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SOCIO-POLITICAL LEXICON IN UKRAINIAN INTERNET-MEDIA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY: FUNCTIONING AND DECODING

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Abstract: The article provides a complex research of Ukrainian socio-political lexicon at the 21st century beginning from the position of both information producer/communicator and its consumer/recipient. It analyses connection between lexical innovations in language of internet-media and social, political and economic transformations. The study describes dynamic changes in thematic groups of sociopolitical vocabulary, particularly those evoked by lexical borrowings. The survey conducted during research brings to light levels of socio-political lexicon decoding for respondents in various age groups. The associative experiment results reflect the invariative component in both individual and language picture of the world.

Keywords: Internet-communication, Language of internet-media, Lexical innovations, Socio-political content, Socio-political lexicon, Thematic groups of vocabulary, Vocabulary decoding, Vocabulary functioning.

1 Introduction

The lexicon of every literary language is constantly in dynamics. Nowadays, globalization in political, financial, economic, and informational domains of public life noticeably influence development of the European languages. They are developing a new "information mode" of functioning. Every language has both common and unique vocabulary updating features, but lexicon being a mirror of social life is an axiom. Cl. Hagège states that each language reflects the deep identity of its community [1].

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Ukrainian language acquired a mammoth number of lexical innovations which are primarily related to the modern civilization process trends such as European integration and neoglobalism. Moreover, we observe that some already existing words are widening their functioning, neologisms are being formed, and borrowings are appearing to denote domestic processes, for instance, the decommunization course, Orange Revolution, Revolution of Dignity, resistance to Russian military aggression, numerous political campaigns, social stratification. Socio-political lexicon interprets reality on a conceptual level. And internet-media are the fastest to record and represent the socio-political vocabulary. Information technologies allow them to replicate an information product on a gigantic scale, and it poses new challenges to the recipients. They need to organize information rapidly and estimate its worth; select necessary information for their life, personal development and professional activity; express their views on certain phenomena or events; convey it to others; understand the mass communication laws: adapt to modern information conditions and various information perception; realize its influence on psychological health; master the communication by technical means.

Media reality also affects the nature of social relations, generating new socio- and information-psychological phenomena: info phobias, info pandemics, info noise, information loads and tensions. All mentioned above dramatically increase a demand in complex linguistic studies which might combine the approach to the socio-political lexicon from the position of both information producer/communicator and its consumer/recipient.

The aim of our study is to analyze the socio-political lexicon in Ukrainian internet-media at the beginning of the 21st century through the prism of its functioning and decoding.

2 Literature Review

Research into socio-political vocabulary functioning and decoding in the new scientific paradigm is based on modern lexicological methodologies. The present study builds on work by O. Taranenko who investigated mechanisms of language units and categories semantic development [14]. N. Klymenko described dictionary creating procedures and a complex system for linguistic research automatization [4]. L. Struhanets outlined dynamic processes directions in the Ukrainian literary language vocabulary in the 20th and at the beginning of 21st century [11]. Collective monograph edited by Ye. Karpilovska presents the systematic and structural study of Ukrainian lexicon during the last decade [3]. L. Kysliuk considers the current Ukrainian word-forming nominations in three interrelated manifestations: language system, general (usus), and individual (idiolect) language practice [6].

Since socio-political vocabulary draws attention of numerous linguists, we will emphasize the prominent studies. Ya. Yaremko researches modern political terminology at cognition and communication intersection [16], M. Stepanenko analyses neologisms and circumlocution that objectify socio-political transformations in 2004–2016 [10]. O. Styshov considers socio-political vocabulary through the scope of dynamic lexical and semantic processes [13], and M. Navalna investigates its place in functional styles interaction [7]. Generally, scholars highlight thematic openness of socio-political lexicon, active changes within its boundaries, actualization of certain units in a particular period, and its importance in current communication. Thus, the research of socio-political vocabulary is a permanent process.

3 Materials and Methods

Nowadays, the society development of society is marked by the growing media influence which shape the global information continuum and is an integral part of professional and personal life. Internet-communication eliminates any geographical distance and creates Homo Medius and the new media civilization. Modern internet-communication features are audience growth, high information transmission speed, information flows complexity, and information oversaturation. In a globalized world, media are an important tool to shape a political, economic, and social agenda. Internet-media that cover central social topics - politics, economics, culture, sports, IT, etc. - are gaining more and more importance. Thus, we chose them for investigating how modern socio-political vocabulary functions. The sources are online-media Day (day.kyiv.ua/uk), Mirror of the Week (zn.ua/ukr), Left Bank (lb.ua), Ukrainian Truth (pravda.com.ua), Censor.net (censor.net/ua). These media were selected for the reason that they rigorously care about professional journalism features in online-communication.

To conduct the thorough analysis, we used a variety of methods and techniques: internet-content monitoring method to assess the content of socio-political publications; direct observation to determine lexical units functional characteristics in internetmedia; survey method to investigate socio-political lexicon semantic decoding and identify collocations; qualitative analysis to discover connections between linguistic indicators and sociolinguistic criteria (including age); descriptive method to characterize the collected data.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Functioning of Socio-Political Lexicon

The lexical system a priori does not exist in isolation, it obeys general linguistic laws. Ukrainian socio-political vocabulary is a subsystem within the modern Ukrainian literary language vocabulary. It is hierarchically structured, formed and constantly evolving in accordance with the new communication conditions in the globalized world.

Numerous socio-political lexicon classifications exist in modern linguistics. S. Kalenyuk distinguished following thematic sets: 1) nomenclature nominations (positions of government officials); 2) departments and state administration bodies nominations; 3) political discourse fundamental lexemes (denoting people belonging to specific parties); 4) unites related to state security; 5) social processes nominations [2]. O. Styshov propose even more detailed classification: 1) regional, European, Eurasian and international organizations and institutions names, mostly abbreviated; 2) Ukrainian political unions, blocs, parties, parliamentary factions names; 3) nominations of people regarding to their party, political affiliation, or supporting relevant doctrines; 4) personal names derived mainly from names of political, social, religious figures in Ukraine and abroad; 5) political and ideological trends, concepts, and doctrines nominations which convincingly reflect that the Ukrainian language reacts to the modern society demands; 6) nominations to denote military confrontation and fight in Eastern Ukraine; 7) names of socio-political actions and processes both in Ukraine and worldwide [13]. Yu. Kostiuk analyses socio-political vocabulary through the scope of thematic fields and remarks: "The socio-political units in modern Ukrainian literary language fall into six thematic fields: Society, State, Politics, Economics, Law, and Military. The size of the last three fields is smaller due to the fact that concepts of economic, legal and military sphere penetrate into the general lexicon only under pressure of external factors such as social changes and correspondent frequent usage in everyday communication" [5].

The presented study analyzes socio-political lexicon by distinguishing inner thematic groups. The socio-political vocabulary thematic range is shaped by the concepts *society*, *state*, *politics*, *economics*, *law*, *morality*, *army*, and *international relations*. The lexicon reflects the language picture of the world with regards to present changes in the Ukrainian society, thus it is influenced by extralinguistic realities. However, one should understand that thematic framing of socio-political lexical units is always relative to some extent, because tokens may belong to several microgroups simultaneously.

For instance, the word *lockdown* has several meanings, and each of them indicates a functional environment: 1) "prisoner's isolation in solitary confinement" in legal; 2) "closing country's external relations" in political; 3) "restrictive measure to stop spreading of a disease" in medical and social spheres. The latter meaning is actively used now due to the global pandemics. Collins Dictionary recognized *lockdown* as the 2020 word because of its frequent usage. In Ukrainian internet-communication, we also observe mainly the third meaning of this token: *Planning May or summer vacations can be complicated by the continuation of hard lockdowns around the world* (pravda.com.ua); *The Minister of Health of Ukraine advocated the continuation of the lockdowns in the country... primarily due to the New Year holidays accompanied by mass celebrations and relatives visiting* (day.kyiv.ua/uk).

Some units undergo semantic modification process, and the word *bonus* is a sound example. It means an additional reward in the financial sphere, i. e. a special premium in insurance or an additional discount or commission in trade. However, in today's general discourse, the token often comes with the meanings "reward", "encouragment", "discount", "gift to a purchase": *Victory is always a nice bonus for a resume* (day.kyiv.ua/uk); *To think rationally and make informed decisions is a bonus* (day.kyiv.ua/uk); *Where is the bonus for kindness? Or how a grant was taken away from young filmmakers* (pravda.com.ua).

Next, we distinguish relative thematic groups of borrowings within the socio-political lexicon. Although they are heterogeneous in quantitative and qualitative characteristics, these units are intensively functioning in the modern Ukrainian language. Thus, the thematic group "Society" consists of tokens denoting representatives of social groups (*babyboomers, VIP*, gamer, vaper, zoomers, corrupt, millennials, celebrities, sponsor, teenager); activity and behavior (gender, glamor, homophobia, image, craft, lifehack, look, mainstream, nomophobia, trend, feedback, handmade, challenge, shopping); places (barbershop, supermarket, second-hand); leisure (battle, weekend, party, performance, flashmob), etc. Borrowings consolidate in language practice thanks to online-media: Nowadays, it is not a secret that any country's image is a part of national security (day.kyiv.ua/uk); We have heard about millennials multiple times and are convinced in their apolitical nature, because we know some of them personally (day.kyiv.ua/uk); Love to creative performances played a nasty joke with the head of state (pravda.com.ua); A German teenager blamed robbers for consequences of party where he and his friends smashed almost the entire house (day.kyiv.ua/uk).

Thematic group "Politics" consist of nominations for political activity subjects (downshifter, electorate, imagemaker, establishment, ombudsman, speaker, speechwriter, spokesman); political activity processes and forms (astroturfing, briefing, default, exit-poll, impeachment, inauguration, consensus, corruption, lustration, lobbying, PR, ratification, rating, summit); ideological concepts (globalism, green card, Euromania, Euroscepticism, Eurocentrism, Eurofederalism, legitimization), etc. Such new borrowings are actively used by journalists in reporting local and international political events, for instance: Can Turkey gain sufficient international support... And if this does not happen, Turkey will increasingly act as a spoiler (day.kyiv.ua/uk); Less than a year later, Zelenskyy's team decided to show his openness to journalists and organized a multi-hour press-marathon (pravda.com.ua); The use of e-voting can significantly reduce the level of electoral apathy and political absenteeism (pravda.com.ua); corruption is the misuse or abuse of trust or authority for personal advantage. This includes bribery, nepotism, and theft of state property (lb.ua).

Neologisms reflect events and participants in international politics, for example, politicians' surnames become the basis for describing political alliances: since 2012 *Merkozi* (Merkel + Sarkozy) transformed into *MerkHollande* (Merkel + Hollande); new nouns and verbs appear: *merkelism* is the word denoting Angela Merkel's politics.

New borrowings in the economic sphere correlate with the relevant terminology and denote economic phenomena and concepts (*brand, outsourcing, banking, dividend, cash, crowdfunding, leasing, marketing, startup, promotion*), positions (*brand manager, broker, dealer, distributor, merchandiser, realtor*), subjects and objects in the economic environment (*holding, tender, tranche, trust, offshore*), etc.

Being terminological system elements, they keep semantic boundaries closed and do not show any ambiguity. Therefore, their use in mass media communication is regulated and correlates with professional communication. The examples are following: the company... won the NASA's tender for the launch of small satellites into space (day.kyiv.ua/uk); A venture fund is going to be created in Ukraine in order to support the startups development after the business incubator (day.kyiv.ua/uk); European colleagues praised the progress made in implementing the program necessary for the second tranche of macro-financial assistance (pravda.com.ua).

Borrowings in the legal sphere correlate with legal terminology and relate to various types of illegal activities and their negative consequences. For instance, *abuser*, *bullying*, *victim blaming*, *gaslighting*, *cyber police*, *clickjacking*, *cryptojacking*, *skimming*, *fitting*, *hacker*, *harassment*. These units retain their specialization, unambiguity, and accuracy in internetcommunication: *Cyber police assumes that the hacker attack may repeat* (day.kyiv.ua/uk); *Dignity attacked: psychological bullying in government agencies* (zn.ua/ukr); *The convention states that sexual harassment should be a subject to "criminal or other statutory sanctions"* (day.kyiv.ua/uk).

Until recently, the functioning of military vocabulary in the Ukrainian society was limited to army professional activities. However, since 2014, military concepts and terms have been actively used in media reports about the Anti-Terrorist Operation and the Joint Forces Operation (JFO) in the East of Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea by Russian Federation. Frequently

used loanwords denote military and war realities: annexation, anti-terrorist, blitzkrieg, blockpost, hybrid (hybrid war), (conflict), occupation, dislocation, expansion, escalation provocation, etc. Mostly they are older borrowings which appear more often in language of internet-media due to the new sociopolitical circumstances. For example: Illegal annexation of Crimea, destabilization of Donbass in Eastern Ukraine violates the fundamental principles by which we create a peaceful and stable world (day.kyiv.ua/uk); This blitzkrieg operation [annexation of Crimea] was hardly possible without Kremlin extras, Crimean politicians (pravda.com.ua); In response to the occupation, the Ukrainian military set up a blockpost with a line of fortified firing points (day.kyiv.ua/uk). Furthermore, tokens denote the enemy (occupier, sniper, terrorist); special military clothing (balaclava) and mechanisms (drone, quadcopter), etc.

In the modern Ukrainian language, the word *cyborg* has been reconsidered and became a "marker of social time" associated with the long-term Donetsk airport defense (2014–2015). Defenders' endurance and courage gave birth to the legend of "cyborgs" – indomitable "cybernetic organisms": On the same day (January 13, 2015), the militants issued an ultimatum to "cyborgs": leave the airport or die (day.kyiv.ua/uk); The legendary "cyborgs" from the 3rd Special Forces Regiment began practicing parachute jumps at the training ground in Kropywnytskyi (censor.net/ua).

The thematic group "Medicine" entered the already formed list of thematic groups in the socio-political lexicon, as the situation provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic prompted medical vocabulary into online-media publications. Social processes actualize commonly used words in new circumstances, and as a result these tokens acquire new semantic connotations. We observe the frequent use of words *pandemic*, *quarantine*, *vaccine*, *distance*, *self-isolation*. Moreover, the language of internet-media faces a powerful wave of lexical innovations: *corona-debutant*, *corona-crisis*, *corona-year*, *anti-vaxxers*, *Covid-dissidents*. The last two words (*anti-vaxxers*, *Coviddissidents*) are contextual synonyms to denote "conspiracy theorists."

The word *pandemic* is the most used in online-media with the meaning "the highest level of epidemic that has spread to the majority of the population and large territories." Now it is associated with the uncontrolled spread of coronavirus, panic, quarantine and lockdown, as well as the rapid and often uncontrolled unverified information spreading – *infodemia*. The medical term of Italian origin *quarantine* "restrictive medical and administrative measures aimed to prevent the infectious diseases spread" has now become commonly used to mean "a way to restrain a pandemic."

The innovation *self-isolation* is synonymous to the concept of *social distancing*. Furthermore, we observe actualization of collocations: *distance work, distance learning, distance education, distance business, distance service,* etc. The word *corona-crisis* as an analogy to the terms *government crisis, constitutional crisis, humanitarian crisis* is commonly used in the same context.

The modern Ukrainian internet-media demonstrate that the language is rapidly developing and evolving through neologization and significant number of loanwords, including quickly adapting anglicisms. Our observations on the lexical borrowings activity correlate with the prevailing opinion in world linguistics [8], particularly with a claim that "nowadays, anglicisms have become the most frequent kind of borrowings" [15].

Loanwords primarily reflect the trend towards Europeanization and internationalization which is significantly strengthened by direct and indirect contacts between countries. For example, frequently used borrowings are *absenteeism* (Latin *absentia* – absence) "evasion from participation in elections, meetings, etc."; *lobbyism* (English *lobby*; Latin *lobium* – gallery) "purposeful legal or illegal influence on public authorities and local governments"; *nepotism* (Italian *nepote* – nephew, grandson, descendant) "protectionism, providing relatives and close friends with lucrative positions."

Functioning of foreign vocabulary, in particular new loanwords, in Ukrainian online-media is caused by linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The online-dictionary *Myslovo* (http://myslovo.com/) rating confirms that borrowings are excessively active in the modern Ukrainian language functioning. Every year *Myslovo* chooses a top word based on its popularity and social significance, and borrowings absolutely dominate: *Euromaidan* (2013), *cyborgs* (2014), *blockade* (2015), *corruption* (2016), *tomos* (2018), *digitalization* (2019), *coronavirus* (2020).

To sum up, it is worth to emphasize that the current period in the Ukrainian language is marked by excessive loanwords "consumption." Thus, the scientific community should coordinate efforts to ukrainianize thematic groups of foreign vocabulary, organize and harmonize them with native language resources.

4.2 Decoding of Socio-Political Lexicon

The object of mass communication in speech community is a recipient who predominantly stays anonymous for a communicator. Sociology of mass media frequently uses recipient research, since studies of this kind help to understand how media content influences audience. S. Rumyantseva compares information decoding and perception to a snowball – having read a text, listened to an audio or watched a video on the internet, a recipient transforms the information form and content into most correct and appealing to them, based on individual characteristics. Moreover, data received from the internet may be complemented and expended by other people's decoding [9].

The basic unit of "scanning the listener/viewer/reader of the text (oral or written) is a word" [12] Therefore, understanding of socio-political vocabulary is the primary basis for decoding political discourse. Given that, we conducted a survey to identify the lexical competence of different ages audience in the Western Ukraine where the Ukrainian language is fully functioning in all domains.

Examining the level of lexical competence, particularly when regarding socio-political vocabulary, one should beware of excessive sociologization in investigating linguistic phenomena as well as underestimation of social factors in the language life and its functional and structural characteristics. The sociolinguistic data were analyzed using quantitative methods. Although not all controversial issues can be solved by calculations, due to the thorough approach to information collection, even small numbers provide useful material for researching certain issues.

The questionnaire, aimed to identify the level of socio-political vocabulary competence, was presented to three groups of respondents, divided by age: 1) 18–35 years, 2) 36–55 years, 3) 56+. First group predominantly consisted of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University students. We chose future teachers as respondents due to the hypothesis that this group is interested in socio-political issues.

They study socio-political disciplines and are involved in sociopolitical activities. The online survey was conducted in the spring, 2021. We collected and analyzed 150 questionnaires, fifty for each age group. 97 % respondents are native Ukrainian speakers. The number of female respondents is slightly higher than male: 62 %. The distribution between urban and rural residents is 59 % to 41 %.

The questionnaire contained multiple choice and open-ended questions. Multiple choice questions identified if respondents understand tokens semantics. They had to choose the correct answer from the three offered. The research established that the correct meaning of *impeachment* – "a procedure that gives an opportunity to remove senior public officials from the office" – was chosen by 86 % respondents in age group "18–35", 92 % respondents in age group "36–55", and 96 % respondents in age group "56+" (Figure 1).

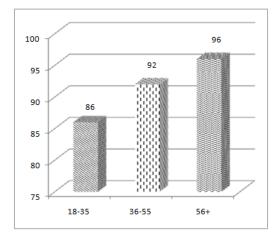


Figure 1 – Correct defining of lexeme impeachment by respondents in age groups "18–35", "36–55", and "56+"

The meaning of word *downshifter* – "a person who moves from more prestigious social level to less prestigious one" – was selected by 62 % respondents in age group "18–35", 40 % respondents in age group "36–55", and 24 % respondents in age group "56+" (Figure 2).

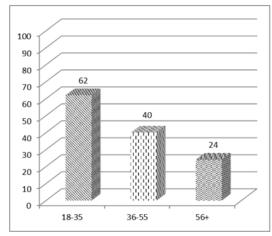
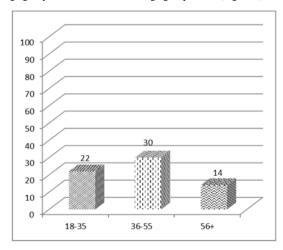
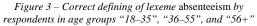


Figure 2 – Correct defining of lexeme downshifter by respondents in age groups "18–35", "36–55", and "56+"

Even less respondents know the meaning of word *absenteeism* – "evasion from participation in elections, meetings, etc." The competence level equals 22 % in age group "18–35", 30 % in age group "36–55", and 14 % in age group "56+" (Figure 3).





However, most questions in the questionnaire were open-ended. Respondents were asked to explain the meaning of *electorate* "voters", *establishment* "ruling circles, political elite", *spoiler* "a candidate who has no chance to win, but attracts some votes from another candidate with a similar program, thus raising chances of a candidate with the opposite position." The percentage of correct answers for each age group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Correct defining of socio-political lexemes *electorate, establishment, spoiler* (in percentage)

Lexical unit	Age groups		
	18-35	36-55	56+
electorate	16	62	86
establishment	26	68	54
spoiler	38	22	14

Some socio-political concepts in the modern Ukrainian language are denoted by both native and borrowed lexical units. Respondents were asked to choose Ukrainian equivalents to the words *consensus, stagnation* and *consolidation* and did it almost effortlessly. The majority answered correctly (Table 2).

Table 2: Correct choise of Ukrainian equivalents to borrowed words *consensus*, *stagnation* and *consolidation* (in percentage)

Lexical unit	Age groups		
	18-35	36-55	56+
consensus	60	88	94
stagnation	54	86	72
consolidation	78	88	92

One possible interpretation of different results is that respondents in the age groups "36–55" and "56+" watch news and political shows more frequently than the younger generation, so former better understand the meaning of borrowings with longer history. In return, young people who obtain more solid knowledge of English can quickly and accurately explain semantics of new borrowings such as *downshifter*. However, some loanwords (for example, *absenteeism*) are equally obscure to individuals in all age groups.

Next, the survey was also aimed to detect emerging collocations with the most used lexemes which mark a certain stage in the society's life. We focused on words-markers referendum, annexation, and vaccine. The lexeme referendum has been actively used throughout the whole period of Ukrainian independence. 84.18 % of the Ukrainian population took part in the referendum on December 1, 1991. 90.32 % voted for the Act of Independence of Ukraine after the Soviet Union collapsed. On April 8, 2021, the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed the Law "On the All-Ukrainian Referendum." Next token annexation was added to our list in connection with the annexation of Crimea in February-March 2014 as a part of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine. The last lexeme vaccine entered the socio-political discourse due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, because vaccination is the only effective way to protect the population from the disease.

Thus, we held a directed associative experiment with the stimulus list: *referendum, annexation, vaccine*. The respondents had a task was to write a phrase with the proposed lexemes. We received 1–2 reactions in each questionnaire. Furthermore, the answers in different age groups were comparatively similar. The associative series with the most frequent reactions generalized and arranged in descending order are presented below:

- Referendum (196 reactions in total) All-Ukrainian (27), nationwide (11), fair (7);
- Annexation (173 reactions in total) annexation of Crimea (38), annexation of a territory (17), annexation of a peninsula (15), illegal annexation (9);
- Vaccine (267 reactions in total) coronavirus vaccine (46), COVID-19 vaccine (20), efficient vaccine (17), quality vaccine (13), effective vaccine (9).

The results prove that each reaction is a key to a certain fragment of language picture of the world. Therefore, the similar associations are caused not by logical and semantic coincidence, but by the quantity of communicative fragments intersections. The individual language consciousness mainly actualizes not random but established, i.e. standardized associations.

5 Conclusion

At the beginning of the 21st century, the language of Ukrainian internet-media is a mirror for all changes taking place in Ukrainian society. The analysis of socio-political lexicon online functioning shows the influence of global and local factors on its formation. Thematic groups of socio-political vocabulary are enriched with lexical innovations that denote multiple new concepts and phenomena. A large part of new words are borrowings, in particular alglicisms. Loanwords reflect the tendency towards Europeanization and internationalization which is significantly strengthened by direct and indirect contacts with other countries.

The modern Ukrainian literary language functions in complex and multidimensional social context. A communicator creates information, and a recipient perceives it. Understanding of whole text often depends on socio-political vocabulary fluency. Both common units and lexical innovations can serve as key words in political communication that mark a certain period in social life. The survey results show that socio-political lexicon understanding varies in different age groups. Respondents in age groups "36–55" and "56+" better comprehend meaning of borrowings with longer history while younger generation is more fluent in semantics of new borrowings. The associative experiment results reflect the invariative component in both individual and language picture of the world which determines how language identity realizes its linguocognitive features.

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