

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO RESEARCHING POLEMICS AND POLEMIC DISCOURSE

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Abstract. The article is dedicated to identifying the approaches to researching polemic discourse and the general idea of polemics. The concept of "polemic" is explored through linguistic and cultural lenses, considering its definitions in both English and Russian. While in English, it is primarily understood as a form of written argumentation, in Russian, it encompasses a broader range of communicative situations, including debates and discussions. The historical evolution of polemic writing is examined, tracing its origins to religious debates during the Middle Ages. Early polemics were characterized by aggressive language and one-sided arguments, often lacking consideration for opposing viewpoints. Translation played a significant role in shaping these debates, as linguistic barriers hindered mutual understanding. Despite changes over time, modern polemic writing continues to be subjective and aggressive, although contemporary examples often incorporate irony, satire, and grotesque elements. The scientific novelty of this article lies in the fact of addressing polemic discourse from different angles, considering the cultural implications which may influence the dichotomy in researching this study object. Theoretical analysis, comparison, and contrast methods are employed to review the body of research related to polemics, providing insights into its complexity and evolving nature. The practical significance of the research results lies in their contribution to the understanding of polemic discourse, which has implications for communication strategies and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: polemics, polemic discourse, polemic writing, debate, discussion, interpretation, translation, linguaculturology

Basic provisions

The notion of polemic discourse, characterized by its fervent defense or attack on particular beliefs or ideologies, has long been a subject of interest across various disciplines. This article delves into the multifaceted realm of polemic discourse, examining its nuances through the lenses of cultural linguistics and translation studies. Polemics, derived from the Greek word "polemikos" meaning war, encapsulates the art of vehemently advocating for or challenging specific viewpoints, often through the written word. While its origins lie in religious debates of the Middle Ages, polemic discourse has evolved to encompass diverse topics ranging from politics and social issues to literature and philosophy.

Within this exploration, we navigate the historical evolution of polemics, tracing its trajectory from early religious confrontations to contemporary socio-political debates. Drawing upon scholarly insights and literary examples, we analyze the rhetorical strategies employed in polemic writing, highlighting the interplay between language, culture, and ideology. Furthermore, we investigate the role of

translation in shaping and transmitting polemic discourse across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

While the primary focus of this study revolves around polemic discourse, it is essential to acknowledge its intersectionality with cultural linguistics and translation studies. Through a brief yet comprehensive examination, we aim to elucidate the dynamic nature of polemic discourse and its implications for intercultural communication and literary translation. By delving into these dimensions, we endeavor to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language, culture, and ideology intersect in the realm of polemic discourse, paving the way for further scholarly inquiry and interdisciplinary dialogue.

Introduction

In Cambridge dictionary of English, the word “polemic” is defined in the following way: a piece of writing where a person strongly defends or attacks a certain position, or a set of beliefs with the same purpose [1]. The word itself is derived from Greek “polemikos”, which means *war* or *anything related to war*. Here we may draw the first line of demarcation between a simple discussion (that does not necessarily involve any sharp attacks or directly opposite opinions) and a polemic one where such differences are the core of the communicative situation. In the Oxford Dictionary of English, the word “polemic” signifies either a controversial argument or a strong, often aggressive verbal attack on someone’s set of beliefs and ideas, on a doctrine, on an opinion or theory [2]. It is noted that this word may be used as a mass noun as well, in the sense of the system of such writings.

So, in the narrow sense, polemics is an art of writing critical pieces which hold a certain view and aim to either corroborate it or disapprove it, all through using specific strategies and tactics along with specific vocabulary. In that sense, polemic writing is a well-known way to showcase one’s beliefs and opinions which either oppose or follow the commonly recognized ones. In the history of English literature, perhaps one of the best polemicists was Jonathan Swift with his famous writings on the rights of poor people and the satirical representations of the English society.

At the same time, it is necessary to note religious polemic writings, in particular those written as a clash between two opposite beliefs. Perhaps this meaning of polemic writing has become the most influential in forming the contemporary definition of what polemics is. From the religious viewpoint, polemic writing is attacking (somewhat fiercely) another person’s set of beliefs while also defending one’s own. Polemic writing became widely popular in Middle Ages, when the Christian church became the educational center of a country and, for the first time, Christianity itself was challenged by another powerful religion – Islam [3].

Here we notice that the definition of polemics itself is two-sided. Polemics is, firstly, defined as a piece of writing which strongly defends or opposes a set of beliefs. This definition is widely recognized and utilized in the English-speaking parts of the world. Polemicists are those writers whose position is evident in their texts, and who use sharp and fierce language in order to reach the sole effect that they pursue: to persuade the reader that they are right. In a way, polemic writing is argumentative writing. Types of polemics may be diverse depending on the context,

the situation, and the speaker: political, religious, social, anti-war, anti-discrimination, anti-racism polemics are few of the most popular ones nowadays.

From the other side, the Russian word “полемика” reflects a slightly different set of notions. Similarly to the word polemic, it was derived from the mentioned Greek term and refers to a communicative situation where arguments are fierce, opinions are sharply opposed to each other, and specific strategies are utilized. At the same time, if we take a closer look at how this Russian word is defined in a dictionary, we notice a peculiar difference from its classical meaning in English.

In Ushakov’s dictionary of the Russian language, the word “полемика” is defined in the following ways:

1. A discussion that occurs when speaking on a certain subject.
2. A debate dedicated to discussing scientific, political, literary or artistic subjects and issues.
3. A fierce, hostile, sometimes aggressive discussion around a certain (usually scientific) topic.
4. A discussion on paper, usually in mass media [4].

We need to note that the definition “a single-authored piece of writing” is not present here. Hence the semantic scope of the Russian version of this word is wider than that of its English counterpart. The reason for such a dichotomy in meanings lies in the fact that the Russian version is a borrowing from French, where the word *polemique* has a slightly different, albeit close, meaning. In the Larousse dictionary of French, the word *polemique* represents a set of meanings:

1. (something) of a violent and aggressive character.
2. Critical, aggressive, attacking.
3. A noun – a fierce debate, an aggressive discussion on a certain topic [5].

The reason why we are listing those definitions lies in the fact that defining the word “polemics” or “polemic” is directly linked to defining polemic discourse. The latter may be thus addressed as a set of communicative situations where polemics occur. This definition is somewhat vague as it does not consider the dichotomy between the mentioned meanings of polemics. Now, if polemics is a single-authored writing, critical and sharp, dedicated to a certain topic, then polemic discourse is a set of such writings, such written pieces, and responses to them. At the same time, if polemics is an art of or the process of engaging in a heated debate, then polemic discourse is a set of such debates taking place in a certain sociocultural situation.

Deciding which definition of polemics or polemic we are going to use influences the elements of discourse which will be analyzed. For instance, defining polemics as a single-authored written piece helps identify the participants of the communicative situation: author and readers. Meanwhile, thinking of polemics as of a debate adds depth and sophistication to the idea of polemic discourse; now, rather than one speaker, it must include two speakers with two different ethnocultural and sociocultural backgrounds. Considering that dichotomy, we aim to analyze how such a difference in meanings influences the body of research related to polemics, polemic writing, and particularly polemic discourse.

Methods and materials

In this article, such methods as theoretical analysis, comparison and contrast are utilized. As the article itself aims at reviewing and scrutinizing the body of research related to polemics, theoretical analysis and comparison are useful there. Materials encompass both the scholarly articles written on the topic of polemics and pieces of polemic writing itself, particularly extracts from the book “Polemics” by Alan Baidou and a few other prominent essays. Those extracts are provided purely for illustrative purposes.

Results and discussion

The essence of polemics, polemic writing, and polemicists.

As it has been mentioned above, the art of engaging in polemic writing began with the development of religious education. Monks, bishops and other religious figures were the first to defend their faith not only by spoken word and sermons, but also on paper, with the use of initial, somewhat primitive strategies of influencing the readers. Most of these strategies are considered aggressive and one-sided nowadays, argues Sita Steckel, the author of an article dedicated to researching the dichotomy between the negative connotation of Medieval Christian polemics and the positive view on contemporary polemic writing [6]. Steckel reviews the polemics between Jews, Muslims and Christians during Middle Ages and concludes that the research addressing those pieces of writing is often filled with certain superstitions, and in some cases those writings are addressed as purely negative. The reason is simple – early pieces of polemic writing did not take into consideration the arguments of the opponent and were filled with fierce vocabulary and aggressive verbal tactics.

What interests us, translation researchers, in those early examples of polemics is what a massive role interpretation and translation played in them. According to Kees Versteegh who reviews 9th-century Muslim versus Christian polemics, the two sides of this debate had to deal with a somewhat trivial issue: while arguing fiercely, they did not speak each other’s languages. If the knowledge of Bible was widespread in the Muslim world, then the book of Qur’an was much less known to the Christians due to the difficulty of translating from Arabic to Latin, the latter being the main language used in those polemics [7]. So, while Muslim polemics was based on a more or less complete text of the Bible (translated into Arabic), the Christian polemics had to settle with fragmentary Greek translations. Obviously, this influenced both the content and the route of that dispute. Not having access to the original text (this is true for both parties) might have impacted the arguments and the outcomes of the said polemics.

Versteegh also notes a very peculiar side of the early polemic writing: the fact that it often involved quite sharp and even obscene lexis. This is a statement easy to corroborate, given how fierce the opposition was and what tactics they could have used against each other. For instance, religious polemics often utilized vocabulary related to devil when talking about a different set of beliefs, a different holy book, or about those sayings which were considered heresy or blasphemy. In that case, Versteegh concludes, the main difference between polemics and apologetics lies in the fact that polemics was an attack, and apologetics was an act of defense.

It is indeed true that early Christian and almost every other religious polemic included the elements of verbal aggression. However, did that change over the course of time? Specifically, considering the English-language meaning of polemics, certain scholars believe that aspect hardly changed. For instance, Jonathan Crewe lists reasons why polemic writing might be considered an unreliable object of research:

1. Polemic writing is one-sided and often centers around quite a narrow, subjected opinion.

2. Polemic writing often lacks the aspects of other types of argumentative writing: considering the opponent's arguments; attempting to find logical fallacies rather than attacking blindly; objectiveness.

3. Polemic writing is often considered "the last resort of those in decline", be those declining figures politicians, writers, social figures or researchers [8].

At the same time, Crewe believes that polemic writing must not be addressed one-sidedly; the question of whether it can or cannot be ethical lies unanswered, the only possible answer being the dependence of polemics on context.

In contemporary understanding, polemics and polemic writing are closely linked to irony, satire, and grotesque. Depending on the type and kind of those essays, they may be more or less subjective, more or less violent, more or less aggressive. Let us take a look at the following extract from "Modest Proposal" of Swift where he covers the most drastic of measures for preventing overpopulation by a mask of sheer irony and mockery:

"I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children" [9, p.1].

Now, if we attempt to make a stylistic analysis of this pamphlet, we come across such figurative means as severe grotesque and deep irony, paired with the humblest style of writing which Swift could think of. The reason why this writing is an example of polemics is quite simple: it centers around a topic of vital importance, and the writer seems to stand on his ground to protect his very unique way of solving that problem. So, formally, this is a polemic. The content of it, however, is so complicated that it needs to be addressed on two levels: the surface, where the author contemplates about the issue and proposes a solution which he believes is the best, and the deeper level, where we see what the author is truly opposing.

In both cases, we may conclude that this piece of polemic writing is extremely sharp and, from a certain angle, aggressive. Whether it addresses landlords, the wealthy people, or those who propose different ways of solving the problem of overpopulation, it utilizes verbal means which are highly subjective and argumentative.

Now let us pay attention to another example, more recent and less violent, from a book titled "Polemics" written by the French philosopher Alan Baidou. In his book, the scholar addresses, primarily, the issue of war. While for the century of Swift hunger and social discrimination were the sharpest problems to tackle, the XX and XXI centuries are marked with issues far less multifaceted and far more global: conflicts and war.

“... we might perhaps refer to them as follows: the argument of the unthinkable; the argument of interruption; the argument of the absolute Evil” [10].

This is an extract from a polemic essay titled *Against Negationism*, written and published in 1982, when the issues of Nazism and Nazis were still very much present and significant. What Baidou does here is describe the ways Nazism may be viewed from different angles – as something that cannot be talked about; as something that needs to be stopped; eventually, as absolute Evil. This essay is a polemic against the new sprouts of Nazism which were rising in the 1980s, the sprouts which, as Baidou believed, were completely ignored by his contemporaries (hence the word negationism in the title). In a way, it is an essay that aims at shedding light on an issue, that is why it has an explanatory character and does not fiercely attack a certain issue.

The issue which is described in this essay does not need any violent verbal attacks because it is a widely recognized negative notion. This same strategy is used in many contemporary examples of polemic writing: the center of the debate, the problem is no longer addressed as sharply as, say, in Swift’s case. There is no need to oppose Nazism: it has been opposed and defeated, and the purpose of modern-day anti-discrimination, anti-war essays is not to violently attack the notions of discrimination and war. Contemporary techniques have become far less evident, notes Jane Gallop [11].

Polemic discourse.

We have examined what polemic writing is, where it came from, and what possible techniques it might utilize. Now we are turning to a more vital issue of polemic discourse. Any discourse is a system consisting of texts and their contexts. In that case, as defined by Fairclough, polemic discourse is a system of communicative situations which seek to challenge existing ideologies and structures of power [12]. This definition is related to the sphere of political polemic discourse, one of the most widespread spheres.

It is necessary to note that the English-speaking scholarly community pays little attention to the notion of polemic discourse, perhaps preferring to dwell on particular examples of it in politics, science, and society. A few notable scholars who do research this area are Hammer (the idea of polemical encounters and debates), Newsom (identity and ideology in polemic discourse), Jackson (disability and inclusion in polemic discourse) and such researchers as Pulcini, Hanegraaf or Vatin who study the religious polemic texts.

In the Russian and Kazakhstani segments of the scientific world, the research of polemic discourse is represented by such names as V. Kosmodemyanskaya, B. Zhumagulova, I. Maslennikov, A. Udelkina, E. Sazhina, I. Makeyev, S. Prihodko, M. Glushkova and so on.

In particular, M. Glushkova examines the polemic discourse as shown on TV. Her research object is audial, that is why she mainly deals with transcripts of TV shows and programs where polemics is present. Her article explores the issues of linguaculturology as well [13]. The article discusses the peculiarities of speech behavior in polemical situations among Russian speakers, focusing on the use of proverbs and sayings to vividly depict abstract concepts. For example, the proverb

"лес рубят - щепки летят" is examined in its various historical iterations, illustrating its role in conveying the inevitability of errors in complex undertakings. Additionally, the article explores how such expressions convey nuanced meanings and influence the discourse's logical coherence. It also delves into the tactical maneuvers employed in polemical discourse, such as interruptions and emotional expressions, reflecting national communication tendencies. Furthermore, statistical analysis reveals prevalent interruption tactics, including the use of particles, imperative forms, and exclamatory expressions, underscoring their role in managing discourse flow.

The article authored by E. Sazhina explores the use of intertextual markers in the polemical discourse of print media, emphasizing the dialogical nature of this discourse [14]. Through a method of continuous sampling, the study analyzes articles and responses from English-language newspapers such as "The New York Times" and "The Guardian" to identify linguistic markers of intertextuality and their functions in print media polemics. The analysis reveals instances of explicit and implicit quoting, including direct and indirect speech, as well as the incorporation of excerpts into the author's sentences. These markers are predominantly found in problem-focused articles, as exemplified by quotes from the article "Fear in the Workplace: The Bullying Boss," which draws on interviews, social surveys, and scholarly works to provide a multifaceted discussion of workplace bullying. The analysis demonstrates that quotations, serving both to authenticate the discourse and integrate multiple sources of information, contribute to the dialogical nature of polemical discourse in print media. Additionally, the examination of reader responses highlights the frequent use of references to other readers' reactions as a marker of intertextuality in print media polemics.

In her research, A. Udelkina explores how polemical discussions aim to get people involved in conversations about important issues [15]. She looks at how these discussions involve not just the writer, but also the reader, creating a back-and-forth dialogue. Her study focuses on articles from well-known German magazines and newspapers like Focus and Süddeutsche Zeitung. She finds that these articles often try to connect with readers by talking directly to them in the headlines, like in titles such as "Energieriegel im Check: Sie enthalten so viel Fett wie Mars und Snickers" (Energy Bars Check: They Contain as Much Fat as Mars and Snickers) from Focus Online.

A.I. Udelkina suggests that this personal approach helps engage readers and make the topics discussed relevant to them.

Based on the research carried out, the following preliminary aspects of polemic discourse may be identified:

1. Every communicative situation has an author (the speaker) and the receiver (the listener). If we take the narrower definition of polemics as a base, we need to underline that polemic discursive situations are often somewhat one-sided. At the same time, if the broader definition is used, polemic discourse becomes dialogical.

2. The main purpose of every polemic text is persuasion, and not pure argumentation. The author is right, and the receiver (or receivers) need to adjust to that.

3. For the purpose of persuasion, certain strategies and techniques are used, including satire and grotesque, irony and logical argumentation. Fallacies are often present, because, while attacking the opponent's viewpoint, the speaker often ignores his or her own erroneous theory.

4. Polemic discourse does not exist outside of the spheres that it covers. It is closely linked to and exists within the contexts in which it bases itself: politics, medicine, science, religion, education, social issues, etc.

So, while researching polemic discourse, one must pay attention to the sphere in which it is being realized. Similarly to how early Christian polemics differ from Swift's satirical writings, contemporary anti-war polemic differs significantly from the disputes in the sphere of astrophysics.

Two-sided understanding of polemics and polemic discourse.

It has been mentioned that the meaning of polemics heavily influences the essence of polemic discourse. Depending on which of the definitions is chosen, the essence of polemic discourse is altered. The following table illustrates this idea (Table 1). It presents both the differences and similarities between two understandings of polemics explored in this article.

Table 1. Different understandings of polemics and polemic discourse

<i>Polemics as a set of written argumentative pieces</i>	<i>Similar to both approaches</i>	<i>Polemics as an art and the process of engaging in a debate</i>
A set of monologues with occasional dialogical characteristics	Response is significant	A set of dialogues with occasional monological characteristics
An author and readers: passive communication	Communication is present	Two speakers (or two authors), active communication
Satire and irony and grotesque used more frequently	Intertextuality	Arguments, logical corrections and expressive means used more frequently
The author's linguacultural knowledge and cultural background is significant	Linguacultural elements are present	The cultural background of both speakers is significant
The author is right: it is an out-of-debate issue	There is a concept of being right or wrong, unlike in any other objective written genres	Both speakers or both authors are right in their own understanding
To persuade, techniques of journalism and publicist style are utilized	The main purpose is to persuade	To persuade, colloquial style techniques may be utilized

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of polemics and polemic discourse reveals several salient observations regarding its historical development, conceptual

underpinnings, contextual variability, rhetorical strategies, dialogical dynamics, and ethical dimensions.

The historical trajectory of polemics from its origins in religious debates to its contemporary manifestations across various domains underscores its dynamic evolution over time. Different linguistic and cultural perspectives offer nuanced definitions of polemics, emphasizing its diverse manifestations as written argumentative pieces or broader communicative situations encompassing debates and discussions.

Polemical discourse is deeply entrenched within specific socio-cultural contexts, reflecting cultural, ideological, and linguistic intricacies. Whether in politics, religion, science, or social issues, polemics interacts intricately with the socio-cultural landscape, influencing and being influenced by prevailing discursive frameworks.

Polemicists employ a diverse range of rhetorical strategies and techniques, including satire, irony, intertextuality, logical argumentation, and rhetorical devices, to advance their arguments and challenge opposing viewpoints. While polemics often feature one-sided arguments, instances of dialogical engagement are observable across various media platforms and scholarly endeavors, highlighting the dynamic nature of polemic discourse.

The ethical dimension of polemic discourse warrants critical examination, as it can both facilitate critique and dissent while potentially exacerbating polarization and ideological division. Responsible engagement with polemical rhetoric necessitates consideration of its broader societal impact and ethical implications.

In summary, the analysis of polemics and polemic discourse offers insights into the complexities of persuasive communication, shedding light on its historical evolution, conceptual diversity, contextual embeddedness, rhetorical strategies, dialogical dynamics, and ethical considerations. Such insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how language mediates social interactions and shapes discursive practices within diverse socio-cultural contexts.

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ПОЛЕМИКА ЖӘНЕ ПОЛЕМИКАЛЫҚ ДИСКУРСТЫ ЗЕРТТЕУГЕ ҚАЗІРГІ ЗАМАНҒЫ ҚАТЫСЫМДАР

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Аңдатпа. Мақала полемикалық дискурсты және жалпы полемика ұғымын зерттеу тәсілдерін анықтауға арналған. «Полемика» ұғымы тіл білімі және мәдениеттану пәндерінің тұрғысынан, ағылшын және орыс тіліндегі анықтамаларды ескере отырып қарастырылады. Ағылшын тілінде полемика негізінен жазбаша аргументация мағынасын білдіреді. Орыс тіліндегі анықтама пікірталас пен дискуссияларды, коммуникативті жағдайлардың кең ауқымын қамтиды. Жазбаша полемиканың тарихи дамуы зерттеледі. Полемика орта ғасырлардағы діни пікірталастардан басталады. Ерте замандардағы полемиканың тілі агрессивті, дәлелдері біржақты болған, қарама-қарсы көзқарастар ескерілмеген. Осындай пікірталастардың қалыптасуында аударма жұмысы үлкен рөл ойнады, себебі тілдік кедергілер өзара түсіністікке жол бермеді. Уақыт өте келе біршама өзгеріс болды, дегенмен қазіргі заманғы жазбаша полемика да субъективті және агрессивті болып қала береді. Қазіргі заманғы полемика сонымен қатар ирония, сатира және гротеск элементтерін қамтиды. Мақаланың ғылыми жаңалығы – зерттеудегі екіжақтылыққа себеп бола алатын мәдени аспектілерді есепке ала отырып, полемикалық дискурсты әртүрлі қатысымдар арқылы қарастыру. Мақала теориялық талдау және салыстыру әдістерін пайдалана отырып, полемикаға қатысты зерттеулердің жиынтығын қарастырады, полемиканың күрделілігі мен дамуы туралы түсінік береді. Зерттеу нәтижелерінің практикалық және теориялық маңызы мақаланың коммуникативті стратегиялар және мәдениетаралық коммуникацияға әсер ететін аса маңызды ұғым – полемикалық дискурсты түсінуге қосып отырған үлесіне байланысты.

Тірек сөздер: полемика, полемикалық дискурс, полемикалық жазу, пікірталас, дискуссия, интерпретация, аударма, лингвомәдениеттану

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ИЗУЧЕНИЮ ПОЛЕМИКИ И ПОЛЕМИЧЕСКОГО ДИСКУРСА

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена выявлению подходов к исследованию полемического дискурса и идеи полемики в целом. Понятие "полемика" рассматривается через призмы лингвистики и культурологии, учитывая его определения как в английском, так и в русском языках. В английском языке оно в первую очередь понимается как форма письменного аргументирования, в то время как в русском оно охватывает более широкий спектр коммуникативных ситуаций, включая дебаты и обсуждения. Рассматривается историческая эволюция письменной полемики, прослеживается ее происхождение до религиозных дебатов в средние века. Ранняя полемика характеризовалась агрессивным языком и односторонними аргументами, часто лишенными учета противоположных точек зрения. Перевод сыграл значительную роль в формировании этих дебатов, поскольку языковые барьеры мешали взаимному пониманию. Несмотря на изменения со временем, современная письменная полемика по-прежнему остается субъективной и агрессивной, хотя современные примеры часто включают элементы иронии, сатиры и гротеска. Научная новизна этой статьи заключается в том, что она рассматривает полемический дискурс с разных точек зрения, учитывая культурные аспекты, которые могут влиять на дихотомию в исследовании данного объекта. В работе используются методы теоретического анализа, сравнения и контраста для обзора тела исследований, связанных с полемикой, что дает представление о ее сложности и развивающейся природе. Практическая и теоретическая значимость результатов исследования заключается в их вкладе в понимание полемического дискурса, что имеет значение для стратегий коммуникации и межкультурного общения.

Ключевые слова: полемика, полемический дискурс, полемическое письмо, дебаты, дискуссия, интерпретация, перевод, лингвокультурология

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