laboratory.

1. The online vocabulary lab will
   - Gather, arrange, and accumulate empirical data to create a large-scale updatable phonosemanticity corpus;
   - Work to produce a regularly updated Universal Electronic Phonosemantic Dictionary, already including various multi-aspect dictionaries: Electronic Dictionary of Phonosemantic Words (Pre-Slavic, Polish, Russian, German, Bulgarian, Czech, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Serbo-Croatian, Greek, Komi-Permyak, etc.); Electronic Dictionary of Initials (Greek, German, Spanish); Electronic Dictionary of Phonaesthemes (German, Russian, English, Arabic, Spanish); Electronic Graphosemantic Dictionary.
2. The online terminology lab will
   - Conduct online discussions to determine a unified terminology for phonosemantics;
   - Record the unified terminology in the Electronic Dictionary of Phonosemantic Terms, to include the terms biolinguistics, iconism, iconic sphere of language, sound poetry, vocal gestures, phonosemantic field, phonosemantics, sound symbolism, audio-chromatic associativity, synaesthesia, phonaestheme, interjection, onomatopoeia, phonotype, ideophone, etc.
3. The online phonosemantic experimental lab will
   - Consult young (graduate and undergraduate students) and newcomer researchers on theoretical questions and research tools;
   - Encompass avenues of research such as 1) Synaesthesia. Grapheme-colour synaesthesia (auditory-chromatic associativity); 2) Universal typology of onomatopes; 3) Phonosemantic field theory; 4) Phonosemantic world-image; 5) Etymology and phonosemantics; 6) Phonosemantics and poetry;
   - Each avenue is to include sub-sections: Tools, Completed Studies, Consulting, New Materials;
   - Bind each author that made use of the materials, tools, or consulted with the project's specialists to publish their research on the website.
4. The dedicated scientific online journal:
   - A specialist journal for a new academic field;
   - Interdisciplinary (spanning linguistics, psycholinguistics, and psychology);
   - With a rigorous peer review mechanism, given the fact that phonosemantic studies published elsewhere do not enjoy serious editorial review (due to little or no access to experts in linguistic motivation);

To facilitate access by international users the website's main materials will also be available in English, with the rest of the authors providing English-language abstracts.

The future website openness to the public will to some extent solve the problem of illegal commercial distribution of copyrighted works.

So far, about 50 scholars from eight countries have expressed their willingness to participate in the project: Bulgaria, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, and Russia. They are leading specialists in linguistic iconism (30 doctoral and 15 post-doctoral level) from 45 universities and 5 institution of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Developing the contents of the future website is 90% complete; the project team is currently looking for funding to commence website construction. For more details and to offer cooperation, please contact us at shlyahova@mail.ru

8. Conclusions

Reviewing the main problems of linguistic iconism studies, analysing the existing online resources on the subject, and analysing the degree of online presence and promotion of this sphere of academic studies, revealed that

1. Many linguists reject the idea of motivation of the linguistic sign and the significance of primary motivation in the origin, evolution, and present-day functioning of language, leading to a scarcity of basic research in linguistic iconism;
2. In Russia there are several established scientific schools and centres (in St. Petersburg, Pyatigorsk, Biysk, Perm, Saratov, and Ufa) devoted to the problems of linguistic iconism;
3. Modern linguistic iconism theories in the Russian scholarship contend that the linguistic sign is non-

arbitrary and motivated, reinvigorating the iconic theory of the origin of the language, modelling the proto-conceptual iconic language space, and fuelling software developments aimed at phonosemantic and colour and graphical analysis of language;

4. Absence of professional Russian-language communities and specialised websites, weak horizontal links between Russian and international researchers, small circulation of specialised literature and its poor availability are impeding the research into linguistic iconism, including its comparative studies aspect.

At this juncture, the strategic goal is to create a universal information environment (an international interactive website) for joined academic, educational, and innovative efforts in studying linguistic iconism.

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10. Appendices

Appendix 1. Problems in coordinating linguistic iconism research

- The fallout of Ferdinand de Saussure's principle of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign is such that research into linguistic iconism is marginal and non-systemic; defending a thesis on the subject means having to overcome certain obstacles, academic papers on the subject are of low-quality. When in 1998 M. Magnus tried to establish a Linguistic Iconism Association in the USA, many researchers, she recalled,

refused her invitation or preferred to keep their membership secret because of the 'pseudoscientific' nature of the subject. According to prof. A.B. Mikhalyov, when in 2013 he tried submitting a paper on phonosemantics to one of the western academic journals, it was turned down saying they had no experts to review a work in that field.

- Absence of terminological coordination and societies and websites involved in summing up the findings makes it impossible to correlate identical pieces of research and their findings. For example, one specialist turned down an invitation to take part in a research project saying he was not studying linguistic motivation, only interjections and vocal gestures. Another argued reduplication has nothing to do with linguistic iconism (when it is, in fact, one of its most reliable indicators).
- Weak (strictly private and one-of-a-kind) scientific ties between researchers in linguistic iconism across national boundaries, but also within the country. For example, two St. Petersburg-based researchers, being aware of each other's work, had no idea they both lived in the same city.
- Western scholars know little of Russian studies on the subject. For example, in its http://synaesthesia.com/en/Science2/scientists/ section on the scientists researching synaesthesia, Marc Jacques Mächler's website fails to list a single Russian researcher. Similarly, A New Approach to Phonosemantics, one of the latest articles by P.K. Agrawal, makes no mention of Russian scientists [Agrawal 2014].

Appendix 2. Russian phonosemantics schools and centres. Main avenues of research

Biysk phonosemantics school: Anthropocentric typology of languages lab (headed by prof. Y.B.Trofimova): manifestations of iconism in psycholinguistic experiments; iconic theory of the origin of the language; research into occasional verbalisation and perception of signals of diverse nature by Russian, English, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Altaic speakers; comparative studies aimed at revealing the iconic character of onomatopoeic words and interjections in Russian, Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian.

Moscow environmental biolinguistics school (founded by prof. V.D.Ilyitchev, headed by prof. O.L.Silayeva): human-animal communication; iconic theory of the origin of the language (language is originally based on natural sounds, animal and bird signals); discovered of the global acoustic-imitative process inherent in every human and animal communications system.

St. Petersburg phonosemantics school (founded by prof. S.V.Voronin): justifying phonosemantics as a separate discipline, defined its categories, laws, and characteristics; modelled the phonosemantic system of language; researched into phonosemantic etymology, universal typology of onomatopes, iconic theory of the origin of the language; substantiated the dual arbitrary/non-arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign; developed the methodology of phonosemantic analysis; identified the objective criteria of a phonosemantic word; defined the basic laws of the origin and evolution of the language sign; singled out the phonotype as the basic category of phonosemantics; introduced and defined the nature of synkinaesthemia as the basis of phonosemanticity.

Pyatigorsk phonosemantics school (headed by prof. A.B.Mikhalyov): phonosemantic field theory; phonosemantic etymology; justifying the proto-conceptual iconic sphere of language; iconic theory of the origin of the language; researching phonosemanticity of morphemotypes, phonaesthemes, initials, and finals.

Perm phonosemantics circle (headed by prof. S.S.Shlyakhova): justifying the proto-conceptual iconic sphere of language (phonosemantic world-image); marginal linguistics; iconic theory of the origin of the language; researching phonosemanticity of the Komi-Permyak language; modelling the phonosemantic system of language; universal typology of onomatopes (Russian, German); phonosemantic etymology; systemacity, universality, and ideoethnicity of onomatopoeia (Russian, German, Komi-Permyak); phonosemantic lexicography (Russian, German, Komi-Permyak); phonosemantics of dialects; experimental research into phonetic meaning and grapheme-colour synaesthesia (Komi-Permyak).

Saratov psycholinguistics school (founded by prof. I.N.Gorelov, headed by prof. L.P.Prokofyeva): substantiating the primary motivation of the linguistic sign theory; experimental psycholinguistic research into phonosemanticity; grapheme-colour synaesthesia, auditory-chromatic associativity (Russian and English); developing the software for analysing auditory-chromatic associativity of prose, poetry, and theatre plays (Russian and English).

Ufa psycholinguistics school (headed by prof. T.M.Rogozhnikova): experimental psycholinguistic research into phonosemanticity; grapheme–colour synaesthesia, auditory–chromatic associativity (Russian, English, Tatar, Bashkir); developing the software for analysing auditory–chromatic associativity of texts (Russian, English, Tatar, Bashkir).

Appendix 3. Bibliography on problems of linguistic iconism

- Sean A. Day (synaesthesia): http://www.daysyn.com/Bibliography.html
- Universities of Amsterdam, Netherlands and Zürich, Switzerland (iconism in linguistics): http://es-dev.uzh.ch/en/iconicity/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1197027659&archive=&start_from=&ucat=2&
- University of Graz, Austria (reduplication): http://reduplication.uni-graz.at/
- Shelly Wynecoop and Levin Golan, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburg, USA (synaesthesia and phonaesthemia): http://www.flong.com/texts/lists/list_synesthesia_bibliography/
- Akita Kimi, Tokyo University (phonosemanticity): http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxha2I0YW1ib3xneDozZDNjNjBlNWRlZGU4ZGEy
- M.Magnus, USA (the most comprehensive bibliography on the subject): http://www.trismegistos.com/MagicalLetterPage/
- A. Sidorov–Dorso (links to websites on synaesthesia): http://www.synaesthesia.ru/links.html
- John J. Ohala, University of California, Berkeley, USA (phonosemanticity): [Ohala 1983].

Appendix 4. Websites on linguistic iconism research

Personal websites of researchers

- A.B.Mikhalyov's personal website: http://amikhalev.ru
- L.P.Prokofyeva's website on synaesthesia: http://synaesthesia.narod.ru/
- A. Sidorova–Dorso's Synaesthesia project: http://www.synaesthesia.ru/research.html
- Cretien van Campen's Synesthesia in Art and Science website http://www.synesthesie.nl/
- Sean Day's synaesthete and synaesthetist's website: http://www.daysyn.com/index.html
- Richard Cytowik's synaesthetist's website: http://cytowic.net/
- Lectures by the synaesthetist Vilayanur Ramachandran at TEDblog http://blog.ted.com/2008/06/13/synesthesia_on_1/
- Marc Jacques Mächler's website: http://synaesthesia.com/en/about/marc-jacques/
- Guerini Silvia's website (Italy): http://www.sinestesie.it/esercitazioni
- M. Magnus's Phonosemantics and Linguistic Iconism website http://www.trismegistos.com/MagicalLetterPage/LetterPage.html
- Daphne M. Maurer's website (McMaster University, USA): http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/pnb/department/dm.html

Websites of professional associations and university research centres:

- The VAAL project (phonosemantic content analysis): http://www.vaal.ru/prog/free.php
- JSRI Prometey: http://synesthesia.prometheus.kai.ru/index.html
- UK Synaethesia Association: http://www.uksynaesthesia.com/
- American Synaesthesia Association: http://www.synesthesia.info/
- Linguistic Iconism Association (Margaret Magnus): http://www.trismegistos.com/MagicalLetterPage/LIA/index.html
- Iconicity in Language and Literature (Olga Fischer, Christina Ljungberg): http://es-dev.uzh.ch/index.php
- Universität Zürich, Beeli Gian http://www.psychologie.uzh.ch/fachrichtungen/neuropsy/Forschung/KonkreteForschungsthemen/Synaesthesie.html
- Universidad de Granada, ICallejas Alicia http://www.ugr.es/~sinestes/contacto.html
- Visual Development Lab, FRSC McMaster University, USA (Daphne M. Maurer): http://psych.mcmaster.ca/maurerlab/people.html

Social network communities:

- Synaesthesia.com – a colourful awareness https://www.facebook.com/pages/Synaesthesiacom-a-colourful-awareness/623208771054393 et al.

Appendix 5. Structure of the Linguistic Motivation Forum interactive information and research website

Title page

About the Forum

Editors

Members

Usage policy

Publication policy

Contacts

Site map

History of Phonosemantics

- Russia
- USA
- Europe
- Researching phonosemanticity in various languages

Phonosemantic schools and centres

- Russia: Biysk phonosemantic school
- Russia: Moscow environmental biolinguistics school
- Russia: Perm phonosemantics circle
- Russia: Pyatigorsk phonosemantics school
- Russia: St.Petersburg phonosemantics school
- Russia: Saratov psycholinguistics school
- Russia: Ufa psycholinguistics school
- Ukraine: Chernivtsi phonosemantics school

Library

- Archive
- Studies
- Post-doctorate dissertations
- Ph.D. dissertations
- Articles and theses
- Specialty courses and workshops
- Digests
- Working papers

Reviews

- Abstracts
- Dissertations
- Studies
- Articles

Bibliography (grouped by)

- Language of the study
- Subject language (Russian, Polish, English, Kazakh, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Bulgarian, etc.)
- Problems (biolinguistics, non-classic phonetics, onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, reduplication, phonosemantics and etymology, interjections, phonostylistics and poetry, phonosemantics and translation, phonosemantic world-image, phonosemantics and education methods, phonosemantics and marketing, etc.)
- Author's name

Faces of Phonosemantics

In Memoriam

- Voronin Stanislav Vasilyevitch
- Galeyev Bulat Makhmudovitch
- Gorelov Ilya Naumovitch
- Ilyitchev Valeriy Dmitriyevitch
- Levitskiy Viktor Vasilyevitch

Forerunners

- Abayev V.I.
- Aksakov K.S.
- Ashmarin N.I.
- Bubrikh F.I.
- Gazov-Ginzberg A.M.
- Germanovitch A.I.
- Gretch N.I.
- Dagurov G.V.
- Zhuravlev A.P.
- Futurist and OBERIU zaum writers
- Zelenetskiy K.P.
- Members of the Kazan and Moscow linguistic schools
- Kartsevskiy S.O.
- Kveselevitch D.I.
- Krivoschyokova-Gantman A.S.
- Krutchenykh A.E.
- Lipavskiy L.S.
- Mandzhikova B.B.
- Marr N.Y.
- Members of OPOJAZ and MLK
- Pavskiy G.P.
- Polivanov Y.D.
- Potebnya A.A.
- Potseluyevskiy A.P.
- Rizhskiy I.S.
- Sorokin Y.A.
- Tarakanov I.V.
- Tulov M.A.
- Tufanov A.V.
- Onomatodoxy in philosophy
- Frolova O.P.
- Khlebnikov V.
- Tsydendambayev T.B.
- Members of Tchinari
- Shagdarov L.D.
- Shishkov A.S.
- Shklovskiy V.B.
- Shtern A.S.
- Yakobson R.O.
- Yakubinskiy L.P.

Forum members

- Banko M. (Warsaw, Poland)
- Bobitchev (Chisinau, Moldova)
- Boronnikova N.V. (Perm, Russia)
- Brodovitch O.I. (St.Petersburg, Russia)
- Vaulina I.A. (Yekaterinburg, Russia)
- Verizhnikova Y.V. (Moscow, Russia)
- Vershinina M.G. (Perm, Russia)
- Vlasov M.S. (Biysk, Russia)
- Golimbiovskaya Y.S. (Ulyanovsk, Russia)
- Grishina Y.A. (Moscow, Russia)
- Daminova R.A. (Ufa, Bashkortostan, Russia)
- Drozhaschikh N.V. (Tyumen, Russia)
- Yefimenko N.V. (Ufa, Russia)
- Zur A.I. (Minsk, Belarus)
- Karpukhin S.A. (Samara, Russia)
- Klimova S.V. (St.Petersburg, Russia)
- Koleva-Zlateva J. (Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria)
- Kotchetova G.R. (Kumertau, Russia)
- Kushnerik V.I. (Chernivtsi, Ukraine)
- Lobanova A.S. (Perm, Russia)
- Makulbek A.B. (Shymkent, Kazakhstan)
- Marukhina S.A. (Yaroslavl, Russia)
- Matasova O.V. (Saratov, Russia)
- Mekheda M.I. (Tyumen, Russia)
- Mikhalyov A.B. (Pyatigorsk, Russia)
- Netyosina M.S. (Moscow, Russia)
- Odonchimeg T. (Khovd, Mongolia)
- Osipova L.F. (Almetyevsk, Russia)
- Pavlovskaya I.Y. (St.Petersburg, Russia)
- Petkova Z.A. (Burgas, Bulgaria)
- Petukhova Y.V. (Kursk, Russia)
- Prokofyeva L.P. (Saratov, Russia)
- Prutskikh T.A. (Irkutsk, Russia)
- Puzyrev A.V. (Ulyanovsk, Russia)
- Razumovskaya V.A. (Krasnoyarsk, Russia)
- Rogozhnikova T.M. (Ufa, Russia)
- Silayeva O.L. (Moscow, Russia)
- Sunduyeva Y.V. (Ulan-Ude, Russia)
- Tatarinova Y.S. (St.Petersburg, Russia)
- Tishina (Makhinya) Y.V. (Volgograd, Russia)
- Trofimova Y.B. (Biysk, Russia)
- Flaksman M.A. (St.Petersburg, Russia)
- Tchekhovskaya (Dergatchyova) T.L. (Minsk, Belarus)
- Tchironov S.V. (Moscow, Russia)
- Shamina Y.A. (Moscow, Russia)
- Sharonov I.A. (Moscow, Russia)
- Shestakova O.V. (Perm, Russia)
- Shibanov A.A. (Izhevsk, Russia)
- Shlyakhova S.S. (Perm, Russia)
- Yusip-Yakimovitch Y.V. (Uzhgorod, Ukraine)

Conferences, round tables, workshops

- Problems of Linguistic Sign Motivation Workshop. Leningrad, 1969.
- USSR Academy of Sciences Linguistics Institute's All-Soviet Union Conference on Phonosemantics. Penza, 1989.

- Contemporary Problems in Psychology, Ethnopsycholinguistics, and Phonosemantics All-Russian Academic Conference. Penza, 1999.
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Dictionaries

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- Koleva-Zlateva J. Serbo-Croatian phonosemantic wordlist
- Koleva-Zlateva J. Slovenian phonosemantic wordlist
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- Koleva-Zlateva J. Czech phonosemantic wordlist
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- Mekheda M.V. Russian reduplicates wordlist
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- Shvetsova N.N. English dialectal phonosemantic words (articulatory onomatopes) wordlist
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- Shlyakhova S.S. Call and drive words, animal and bird sounds in Komi-Permyak

Electronic Dictionary of Initials

- Zimova M.D. Greek Θ-words
- Zimova M.D. Greek Ψ -words
- Zimova M.D. German D-words and Modern Greek Δ-words
- Zimova M.D. German G-words and Modern Greek Γ-words
- Zimova M.D. German L-words and Modern Greek Λ-words
- Zimova M.D. German R-words and Modern Greek Ρ-words
- Zimova M.D. German S-words and Modern Greek Σ-words
- Zimova M.D. German W-words, Modern Greek Φ-words, German F-words
- Zimova M.D. German Z-words and Modern Greek Ζ-words
- Zimova M.D. German and Modern Greek N-words
- Zimova M.D. German and Modern Greek B-words
- Zimova M.D. German and Modern Greek K-words
- Zimova M.D. German and Modern Greek M-words
- Zimova M.D. German H-words and Modern Greek X-words
- Zimova M.D. German P-words and Modern Greek Π-words

- Zimova M.D. German T-words and Modern Greek T-words
- Electronic dictionary of phonaesthemes
- Zimova M.D. German SCH-words
- Mikhalyov A.B. Spirant + labial plosives words (Russian, English, French, Arabic)
- Shlyakhova S.S. Phonaestheme ШВ in Komi-Permyak

Electronic graphophonosemantic dictionary

- Shlyakhova S.S. A

Terminology lab

- Dictionary of phonosemantic terms

Phonosemantic experimental lab

- Synaesthesia. Auditory-chromatic associativity
- Onomatopoeia. Universal typology of onomatopes
- Phonosemantic field theory
- Phonosemantic world-image
- Etymology and phonosemantics
- Phonosemantics and poetry

Problems of Linguistic Motivation online journal

Photos

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- Vivas
- Field studies
- People and faces
- Phonosemantic photoquotes

Audio and video

- Sea sounds. Catalonia
- Sounds of Moscow
- Sounds of Barcelona
- Con-classical phonetics in music texts

Folk phonosemantics

- Phonosemantic jokes
- Phonosemantic caricatures
- Living the Boom! life
- Living the Ouch! life

Interesting facts

- Journey inside the sound
- Sound-art
- Sound visualisation

Affiliated websites

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- In other languages

Useful links

- In Russian
- In other languages

BUDGET AND FINANCE TRANSPARENCY IN THE 2014 RANKING OF FEDERAL SUBJECTS OF RUSSIA'S REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WEBSITES[1]

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Abstract. The present paper deals with analysing official local government websites of Federal subjects of Russia to find the one featuring the best framework for the disclosure of budget data, the visualising of information and overall design. The three leading contenders that received top marks are websites of the Leningrad, Altai, and Krasnoyarsk regions.
Keywords: ranking, Russia, region, transparency, budget.

1. Introduction

Citizens of the Russian Federation are becoming increasingly interested in the way public funds are being used in their regions. In order to facilitate access to their information, each Federal subject government publishes the relevant documents on the regional Finance ministry's website or in a dedicated section of the region's official website.

The presentation, however, sometimes leaves much to be desired. For example, while the Moscow government website (http://www.mos.ru/), as of November 2014, is offering plenty of graphic diagrams, with all the necessary figures available right on its front page, that of the Magadan region (http://www.magadan.ru/ru/government/Main.html) is the antithesis of transparency in that regard.

Consequently, the present paper sets out to investigate how well public expenditure figures are disclosed in Russia, defining the aim of the study as establishing which regions offer the best framework for disclosing data on their official websites.

2. Methodology

The methodology was modelled on the one used in the paper 'Budget and finance transparency in ranking regional government websites of Federal subjects of Russia'[3] .

The preparations for ranking the participant websites included:

1. Members of the action group assigning each student a number of Federal subjects;
2. Evening out the load by distributing subject websites in equal portions and, should unassigned websites remain, distributing the rest between the action group and top of the list of students.
3. The students examining each regional website assigned to them, establishing the exact location where budget and finance data is hosted (in theory, the regional Finance ministry website).
4. Assessing the previously established website using the four criteria:
   - Frequency of news updates, a maximum of 10 points;
   - Website design and usability, a maximum of 25 points;

1 Course work in Finance. Course read by Magomet Yandiev, Associate Professor, http://ssrn.com/author=1278584

2 Valentina Akimova, Vladlena Alekseyenko, Svetlana Alykova, Anastasiya Serebryakova, Arman Bagdasaryan, Maksim Bureyev, Yekaterina Gukhova, Aleksandr Grishin, Yevgeniya Yegorova, Natalya Zherebyatyeva, Mansur Zakayev,Violetta Zvereva, Yekaterina Kovaltchuk, Nikita Kryzhko, Kamila Kusmanova, Georgiy Mazin, Yan Nedashkovskiy, Anastasiya Ostapenko, Viktoriya Samoylova, Anastasiya Smirnova, Edgard Tkatchev, Sofya Turkina, Miogi Tyan, Kseniya Shkitina, Anton Shumov, Yegor Yakovlev.

3 Nikita Kurtukov et al., 2011, http://ssrn.com/abstract=1865786

- Availability and comprehensiveness of budget and finance documents, a maximum of 30 points;
- Intelligibility of budget and finance data presentation, a maximum of 35 points.

5. Frequency of news updates, given that the website must offer timely information on budget implementation, debt management, oversight of publicly funded institutions, and public procurement, is an important component, marked as follows:
   - Daily updates – a maximum of 10 points;
   - Weekly updates – a maximum of 7 points;
   - Monthly updates – a maximum of 5 points;
   - Occasional updates – a maximum of 3 points;
   - No news section – 0 points.
6. Website design and usability is marked as follows:
   - Ease of finding the information wanted by a user – a maximum of 15 points;
   - Website design – a maximum of 10 points.
7. Availability and comprehensiveness of budget and finance documents is marked as follows:
   - A record of budget and budget implementation acts, a debt book, as well as timely information on current budget implementation, up-to-date data on government debt and procurement present – 30 points;
   - Absence of any of the above results in 5 points per component withdrawn.

   A maximum of 30 points in all.
8. Intelligibility of budget and finance data presentation is marked as follows:
   - All or most of the materials written in plain Russian – a maximum of 35 points;
   - All or most of the materials written in a convoluted way, difficult for most Russian citizens to understand – a maximum of 5 points;
   - No materials written to be understood by a lay person – 0 points.

   A maximum of 35 points in all.
9. The total sum of points a region can get is therefore a 100.
10. The winners are selected from the regions whose websites received most points.

3. The study

Analysing the websites of the 81 regional financial authorities according to the criteria set out above, the average result arrived at was 79.57 point. This indicates that it is easy enough to find information on a given region's cash flow on its website, thanks to accessible and easy to understand user interface (19.3 points out of 25 on average). It is also clear that the information presented is sufficiently comprehensive (22.8 out of 35), but not very accessible for a lay person (28.2 out of 35). All the budget and finance data published on regional government websites is updated on a regular basis (9.2 out of 10). Yet, one of them (the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia) does not have a dedicated hosting server, relying on the ucoz.ru free hosting provider.

The original population was then divided into four brackets depending on the number of points.

100–86 points	85–71 points	70–51 points	<51 points
32 regions	29 regions	15 regions	5 regions

Falling into the 100–86 bracket are 32 Federal subjects of Russia[1]. Their average score is 93.31 (out of 100) point. Out of these, three regions gained most points: the Leningrad, the Altai, and the Krasnoyarsk region. This shows that financial authorities in these regions of Russia are doing an excellent job, providing accessible and clear budget and finance data for the region that anyone can access.

The 86–71 bracket includes 29 regions. Their average score is 79 (out of 100) points. There are things that

1 The spreadsheet with regional government websites rankings is available at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Jo3611nT695NMYQgH-OF6wCAtOj4enlfCdfUD4vlNUQ/edit#gid=1279885134

financial authorities in these regions can improve in terms of content and presentation of their data. To make it more accessible and easily understood by a lay person they need to work on the navigation design and usability of their websites, append them with the missing documents (things like the debt book or budget implementation documents are in many cases missing or impossible to locate).

Next, a much less densely populated bracket of 15 regions which scored 70 to 51 points. Their average score is 63.63 points. These are never dedicated local Finance ministries websites, but rather subsections of the respective regional government websites, which makes it harder to search for the information. Poorly designed, it is difficult for a lay person browsing them to locate budget figures for the region (which are typically dry datasheets full of incomprehensible acronyms). There are almost no clear and graphic charts; on the whole, visitors of these websites have to make an effort to use them.

The last bracket with the least number of points includes only 5 Federal subjects. These are regional Finance ministries websites offering the least amount of budgetary information, presented in the least accessible manner. These are the Buryat Republic, the Penza region, Karachay–Cherkessia, the Jewish autonomous region, and the Magadan region. Their average score is 41.4 points.

4. Comparison with previous years' ranking results

Comparing the 2014 figures with those obtained in the previous ranking exercise [1], done in 2011 (factoring in some changes in methodology), it is clear that good content does not necessary mean good navigation. For example, the Republic of Yakutia's website (which came top in 2011), although enjoying a high enough result in the present study, scored somewhat lower. The figures show that all the necessary information is there, but the presentation and accessibility are lacking. It should be noted that all the websites which came top in 2011 performed well enough in 2014, scoring around 80 points on average. Still, the case of the St. Petersburg regional Finance ministry website, which came 3rd in 2011, but only 5th in 2014, merits particular attention. Given that the present study aims to establish which website has the best framework for disclosing budget data for the region and the best design, whereas the criteria used in 2011 emphasised availability and comprehensiveness of information, one can say that the latter remained St. Petersburg's forte. Its website still offers the most comprehensive insight into a region's budget, presented with unparalleled design and accessibility.

5. Conclusions

1. Leading in terms of budget and finance data transparency are the local authorities of the Leningrad, Altai, Krasnoyarsk, and Tver regions, as well as in St. Petersburg and Moscow.
2. Up to 40% of regional government or financial authorities of Federal subjects' websites offering budget and finance figures are highly fit for purpose or in need of only minor improvements.
3. 36% of regional government websites are in need of slight revisions, improvements in user interface, or a more complete set of documents.
4. 18% of the websites are inadequately designed, some missing a working site search engine, some offering documents not accessible to lay persons, some missing half the necessary documents.
5. 6% of regional financial authorities' websites are in poor condition, with updates extremely rare, most of the documents missing or links to them broken, and those presented hard to understand by a lay person.
6. Taking both the 2014 and the 2011 rankings into account, the one region whose website scores highest among all the others is St. Petersburg.

6. References

1. Nikita Kurtukov et al., 2011, http://ssrn.com/abstract=1865786

7. Appendices

Appendix 1. Russian Regions, ranked by the number of points

Federal subject	URL of the website ranked	Frequency of news updates, 10 point	Website design and usability, 25 points	Availability and comprehensive-ness of budget and finance documents, 30 points	Intelligibility of budget and finance data presentation, 35 points	SUM
Leningrad region	http://www.lenobl.ru	10	25	30	35	100
Altai region	http://www.altairegion22.ru	10	25	30	35	100
Krasnoyarsk region	http://www.krskstate.ru	10	25	30	35	100
Tver region	http://www.reg.tverfin.ru	10	23	30	35	98
St. Petersburg	http://www.fincom.spb.ru	10	25	30	33	98
Moscow	http://www.mos.ru	10	25	30	32	97
Volgograd region	http://volgafin.volganet.ru	8	25	29	34	96
Republic of Chuvashia	http://gov.cap.ru	10	25	30	30	95
Perm region	http://mfin.permkrai.ru	10	25	25	35	95
Primorsk region	http://primorsky.ru	10	25	25	35	95
Vladimir region	http://www.avo.ru	10	25	25	35	95
Vologda region	http://vologda-oblast.ru	10	25	30	30	95
Ivanovsk region	http://df.ivanovoobl.ru	10	23	30	32	95
Murmansk region	http://minfin.gov-murman.ru	10	25	25	35	95
Nizhny Novgorod region	http://www.government-nnov.ru	10	25	25	35	95
Sverdlovsk region	http://minfin.midural.ru	7	25	30	33	95
Kaliningrad region	http://www.minfin39.ru	10	24	28	32	94
Republic of Khakassia	http://www.r-19.ru	10	23	30	30	93
Irkutsk region	http://www.gfu.ru	10	22	30	31	93
Republic of Tatarstan	http://minfin.tatarstan.ru/rus/index.htm	9	25	25	32	91
Omsk region	http://mf.omskportal.ru	6	23	30	32	91
Orel region	http://orel-region.ru	10	24	27	30	91
Ryazan region	http://www.ryazanreg.ru	8	24	27	32	91

Federal subject	URL of the website ranked	Frequency of news updates, 10 point	Website design and usability, 25 points	Availability and comprehensive-ness of budget and finance documents, 30 points	Intelligibility of budget and finance data presentation, 35 points	SUM
Zabaikalye region	http://e-zab.ru	10	25	25	30	90
Khabarovsk region	http://minfin.khabkrai.ru/portal/Menu/Page/1	10	20	25	35	90
Novosibirsk region	http://mfnso.nso.ru/Pages/default.aspx	10	20	30	30	90
Tambov region	http://www.tambov.gov.ru	10	20	30	30	90
Saratov region	http://www.saratov.gov.ru	10	25	20	34	89
Kostroma region	http://www.region.kostroma.ru/index.aspx	10	18	30	30	88
Tomsk region	http://tomsk.gov.ru	9	24	25	30	88
Republic of Marij El	http://portal.mari.ru/minfin/default.aspx	9	20	25	33	87
Belgorod region	http://beldepfin.ru	7	20	29	30	86
Krasnodar region	http://finmarket.kubangov.ru/otk-dannie	10	20	20	35	85
Stavropol region	http://www.mfsk.ru	10	25	20	30	85
Amur region	http://www.amurobl.ru/wps/portal/Main	5	25	20	35	85
Yaroslavl region	http://www.yarregion.ru	10	25	20	30	85
Republic of Bashkortostan	https://minfin.bashkortostan.ru	9	25	25	25	84
Moscow region	http://mf.mosreg.ru	10	23	15	35	83
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	http://www.sakha.gov.ru	10	17	25	30	82
Arkhangelsk region	http://www.dvinaland.ru	9	20	27	25	81
Samara region	http://www.samregion.ru	8	18	25	30	81
Republic of Altai	http://www.minfin-altai.ru	10	15	25	30	80
Kabardino-Balkarian Republic	http://kbr.ru	9	17	24	30	80
Komi Republic	http://www.rkomi.ru	10	25	10	35	80
Rostov region	http://www.donland.ru	10	20	15	35	80
Sakhalin region	http://sakhminfin.ru	9	20	26	25	80
Republic of Tuva	http://minfin.tuva.ru	6	22	20	31	79

Federal subject	URL of the website ranked	Frequency of news updates, 10 point	Website design and usability, 25 points	Availability and comprehensive-ness of budget and finance documents, 30 points	Intelligibility of budget and finance data presentation, 35 points	SUM
Astrakhan region	http://www.astrobl.ru	10	23	21	25	79
Lipetsk region	http://admlip.ru	9	20	25	25	79
Republic of Dagestan	http://www.minfinrd.ru	10	18	25	25	78
Nenets autonomous region	http://adm-nao.ru	10	18	15	35	78
Udmurtian Republic	http://www.udmurt.ru	10	20	22	25	77
Republic of Ingushetia	http://mfri.ru	10	20	20	27	77
Voronezh region	http://www.govvrn.ru/wps/wcm/connect/vrnmain/main	6	18	22	30	76
Republic of Karelia	http://www.gov.karelia.ru	10	20	25	20	75
Kemerovo region	http://kemoblast.ru	10	25	15	25	75
Chelyabinsk region	http://pravmin74.ru	10	20	25	20	75
Kaluga region	http://www.admoblkaluga.ru/sub/finan	2	17	25	30	74
Republic of Adygeya	http://www.minfin01-maykop.ru/Menu/Page/1	8	15	20	30	73
Kirov region	http://depfin.kirov.ru	8	15	25	25	73
Kurgan region	http://kurganobl.ru	10	17	20	25	72
Republic of North Ossetia-Alania	http://mfrno-a.ru	6	9	25	30	70
Bryansk region	http://bryanskoblfin.ru/Show/Category/?ItemId=26	5	5	25	35	70
Kursk region	http://www.oblduma.kursknet.ru	10	20	20	20	70
Orenburg region	http://www.orenburg-gov.ru/magnoliaPublic/regportal/Main.html	5	15	25	25	70
Republic of Kalmykia	http://www.kalmregion.ru	10	19	20	20	69
Republic of Mordovia	http://www.e-mordovia.ru	10	19	20	20	69
Smolensk region	http://www.finsmol.ru	5	17	15	30	67

Federal subject	URL of the website ranked	Frequency of news updates, 10 point	Website design and usability, 25 points	Availability and comprehensive-ness of budget and finance documents, 30 points	Intelligibility of budget and finance data presentation, 35 points	SUM
Chukotka Autonomous District	http://www.chukotka.org/	9	23	5	30	67
Chechen Republic	http://www.minfinchr.ru/	3	5	30	25	63
Tula region	http://tularegion.ru/	10	18	15	20	63
Pskov region	http://gz.pskov.ru/trade/view/organization/general.html?id=100253986	5	2	25	30	62
Yamalo-Nenets autonomous region	http://правительство.янао.рф	10	20	5	25	60
Novgorod region	http://novkfo.ru	10	9	19	20	58
Khanty-Mansijsk autonomous region	http://www.depfin.admhmao.ru	10	12	13	17	52
Kamchatka region	http://www.kamchatka.gov.ru	9	14	10	18	51
Buryat Republic	http://minfinrb.ru	10	11	15	10	46
Penza region	http://finance.pnzreg.ru	3	10	15	15	43
Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia	http://minfin09.ucoz.ru	5	7	20	10	42
Jewish autonomous region	http://www.eao.ru	8	15	10	8	41
Magadan region	http://www.magadan.ru/ru/government/Main.html	10	10	5	10	35

2015 INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES SAFETY RATINGS

The Safe Internet League, with the assistance of the National Rating Agency (Russia), has issued popular Internet search engine companies rankings to illustrate how safe for underage users their search engines were in 2014 and early 2015 when used at their standard and strictest security settings.

1. Top Safety Ratings Tier

IS1 Rating, meaning the Safe Internet League takes the responsibility of recommending the search engine for underage use, was not assigned this time.

IS2 Rating was assigned to Sputnik (sputnik.ru)

The Safe Internet League has found nothing that should restrict its use by underage persons.

The research found the search engine demonstrating high performance in terms of filtering out dangerous content in its output, and its staff ready and willing to listen to feedback from ordinary users and NGOs and to promptly correct any shortcomings detected. The only reason why the search engine did not get the highest rating is that it is a new company with no extensive record of consistently safe output.

2. Medium Safety Ratings Tier

IS3 Rating was assigned to Yandex (yandex.ru, used with its strictest security settings)

The Safe Internet League recommends Yandex for underage use with periodic adult supervision.

The research found its search engine demonstrating satisfactory performance in terms of filtering out dangerous content in its output. On top of that, the League notes that the company is quite open and willing to cooperate with both government agencies and NGOs, and is doing its own R&D in dangerous content filtering. Nevertheless, 2014 saw its search quality drop, signifying that the company sometimes fails to react to the ever-changing online environment with new countermeasures.

IS4 Rating was assigned to

- **Google** (google.ru, used with its strictest security settings),
- **Microsoft Russia** (bing.ru, used with its strictest security settings),
- **AOL.com** (used with its strictest security settings)

The Safe Internet Leagues recommends using these Internet search engines with constant adult supervision.

The research found these search engines demonstrating mostly satisfactory performance in terms of filtering out dangerous content in its output. That said, the League notes that Google is quite open and actively cooperating with government agencies at its place of incorporation, but is not equally open and cooperating with their Russian counterparts. 2014 saw its search quality drop, signifying that maintaining up-to-date countermeasures for the Russian-language segment is not a priority.

3. Low Safety Ratings Tier

IS5 Rating was assigned to

- **Yandex** (yandex.ru, used at any but the strictest security settings),
- **Google** (google.ru, used at any but the strictest security settings),
- **Microsoft Russia** (bing.ru, used at any but the strictest security settings),
- **AOL.com** (used at any but the strictest security settings),
- **Mail.Ru Group** (mail.ru),
- **Yahoo** (yahoo.ru),
- **Lycos.com**
- **Duckduckgo.com**
- **Baidu.com**

The Safe Internet League does not recommend these Internet search engines for underage use.

The above-listed services demonstrate unsatisfactory performance in terms of filtering out dangerous content in their output, and are therefore not recommended for underage use.

NG Rating was assigned to

- TorSearch (http://kbhpodhnfxl3clb4.onion)
- Torch (http://xmh57jrzrnw6insl.onion)

Besides not recommending these Internet search engines for underage use, the Safe Internet League also notes the very criminal nature of the websites, created specifically for distribution of dangerous content.

P.S. The Rambler and Nigma Internet search engines were not ranked due to their using the Yandex search engine API.

INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES SAFETY RANKING METHODOLOGY

The Internet Search Engines Safety Ranking is a system of ratings assigned by the Safe Internet League, with the assistance of the National Rating Agency, to illustrate how safe the output of a particular Internet search engine is for underage users.

The ranking is carried out under Article 21 of the 2010 Federal Law no. 436 On Protecting Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development providing for public oversight of its implementation.

A search engine's rating is assigned by a conference of Safe Internet League experts assessing

- Its search query output, analysed by League and NRA experts;
- Its absolute values and volatility of integrated search quality indices, according to AnalyzeThis.ru;
- Online publications on underage search engines safety;
- Its compliance with Federal Law no. 436;
- Its readiness to cooperate – in particular, to react to valid demands by the public, the authorities, and individual users regarding matters of underage safety.

Safety Ratings Tiers:

	Rating	**Underage use recommendations**
	Top Safety Ratings Tier	
	IS1, IS2	Unrestricted use
	IS3, IS4	Restricted use
	Low Safety Ratings Tier	
	IS5, NG	Do not use

Ratings in detail:

Top Safety Ratings Tier:

IS1 – the search engine is recommended for underage users

IS2 – no restrictions on using the search engine by underage users

Medium Safety Ratings Tier:

IS3 – the search engine is recommended for underage use with limited adult supervision

IS4 – the search engine is recommended for underage use with constant adult supervision

Low Safety Ratings Tier:

IS5 – the search engine is not recommended for underage use

NG – the search engine is not recommended for use

The Safe Internet League is the largest and most reputable Russian organization fighting dangerous Web content. Our aim is to eradicate dangerous content through community action by IT professionals, industry players, and regular Internet users.

Our mission consists in complete eradication of dangerous online content by inviting members of professional community and industry players to adopt self-regulation in order to avoid censorship.

To accomplish this, members of the League undertake the following tasks:

- Fighting the dissemination of dangerous Web content using every means available;
- Uniting the professional community and industry players to work out self-regulation mechanisms in order to avoid top-down regulation and Internet censorship;
- Providing genuine help to children and teenagers victimized by the spread of dangerous Internet content;
- Assisting the authorities in tackling web site owners who are creating and distributing dangerous content – child pornography, materials encouraging violence and illegal drug use;
- Participating in drawing up legislation aimed at eradicating dangerous Internet content.

www.ligainternet.ru/en/

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