

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF DISCOURSE AND THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF INTERNET COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

This article examines the theoretical foundations of discourse and its contemporary interpretations in modern linguistics. Particular attention is paid to Internet discourse as one of the most rapidly developing areas of discourse studies. The study analyzes the concept of discourse, its main types, including spoken, written, and inner discourse, as well as the role of genre in discourse typology.

Keywords

discourse, discourse theory, Internet discourse, communication, discourse typology, genre, spoken discourse, written discourse, inner discourse, digital communication, linguistics.

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются теоретические основы дискурса и его современные интерпретации в лингвистике. Особое внимание уделяется интернет-дискурсу как одному из наиболее динамично развивающихся направлений дискурс-анализа. Анализируются понятие дискурса, его основные виды, включая устный, письменный и внутренний дискурс, а также роль жанра в типологии дискурса.

Ключевые слова

дискурс, теория дискурса, интернет-дискурс, коммуникация, типология дискурса, жанр, устный дискурс, письменный дискурс, внутренний дискурс, цифровая коммуникация, лингвистика.

Discourse theory is regarded as one of the most dynamically developing fields in contemporary linguistics. Within this area, numerous research paradigms have emerged which, although they may at times engage in substantial theoretical debate, are united by a common objective: the investigation of language as it

functions in authentic communicative situations rather than as an abstract linguistic system.

At the current stage of linguistic development, one of the most significant directions of discourse studies is the examination of communication in digital environments. Internet communication is distinguished by its emergence as a new form of verbal interaction and as a unique communicative environment with its own structural and functional characteristics.

The features of Internet discourse are of particular scholarly interest in the context of foreign language learning and teaching, as they reflect contemporary trends in language development, innovative communicative strategies, and evolving patterns of linguistic behavior.

Providing a precise and universally accepted definition of discourse remains a challenging task. In its broadest sense, discourse is commonly understood as a communicative act, speech, or the process of speech activity. Diverse interpretations of this concept have traditionally prompted a reconsideration of conventional views on speech, text, dialogue, style, and language, while simultaneously serving as a basis for the development of various discourse typologies.

Within discourse typology, written and spoken discourse are generally recognized as the principal categories. However, some scholars identify an additional type, namely **mental (or inner speech) discourse**. In this form of discourse, language is employed without being realized through spoken or written expression. The communicative process occurs internally, with a single individual simultaneously assuming the roles of both sender and receiver of the message.

Since inner discourse lacks an external manifestation, its investigation is considerably more complex than the study of spoken or written discourse. Consequently, it remains one of the less extensively explored areas within discourse research.

The concept of **genre** plays a crucial role in distinguishing among different types of discourse. Genre encompasses the essential characteristics of artistic and communicative phenomena, their interrelationships, and both the formal and semantic dimensions of a text. Today, the notion of genre is widely applied in discourse analysis. Nevertheless, a comprehensive and universally accepted classification of genres has yet to be developed. Existing genre categories may include drama, poetry, everyday conversation, narrative, technical instructions, interviews, reports, lectures, political speeches, and religious sermons.

Each genre is characterized by a set of relatively stable features. For example, narratives typically exhibit a conventional compositional structure consisting of an introduction, development (or climax), and conclusion, accompanied by specific grammatical patterns and cohesive devices. However, the problem of identifying the distinctive linguistic characteristics of genres remains unresolved, as many genres do not possess sufficiently stable formal markers that allow for clear classification.

According to Yuri Stepanov, discourse may be interpreted as “one of the possible worlds.” Expanding upon this perspective, L. S. Patrusheva argues that the rapid development and widespread dissemination of modern information technologies have contributed to the emergence of a new “world” – the virtual space of communication. This space represents human interaction mediated through computer networks and constitutes what is commonly referred to as **Internet discourse**.

Thus, Internet discourse has become a distinct object of linguistic inquiry, reflecting the transformation of communicative practices in the digital age and providing valuable insights into the interaction between language, technology, and society.

With the transfer of communication into the online environment, the previously existing concept of discourse has acquired a range of distinctive features and has begun to be studied as “internet discourse.” Internet discourse has been examined in the works of such scholars as M.B. Bergelson, A.E. Voiskunsky, A.I. Kazina, V.I. Karasik, O.V. Lutovinova, Ya.V. Trepak, V.E. Chernyavskaya, O.V. Shiryayeva, and David Crystal.

Internet discourse combines multiple forms of discourse and discourse genres that continue to evolve actively. As a result, they have become important subjects of linguistic research aimed at expanding knowledge about language expression and the role of language as a tool of human communication.

The term “discourse” (derived from the Latin *discursus*, meaning speech, conversation, dialogue, or the process of language activity) is considered one of the key concepts in modern linguistics [1, p. 31]. At present, numerous studies are devoted to discourse and its varieties, examining them from different perspectives and according to different areas of application.

For the purposes of this study, the definition proposed by Ya.V. Trepak has been adopted as a working interpretation. According to this view, discourse is understood as “a speech act shaped by specific extralinguistic factors and categories,” including:

- communicants and their social-role characteristics;
- the conditions of communication, such as time, place, and communicative situation;
- the motives, goals, and speech strategies of interaction;
- the modes of communication, including the channel, style, and genre of interaction [2, p. 21].

It should be noted that discourse is realized through texts, which themselves function within a particular context. Therefore, the analysis of discourse requires consideration of its “genre and stylistic (linguistic), sociocultural (linguocultural and psycholinguistic), pragmatic (participants, their intentions, communicative strategies and tactics), and cognitive factors (mental processes accompanying speech), since, on the one hand, context determines these features, while on the other hand, it is also shaped by them” [2, p. 22].

The discourse analysis model proposed by Ya.V. Trepak is valuable because it takes into account a wide range of approaches to discourse analysis. The scholar emphasizes that linguostylistic parameters are equal in importance to other factors and, in some cases, even primary within the comprehensive discourse model, since pragmatic, cognitive, and sociocultural parameters cannot exist outside a linguistic situation. Consequently, the study of a text should first of all be based on its linguostylistic analysis.

Discourse analysis involves the study of discourse typology, including the identification of different discourse types, their typological characteristics, and genre variations. The principal distinction in discourse typology is the opposition between spoken and written discourse. This distinction is connected with the channel of information transmission: spoken discourse relies on the auditory channel, whereas written discourse is based on the visual channel.

From the perspective of sociolinguistics, discourse is generally classified into two broad categories, each containing several subtypes. According to V.I. Karasik, the two central forms are personal discourse, which is oriented toward the individual, and institutional discourse, which is shaped by social status and roles [3, p. 199].

In personal discourse, the speaker expresses themselves as a unique individual, revealing their thoughts, emotions, and inner experiences. V.I. Karasik distinguishes two primary varieties of this discourse type: everyday interaction and existential communication.

Institutional discourse, by contrast, occurs when the speaker functions as a representative of a social institution or organization. It can be understood as a

structured and standardized form of communication between individuals who may not be personally acquainted but who interact according to established social norms and professional expectations [3, p. 203]. In this sense, institutional discourse is based on fixed status-role relationships that regulate communication within society.

Modern society is characterized by a wide variety of institutional discourse types [3, p. 199], including political, diplomatic, administrative, legal, military, educational, religious, mystical, medical, business, advertising, sports, scientific, theatrical, and internet discourse. Within these forms of communication, specialized knowledge and information are transmitted.

The norms of institutional discourse reflect both the cultural values of society as a whole and the specific values of the social group that forms a particular institution. The main participants in institutional discourse are representatives of the institution and the individuals who interact with them, such as teachers and students, doctors and patients, or bloggers and readers.

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