

DOI 10.32342/2523-4463-2017-0-13-219-222

УДК 81'2

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## **SPEECH BEHAVIOR OF AN INTERNET TROLL IN ONLINE COMMUNICATION**

The phenomenon of Internet trolling has been considered in the article. The definition «Internet troll» has been drawn out and the history of the notion has been traced. Such aspects as aggression, success, disruption, and deception have been analysed in the context of the given question. Means of verbal aggression have been defined: character attacks, competence attacks, self-concept attacks, intentionally vague or ambiguous yet implicit threats, insults, malediction, scolding, teasing, mockery, verbal use of force, profanity, verbal abuse.

*Key words: trolling, online communication, speech behavior, Internet slang, verbal aggression, discourse, networking, online community.*

**T**he amount of social data on the Web is increasing infinitely and online social networking is becoming one of the most prevalent means of expression worldwide. Websites like Twitter, YouTube and Blogger are providing an efficient way to link different parts of the world and also different classes of the global society. Together with the positive aspects of the Internet, people who sow discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion have come into our life under the name «trolls» [1].

Thus, analysis of speech behavior of people making emotional attacks on a person or a group through malicious and vulgar comments in order to provoke response (referred to as Internet trolls) is the objective of the article.

E. Buckels, J. Donath, C. Hardaker, M. Neurauter-Kessels, N. Sullivan, R. Watts can be mentioned among the researchers of this relatively new phenomenon [2; 4; 5; 9; 11]. A number of recent studies are devoted to displays of verbal and nonverbal aggression as an integral component of Internet trolling in online discourse [3; 6; 7; 9; 10].

There are competing theories of where and when the word «troll» was first used in Internet slang, with numerous unattested accounts of BBS and UseNet origins in the early 80's or before [3; 6; 7].

In academic literature, the practice of trolling was first documented by Judith Donath (1999). Donath's paper outlines the ambiguity of identity in a disembodied virtual community such as Usenet [4].

Due to her research, trolling is a game about identity deception, albeit one that is played without the consent of most of the players. The troll attempts to pass as a legitimate participant,

sharing the group's common interests and concerns; the newsgroups members, if they are cognizant of trolls and other identity deceptions, attempt to both distinguish real from trolling postings, and upon judging a poster a troll, make the offending poster leave the group. Their success at the former depends on how well they – and the troll understand identity cues; their success at the latter depends on whether the troll's enjoyment is sufficiently diminished or outweighed by the costs imposed by the group [4].

Others have addressed the same issue, e.g., Claire Hardaker, in her Ph.D. thesis «Trolling in asynchronous computer-mediated communication: From user discussions to academic definitions» [5].

Surveying various definitions of trolling, C. Hardaker notes that most of these definitions nevertheless share a certain area of common ground, which can be characterized as «the posting of incendiary comments with the intent of provoking others into conflict» [5]. However, she points out that the surveyed definitions are intuitive and not based on the analysis of actual data. She therefore sets out to formulate a more data-driven definition of trolling, based on the analysis of approximately 2,000 user comments about trolling, which were extracted from an extensive initial corpus of online discussions. She arrives at the conclusion that trolling speech behavior, as perceived by forum users, involves four main interrelated characteristics: aggression, success, disruption, and deception [5].

The first characteristic – aggression – involves «aggressive, malicious behavior undertaken with the aim of annoying or goading others into retaliating» [5].

Among Internet trolls' means of verbal aggression the following ones can be listed: character attacks, competence attacks, self-concept attacks, intentionally vague or ambiguous yet implicit threats, insults, malediction, scolding, teasing, mockery, verbal use of force, profanity, verbal abuse. Some nonverbal emblems belong to this characteristic too – intentional use of emoji that are inappropriate for the given discourse situation or use of offensive pictures. It is worth mentioning that despite their being basic means of communication with traditions that go back to biblical literature with the curse and Greek culture with the diatribe, most linguistic studies quite rarely mention verbal aggression it being too emotion-laden and unquantifiable.

The second characteristic – success – depends on whether or not the troll's provocation elicits the desired angry response. Such a response is generally known by discussion forum users as «biting». The metaphor is drawn from fishing; the troll places bait in the water, and hopes that the fish will bite [5].

The third characteristic of trolling speech behavior – disruption – involves the troll's desire to «hijack» the discussion, leading to topic decay as the participants are sidetracked away from the original topic to become embroiled in a series of intense personal attacks [5].

The fourth characteristic – deception – is connected with the troll's projection of a false identity for purposes of disrupting the discussion; a troll is thus defined as «a CMC user who constructs the identity of sincerely wishing to be part of the group in question but whose real intention(s) is/are to cause disruption or exacerbate conflict for the purposes of their own amusement» [5].

Considering psychological features of people who may be defined as Internet trolls, in 2014, a team of researchers led by Erin Buckels, of the University of Manitoba, found strong positive correlations between trolling and Machiavellianism, a predisposition to be cunning, calculating, deceptive in achieving personal goals, psychopathy, a lack of remorse and empathy, and a tendency for manipulation. Sadism, the tendency to derive pleasure from causing others physical or psychological pain, was one of the most robust of the personality traits linked to trolling behavior [2].

In another study titled «The Dark Side of Facebook», Evita March, a psychologist at Federation University, in Australia, along with some colleagues, conducted an online questionnaire similar to Buckels'. Three hundred and ninety-six adults between 18 and 77 participated, 76 percent of them women. They found that trolls on Facebook are likely to be merciless, emotionally cruel, and are driven by the pleasure they obtain through others' pain and discomfort. That pleasure can even become addictive. «When you engage in this, you're reinforced by certain biological processes: neurotransmitters, dopamine», March says. «But like any addictive behavior, you have to do more and more to get that same rush, which is why we might see people engaging in trolling more and more» [8].

Michael Nuccitelli, Psy.D. made a deep psychological analyses of Internet trolls in 2010 and defined their following features:

- Most often they are males.
- An Internet troll is likely to be Internet addicted.
- There is a self-awareness of causing harm to others, directly or indirectly.
- They use Internet to obtain, tamper with, exchange and deliver harmful information, to engage in criminal or deviant activities or to profile, identify, locate, stalk and engage a target.
- Internet trolls tend to have few offline friends and online friends often engage in the same type of online harassment.
- They are psycho-pathological in experiencing power and control online fueled by their offline reality of being insignificant, angry, and alone.
- The severity and magnitude of psychological abuse they inflict upon their online targets is directly correlated to their probability of suffering from an Axis I, Axis II or Dual Diagnose mental illness.
- When online, Internet trolls show a lack of empathy, have minimal capacity to experience shame or guilt and behave with callousness and a grandiose sense of self.
- They are developmentally immature, tend to be chronically isolated and have minimal or no intimate relationships [10].

As a conclusion, we may point it out, that although trolling is a somewhat vague concept, the core of this type of online behavior is the notion of deliberate provocation for purposes of personal amusement. Trolls' opening moves – through which they first announce their presence to other participants in the discussion – can be seen as dropping «bait» into the water and waiting for the in-group members to «bite». This «baiting» commonly involves exaggeration; trolls may parody in-group members' expectations of out-group views, offering a heightened version of those views in order to encourage hostile reactions. If this strategy is successful, a «flame war» may ensue, involving attacks not only against opponents' quality face (by impugning their intelligence and other positive qualities), but also against their relational face (by distorting their views and thus violating their sociality rights, i. e. the expectation that they will be treated fairly). Trolls adopt a range of fluid personas, oscillating between the sincere expression of their views and various forms of role-playing, particularly involving strategies based on irony. These «insincere» strategies perform multiple face management functions, enabling trolls to attack opponents' face, defend their own face, and pre-emptively preserve their face [1; 7].

Notwithstanding the above, trolling is paradoxically not only a destructive form of speech behavior, it also has the potential to be profoundly constructive, stimulating community-building and strengthening group identities, and undoubtedly requires further researches there being many unclear and questionable aspects of the phenomenon.

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В статье рассматривается феномен интернет-троллинга. Выведено определение «интернет-тролль» и прослежена история понятия. Определены средства вербальной агрессии. Проанализированы психологические характеристики интернет-троллей. Отмечаются особенности такого речевого поведения в Интернете. Дана классификация людей, которые могут быть определены как интернет-тролли.

*Ключевые слова: троллинг, онлайн-коммуникация, речевое поведение, интернет-сленг, вербальная агрессия, дискурс, сетевое взаимодействие, интернет-сообщество.*

У статті розглядається феномен інтернет-тролінгу. Виведено визначення «інтернет-троль» та простежено історію поняття. Визначено засоби вербальної агресії. Проаналізовано психологічні характеристики інтернет-тролей. Вказуються особливості такої мовленнєвої поведінки в Інтернеті. Подано класифікацію людей, які можуть бути визначені як інтернет-тролі.

*Ключові слова: тролінг, онлайн-комунікація, мовленнєва поведінка, інтернет-сленг, вербальна агресія, дискурс, взаємодія у Мережі, онлайн-спільнота.*

*Одержано 21.11.2016*