ENGLISH COMPUTER DISCOURSE: SOME CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

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The problem of virtual discourse is coming into focus of linguistic research. This interest results from the rapid spread of information technology, modern Internet culture incipience, a symbol of information revolution, new opportunities and threats that accompany computer civilization. The emergence of the communicative environment as a particular sphere of language actualization, necessitates new language means of communication or transformation and reframing the already existing ones. Obviously, it's time to talk about the formation of a new discourse in the new communicative space – computer (electronic, virtual) discourse, which subsequently may considerably affect the speech behavior of society. The present article makes an attempt to identify some linguistic and communicative features of virtual discourse. Computer discourse, being a sublanguage of hybrid character, combines elements of oral and written discourse with its own specific features. It should be noted that in the context of information culture the problem of communication interaction is among the most topical issues in science and education. There is hardly any doubt that the study and advancement of virtual communication culture is one of higher education distinctive mission components.

Introduction

The Internet plays an ever growing role in the functioning of modern society, meeting a variety of needs: access to information, the provision of various services (commercial, financial and professional, etc.), means of synchronous (chat) and asynchronous communication (e-mails and forums), means of self-expression (blogs), entertainment and gaming facility (MUD), and many others. Thus, the increasing part of human existence takes place in virtual reality. Participants of cyber communication unite into a virtual community, which is a notable type of modern society, operating under distinctive laws within the virtual reality. Electronic chan-nel ensuring the process of communication has stipulated the onset of a completely new environment where it no longer seems possible to communicate the standard old way. On the one hand, the Internet expanded human ability to communicate, destroying temporal and spatial boundaries, creating the possibility of simultaneous interaction for a considerable number of participants. On the other hand, it determined the emergence of specific conditions of communication, offering a variety of technical possibilities as substitutes of real communication interaction basics and principles. The choice of specific solutions and their practical applica-

tion was the users', thus stimulating the creative search resulting in the best possible ways of successful communication. The emergence of new technical communication channel has raised the question of discourse features of the Internet texts.

Human language is the basis and means of transformation in the post-modern society, which presupposes significant scope expansion of linguistic research and its consistent correlation with other areas of the humanities. The need to study both linguistic and communication problems through the perspective of other fields of science, reframing the traditional language concepts and studying different aspects of verbal and cognitive activities has arisen in modern linguistics. A cognitive-discourse approach rooted in traditional linguistic analysis with the use of other sciences methods has advanced linguistics to a qualitatively new level of cognition and discourse research on the basis of complex cognitive concept.

Cognitive – discourse paradigm presupposes the study of language in action when the language is "an instrument, a tool, a means and a mechanism of reaching specific aims and realizing definite intentions of a person both in the sphere of the reality cognition and description and also in the act of communication and interaction by means of language" (Кубрякова 1995: 217).

From this point of view, discourse is defined as "a coherent text in conjunction with the extra linguistic, pragmatic, socio-cultural, psychological, and other factors; the text in event-driven aspect, speech, considered as a purposeful, social action, as a component involved in the interaction of people and their cognitive processes. Discourse is speech "immersed into life" (Арутюнова 1990: 136–137).

The phenomenon of the Internet is not just a matter of new technologies, but the problem of radical changes in human life. Network language is a totally new phenomenon, though having similar characteristics with both written and spoken language. Currently, one can speak of the incipience of a new linguistic branch, which has already received the name – Internet-linguistics (Сидорова, Шувалова 2006; Горошко 2006; Crystal 2011), as well as Internet discourse being a special form of speech activity.

Due to the emergence and rapid development of new information technologies at the end of 20 – beginning of 21 century, the word "cyberspace", metaphorically used for the first time in 1984 by Canadian science fiction writer William Gibson in his novel "Neuromancer", is becoming increasingly popular and gradually turns into a term. Cyberspace is a new world, which is already an integral part of modern man's life. It is in this world and not in geographic countries and cities (where computers are actually located) that all communicative events really happen involving users of the Internet, quite recent but a very popular means of communication. At the moment, the Internet has become the focus of research in different fields science, because alongside technological it has also become a new socio-cultural environment leaving its mark on all aspects of communication.

Inevitably cyberspace as a new communicative environment was doomed to become the subject of discourse studies, and text, immersed in the situation of communication, has been currently regarded as a new, previously nonexistent type of discourse, called computer, electronic, network, virtual and online discourse by different scientists.

The terms "computer discourse" and "electronic discourse" are synonymous and refer to the text, immersed in the situation of communication by electronic means, or rather, by a computer. Besides, "Internet discourse" and "website discourse" are included into the concept of computer discourse as particular into general.

The Internet forums and blogs communication written texts are the ***material*** of analysis.

Language structure specific features, cognitive and pragmatic characteristics within the Internet forums and blogs communication are the **aim** of analysis.

The methods used are: discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis, semantic and syntactic analysis, descriptive and contextual analyses.

Changing the image of the world and way of life under the influence of information and communication technologies is associated with the formation of a new type of individual, a virtual one, and a new kind of society, a virtual community.

Discussion and results

An aspiration of man and society to virtualization, mobility, intersubjectivity, interactivity, transactivity occurs during the transformation of the socio-cultural systems. Real communicative experience of each of us and the modern society itself increasingly relies on the ability of global virtual networks. An entirely new socio-cultural field in which people can have simultaneous access to any time, space, information and human resources is being formed up. Therefore, a virtual discourse inevitably shows the dynamics of the mainstream systems, values and norms.

The development of computer technology has generated basic changes in traditional forms of communication and, above all, due to its global virtualization, socialization potential enhancement, sophistication of identity formation models and subjectivity models framing. Thus, many types of professional and socio-cultural activities have moved to virtual networks space.

These processes upgrade cultural life, generate new concept-centers, changing the way of thinking and the scale of priorities.

Network community has developed its own distinct communication style, a somewhat unusual language. It appears in the form of opposition to the generally accepted norms of language. The opposition is manifested at all linguistic levels: lexical, grammatical, syntactic, and semantic. It is characterized by expressivity, adding special ironic connotation to lexical units. The laws of syntax are often violated in network texts, e.g."'r u going 2 c the movie" (from Herring 2001: 621),

Les1: as it stands now, meeting on weds?

Les2: instead of tues

Brian1: idiot Hess seemed to think you were there tues morning

Brian2: thot that mtg from 9 to 10 would solve

Brian3: if you not in ny I'm going to have mtg changed to wedne (from MacKinnon 1995: 131).

As is illustrated in the above message exchange between Les and Brian, the communicants delete subject pronouns, determiners, and auxiliaries; use abbreviations; do not correct errors and do not use mixed case.

The use of punctuation undergoes considerable changes as well. Many punctuation marks are now acquiring new semiotic and expressive value. Exclamation note in network texts has certain features, this punctuation mark is often used in interrogative sentences, and when combined with a comma after the interjections "cool", "thanks" and "well" it denotes agreement, reflection or concession. Being used in combination with either ellipsis or a dot in the end of the sentence the exclamation note adds prominence to the statements.

The use of a dash may also be peculiar. The dash switches the reader's attention from one idea to another. It is a sign of segmentation, signaling the change of idea. Dashes are often used instead of quotation marks, commas and at the end of the sentence, thus leaving the effect of understatement. Usually the ellipsis has this function.

Another characteristic feature of network texts is the increasing use of a slash. In the material analyzed slash was used either instead of a colon or a semicolon. Often enough when a slash was used in place of parenthesis an emoticon was also added. Slash may also be present in a two letter abbreviation.

Creation of network user specific language is characterized by an abundance of different abbreviations, resulting from concise and informative style of communication.

In the course of written communication in the Internet reduction of letters and numbers was used to express words and even whole phrases that sound the same as some letters and numbers do. The intensity of computer work caused the emergence of many acronyms designed to reduce the number of taps on the keyboard. A distinctive feature of abbreviations in computer texts is not only term reduction, but also recurrent colloquial speech phrases and even whole sentences.

The most common ones are: IOU – I owe you; U2 – you too; R – are; 4U – for you; B2B – business to business; B4U – before you; ICQ – I seek you; 4X – forex (foreign exchange); ASAP – as soon as possible; BTW – by the way; BOT – back on topic; FWIW – for what it's worth; FYI – for your information; GIGO – garbage in garbage out; HTH – hope this helps; IBTD – I beg to differ; IIWM – if it were me; IMCO – in my considered opinion; IMHO – in my humble opinion; KISS – keep it simple stupid; LOL – laughing out loud; NRN – no reply necessary; OBTW – oh, by the way; OTOH – on the other hand; PLS – please; RBTL – read between the lines; TAFL – take a flying leap; TIA – thanks in advance; TYVM – thank you very much; AAMOF = as a matter of fact; GON – God only knows; TTYL – talk to you later; RL – real life; VR – virtual reality, etc.

As computer communication participants are often people familiar with mathematics, they transfer the use of formulas and various symbols into computer discourse, thus leading to maximum compression. For example: PGY = Post Graduate year, PGY-1, PGY-2, etc. It is known that computer network communication occurs mostly in writing and the combination of standard spelling with a symbolic one enhances expressiveness, e.g.: U – you, BCU – be seeing you; CU – see you, 2 – too, to; B – be, 4 – for, 2B – to be, B4 – before.

Such strategies demonstrate the ability of users to adapt the computer medium to their expressive needs.

One of the features of virtual discourse, which to some extent stipulates its diffuse nature, is expressed in a combination of different discourses represented in the communicative segment of the Internet by the following forms of interpersonal communication: electronic mail (E-Mail), instant messaging, teleconferencing, forum, ICQ, MUDs (role-playing game in which many users are united into one virtual space) and online diary or blog.

The distinguishing feature of virtual discourse, as opposed to other types of discourse, is largely conditioned by the technological parameters of the medium it exists in, the latter resulting in weblogs multi-functionality. Weblogs acquire a somewhat diffuse form of virtual communication, which under certain conditions can combine emails, a forum and a homepage. In its turn, virtual discourse indefiniteness (semantic, issue-related and broader – the author's) is created by means of web space hypertext organization.

In the process of virtual interaction with users being anonymous, linguistic personality does not think about face saving and can exhibit those traits of own character, that are commonly concealed in real communication due to certain conventions.

"Mask", the traditional linguistic category, acquires a new value in virtual communicative space. This new value is inextricably linked with the broad-gauge definition of narration as "an organizing principle of any discourse", introduced by A. Greimas and J. Courtés (1986) and fully corresponds to the culture of virtual discourse, where a person is adequate to what she/he wrote.

In virtual discourse "mask" is a multifunctional phenomenon. A mask can be both a disguise, a cognition, a kind of self- protection and a possibility to turn into any identity. The polysemy of "mask" introduces into the Internet discourse an element of play and even virtual masquerade, which is manifested in various types of faking, dupery and leg pulls, the virtual space being a perfect place for their implementation due to its openness and anonymity.

The inception of specific communication environment, a virtual or electronic one, resulted in the birth of specific linguistic identity that is termed "virtual linguistic identity" by D. Crystal (2011: 87).

This narrative mask is the only way of personality's self-modeling in the process of virtual communication under the conditions of anonymity and lack of paralinguistic components. Evidently, the mask creates issue-related, notional, linguistic and other types of virtual discourse indefiniteness.

Virtual discourse is a conversational discourse which is formed and exists in the new communication space – a virtual one. Hence virtuality should be understood as a combination of a distinct type of conversational discourse with technological specific character of network environment. Thus, conversational discourse serves as the basis for virtual discourse generation at the level of consciousness and verbal expression. Both structural and subject-related indefiniteness integrates "one's own" and "someone else's", "personal I" and "alien's I" in a single mental and verbal space.

From the perspective of linguistic identity communicative behavior in virtual discourse the following methods of virtual linguistic identity self-presentation are relevant: the choice of nick (network name), avatar (a small picture, aimed at visual representation of the virtual linguistic identity), an origin (kind of a signature accompanying messages), home page or blog created by web users, communicants verbal behavior. Self-presentation aim in virtual discourse is the result of interaction structure deformation in virtual space, as compared to the real communication, i.e. substitution of the focus on the other for the focus on oneself. It is possible to assume that the linguistic identity attempts to get free from certain traits otherwise concealed in real everyday life by certain psychological or social complexes. During the whole process of virtual interaction with other users the virtual linguistic identity somehow tends to show its best side, to appear in a positive light, concentrating the communica-tion partners' attention primarily on those own features and qualities, that she/he believes to be or wants to consider personal merits.

In the virtual discourse linguistic identity possesses multiple identity, dynamism and freedom of self-realization. Self-character reference and influence are the core components of linguistic identity self-presentation in virtual discourse.

Conclusions

Virtual discourse is an open emerging functional form of the national language, which serves a specific sphere of communication. It finds its application in the Internet users communication, as well as in a variety of texts dealing with this area of communication. Virtual discourse functioning is 'technically limited by the written form of speech, which is stylistically close to the informal oral communication of users, .i.e. to colloquial style. This contradiction causes the culture of writing decline in the informal computer communication and identifies the incipience of specific graphical means of expression in virtual discourse, imitating the paralinguistic features and possibilities of oral speech.

Computer discourse can be interpreted as speech behavioral system characterized by the following common discourse features: dynamic, progressive, communicative, embodied, situationally determined and connotative, socially and culturally marked. In various types of discourse these properties are manifested in different ways, defining it as speech behavioral system.

The most relevant properties of computer discourse inferred from general discourse are as follows: combination of real and virtual vectors in the characteristics of communication (real and virtual space, time, real interlocutors and virtual masks-nicks); imitative nature of communication; diffusion of different in nature forms of speech (oral and written), and the presence of specific contaminated expressive visual means (emoticons); shaping of distinct

communication communities, free from traditional social framework, but establishing their own due process of communication; incipience of intercultural communicative sphere, enhancing current trends in world globalization.

Punctuation marks have lost their functions: marking inter-phrasal boundaries, communicative type statements and interphrasal statement segmentation. In chat rooms punctuation marks are used primarily in the expressive function.

Manifestation of expressiveness through: a) the multiple repetition of punctuation, b) the use of emoticons and c) graphical fixation of phonetic expressive means.

Several major trends can be observed in virtual discourse: unrestricted and creative use of graphical language resource, substitution of verbal component by graphical means, an attempt to compensate for missing phonetic and paralinguistic means.

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KAI KURIOS ANGLŲ KALBOS KOMPIUTERINIO DISKURSO YPATYBĖS

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Virtualiojo diskurso problema šiuo metu tampa lingvistinių tyrimų dėmesio centru. Šis susidomėjimas yra informacinių technologijų spartaus vystymosi ir interneto kultūros atsiradimo rezultatas, taip pat informacinės revoliucijos, naujų galimybių ir grėsmių, lydinčių skaitmeninę civilizaciją, simboliu. Komunikacijos terpės, kaip tam tikros kalbos aktualizavimo sferos, atsiradimas lemia naujų kalbinių priemonių atsiradimą arba jau esamų priemonių transformavimą. Akivaizdu, kad yra poreikis naujo diskurso formavimo naujoje komunikacijos erdvėje – kompiuterinio (elektroninio, virtualiojo) diskurso, kuris vėliau gali turėti didelės įtakos visuomeninei kalbai. Šiame straipsnyje bandoma identifikuoti lingvistines komunikacines virtualiojo diskurso charakteristikas, apimančias lingvistinius ir komunikacinius aspektus. Kompiuterinis diskursas, kuris yra hibridinio pobūdžio kalbos rūšis, sujungia šnekamosios bei rašytinės kalbos diskurso elementus ir savo specifines charakteristikas. Pažymėtina, kad informacinės visuomenės kontekste komunikacinės sąveikos problema yra tarp aktualiausių mokslo ir švietimo problemų. Beveik nėra abejonių, kad studijos ir pažanga virtualiojoje komunikacinėje kultūroje yra svarbiausi aukštojo mokslo misijos komponentai.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: virtualusis diskursas, virtualiosios kalbos asmenybės, kaukė, santrumpa, skyriklis, kognityvus, virtualioji realybė.

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