

Digital genres through linguistic approach – problems and prospects

T. L. Polyakova

Kharkov National Automobile and Highway University
Corresponding author. E-mail: tatyana@mail.ru

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Abstract. The article deals with the issues of Internet-communication. A great variety of texts in this communicative environment has led to the appearance of the system of digital genres. It contributed to the development of studying digital genres through linguistic approach – a new field of Internet linguistics. The issues associated with working out unified terminology in this sphere, common criteria to identify digital genres, making up their classification are analyzed. It is proposed to classify digital genres into genres of web 1.0, web 2.0 and web 3.0 – a classification based on the technological criteria.

Keywords: digital genres through linguistic approach, Internet-communication, digital genre, classification, classification parameters.

Introduction. The appearance and the dynamic development of information technologies, the Internet has led to the emergence of a new form of communication in this environment – *computer-mediated communication* or *Internet-communication*. These terms are practically synonymous, but the first one is broader and includes Internet-communication. Under computer-mediated communication we understand any human interaction with the help of computers connected into the network, while Internet-communication is a special form of communication when people interact with each other by exchanging texts and multimedia messages.

Theoretical background. The emergence of Internet-communication and, accordingly, the language serving this sphere has become the object of study of a new branch of linguistics – *Internet-linguistics* defined as «...the synchronic analysis of language in all areas of Internet activity, including email, various kinds of chatroom and game interaction, instant messaging, and Web pages, including associated areas of computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as SMS messaging (texting)» [15, p. 1].

The language serving Internet-communication has led to the emergence of a new digital genres system and, as a result, contributed to the development of a new branch in Internet-linguistics – *digital genres through linguistic approach*, the focus of which is theoretical issues of studying genres in the Internet, as well as the description and structuring of digital genres and the ways of their classification [11].

Purpose. The study is aimed to consider the major areas of concern (working up common terminology, common criteria for identifying digital genres, making up their classification) of one of the fields of Internet-linguistics – digital genres studying.

According to the objective set in the work there have been used general scientific **methods** of study including: the method of information analysis – to distinguish the major research trends of Internet-linguistics, the synthesis method – to bring together the information obtained when analyzing the main parameters of digital genres classification and to mark out the parameters relevant to describe individual genres, the comparative method – to determine the main similarities and differences of the linguistic design of texts in Internet-communication, the descriptive method with its devices of comparison, generalization, and classification of the linguistic material.

Results and discussion. Digital genre studying in Internet-linguistics is one of the most popular research trends among modern linguists. At the moment, in the digital genre studying there are distinguished the following areas of concern which attract the attention of linguists: digital genres identification and description; correlation and interaction of traditional and digital genres [4, p. 105; 8]; description of specific digital genres [8]; analysis of digital genres evolution; relationship between genres and peculiarities of their formation and development; development of the criteria for digital genres classification [4, p. 105; 8].

Speaking about the choice of the term for certain groups of texts in Internet-communication (*broad Internet-using situations* [14], *speech community, register, text, discourse type* [13, p. 6], *communicative practice* [16] and others), it should be mentioned that *digital genre* is the most frequently used term in contemporary foreign and national linguistic literature on the study of typical forms in this communicative environment.

In the sphere of Internet-communication the term *genre* was first introduced in the scope of information systems study in the early 1990s by J. Yates and W.J. Orlikowski [18].

It is the term *genre*, being widely used in traditional linguistics, that does not cause ambiguous interpretation and indicates a linguistic component of the texts studied and is also the most appropriate one when describing linguistic features of texts in Internet-communication. According to L.Yu. Shchipitsina this term is the most frequently used when considering text classifications and forms of communication in the Internet and it has become widely spread in studying different spheres and, primarily, the sphere of communication, within the scope of different approaches (functional stylistics, mediallynguistics, discourse analysis, applied linguistics) [9, p. 15-16].

Along with the problem of choosing a single term for denoting each communication group in the Internet, there is also a topical issue of giving a definition to the digital genre which in this work is defined as a settled pattern of texts characterized by the unity of purpose and form and reflecting a standard communication situation in the Internet.

Despite a great number of studies related to Internet-communication, the issue of digital genres development has not been elaborated to a great extent though it attracts the attention of more and more scholars. The rapid development of the World Wide Web is accompanied by a

transfer of existing genres to the network, their development and emergence of new genres.

The attempts to classify digital genres have been undertaken by scholars for a long time and here linguists face a daunting challenge, because in the social and cultural space of the Internet the boundaries between genres are blurred and much more flexible than in real communication. It can be explained by the fact that continuous and rapid development of Internet technologies causes an innumerable quantity of transformations in the communicative environment of the Internet. As a result, digital genres appear, form, change and sometimes disappear much faster than in real communication [5, p. 11]. Therefore, we can find a lot of various classifications of digital genres built up partly on the same basis as the classifications of genres of traditional spheres of communication and partly – on new ones.

Thus, the classification of Internet genres should be based on specific genre parameters: event content, the communicative purpose, the concept of the author, the concept of the addressee, linguistic and nonlinguistic means of texts design, the sphere of communication, the synchronous / asynchronous mode of communication, the objectivization form (similarity with written or oral texts), dialogue / polylogue, text composition [1, p. 35-36] and others.

In foreign literature there are also offered different parameters of digital genres description, the main of which are considered to be a communicative purpose; functioning structure [19, p. 63]; rhetorical strategies (verbal and visual) [17]; hypertextuality [12, p. 2]; content; the concept of the author and the addressee; temporal and spatial dimensions of interaction; functionality [19, p. 63].

However, all these models of digital genres parameters are not comprehensive, in our opinion. Some of them that can be used when describing some genres can lack the parameters which are necessary to use when describing other genres. There exist the models that do not include some of the media parameters that are very important in the age of rapid development of information technologies. In addition, many models do not contain linguistic parameters.

Taking into account that genres of Internet-communication are of multifeature nature, a complex model of digital genres offered by L.Yu. Shchipsina, is of the utmost interest. This model includes the following parameters: *media parameters* (genre design, multimodality, hypertextuality, interactivity, synchronicity, the number of communicants); *pragmatic parameters* (the communicative purpose, the concept of the author, the concept of the addressee, time, place); *structural and semantic parameters* (description of the text content of a particular genre and structural elements in which it is implemented); *linguistic parameters* (specific linguistic means used when creating texts of various genres) [10, p. 27-63].

Thus, it is obvious that the issue of finding the criteria for identifying digital genres in the Internet is extremely complex and diverse which, consequently, leads to a variety of genre classifications in this new communicative environment.

The most common classification of digital genres offered by many scholars (N.G. Asmus, L.Yu. Ivanov et al.)

is their division into the genres which are of network origin (forums, chat rooms) and the ones borrowed from other spheres of communication (abstracts of scientific and technical articles, editorials of electronic media [1, p.34].

Depending on the type of discourse, there is proposed the following classification of digital genres: *personal discourse* (personal web pages, e-mails); *political discourse* (political web pages, political forums); *legal discourse* (web pages of law firms); *business discourse* (web pages of companies, e-shops); *advertising discourse* (web banners, advertising e-mails); *mass media discourse* (web pages of online media and news agencies); *pedagogical discourse* (academic websites, educational forums) [11, p. 209].

Based on the theme digital genres are divided into: *general information genres* or *news genres* (newspaper and magazine articles, interviews); *scientific and educational genres*, *special informative genres* (interactive training courses, webinars); *fiction genres* (represented mainly by digitalized traditional literary works as well as those that are originally created to be published only in the global network); *genres of entertainment* (jokes, humorous stories); *genres arranging non-professional communication* (chat groups, guest books); *business and commercial genres* (professional and non-professional commercial billboards) [6].

Taking into account that each genre is a particular type of statement within a certain discourse, there exists a genre classification which is based on the structure and composition of its text. Genres identified on the basis of these criteria are defined as *discourse forming genres* (e-mail, chat, forum, instant messages, blogs). There are also *discourse obtained genres* (flame, network flirt, spam). They are identified on the basis of the intentional variety of text statements [7, p. 11].

Depending on the communicative functions of Internet-communication, digital genres are divided into six types: *informative genres* (search systems, on-line encyclopedia, electronic libraries); *directive genres* (web advertising, e-shopping); *communicative genres* (chat, forums); *presentation genres* (personal web pages, weblogs); *aesthetic genres* (net novel); *entertainment genres* (multi-user worlds and games) [10, p. 73-74].

The classification of digital genres based on the development of Internet technologies of *Web 2.0* is of great interest as well. The main features of *Web 2.0* communicative services are rapid creation of user-generated content; the possibility of instant and simultaneous text correction; team work at any text or project; the possibility of virtually constant communication; storing of large amounts of information directly in the network rather than in electronic media; easy work with the content; user friendly interfaces; strengthening of the audio-visual format in transmitting and presenting data; absence of distinct boundaries between public and private in the Internet [2, p. 115].

Thus, the emergence of *Web 2.0* technologies and rapid development of social media working on the basis of this web-concept (social networks, blogs) has led to the emergence of new genres which can be called *genres 2.0*. Among them there began to appear hybrid genres that do not have their paper analogues. Their emergence is stipu-

lated by the so-called combination of several Internet-genres within a single Internet service or platform [3, с. 12].

Based on such criteria as *synchronous / asynchronous* communication, *regimentation* (presence or absence of tough requirements to the form of communication), *the nature of the addressee* (mass or personal) and *a technological criteria*, digital genres are divided into:

- *hypergenre* of Internet-communication which implies a genre macroformation accompanying social and communicative situations in the Internet and combining several genres (websites, social networks);
- *digital genres* (e-mails, forums, chats, virtual conferences) [4, p. 114-117].

However, it is considered to be more convenient to classify digital genres on the basis of a technological criterion. According to this, they distinguish conventional *paper genres* which have not undergone a significant change in the network (scientific articles in *pdf*); *digital genres* which emerged entirely due to the technical capabilities of the Internet (chats, instant messaging) and *hybrid genres* that either have changed significantly under the influence of Internet technologies (blogging) or mutated into other forms (multi-user worlds like Muds or Moors) [5, p. 11-12].

In this work we support the classification proposed by Ye.I. Goroshko and also consider it appropriate to identify digital genres by the technological criterion which affects not only the design of the genre, peculiarities of its functioning in the Internet but also the peculiarities of its language. The use of Internet-based technology allows including video, audio, animation and different graphical means in the text. Use of technologies makes it possible to change the outer appearance of texts, their content, structure, etc. It is proposed to specify the existing classification of digital genres based on the technological criterion [5, p. 11-12] and divide them into:

- *genres of the first web (Web 1.0)*, the content of which is created by the professionals of the web community and is practically not up for change. The influence of a technological factor in this case is minimal. However, these genres have already some features of hypertextuality. It logically leads to the appearance of the genres of the second web where the impact of technologies is much bigger. The examples of the genres of Web 1.0 can be texts in *pdf*, *WinDjView*, etc.;

- *genres of the second web (Web 2.0)*, the content of which can be created and corrected by common users and their number is not limited. The impact of Internet technologies in these genres is great enough so that they are characterized by a high level of hypertextuality, operational efficiency, interactivity. The examples of the genres of Web 2.0 are social networks, blogs, etc.;

- *genres of the third web (Web 3.0)*, the content of which is created by both ordinary users and professionals. Searching for information in this case is carried out not by the user but with the help of search engines. The impact of Internet technologies here is the highest. The example of the genres of Web 3.0 is Online Favorites Service.

Thus, we can draw a **conclusion** that the issues of a new field of Internet linguistic – studying digital genres through linguistic approach – are complex, multi-faceted and are of great scientific interest for modern linguistics as although many works by Ukrainian and foreign scholars have dealt with the issue of Internet-communication, there is still much unstudied and controversial. It concerns working out unified terminology in this sphere, common criteria to identify digital genres, making up their classification, describing linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of certain genres, their comparison in synchronic and diachronic aspects. This fact determines the necessity and justification of further detailed study of digital genres.

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Виртуальное жанроведение – проблемы и перспективы развития

Т. Л. Полякова

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются вопросы появления интернет-коммуникации. Большое разнообразие текстов в данной коммуникативной среде привело к возникновению системы интернет-жанров, что способствовало развитию нового направления в интернет-лингвистике – виртуального жанроведения. Анализируются проблемы, связанные с составлением единой терминологии в данной сфере, общих критериев выделения интернет-жанров, составления их классификации. Предлагается классификация жанров интернет-коммуникации на жанры первого веба, второго веба и третьего веба, которая основана на технологическом критерии.

Ключевые слова: виртуальное жанроведение, интернет-коммуникация, интернет-жанр, классификация, параметры классификации.