

## The Evolution of the ‘Comment’ Genre: Theoretical Aspect

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the problem of transforming the genre of comment due to the peculiarities of the Internet communication. The comparative analysis of the traditional interpretation and the new one is initiated based on the modern demands of the virtual discourse. Not only the journalists and the experts, but the readers as well are considered to be the subjects of communication. The research on two forms of comments show the similarities and differences in communicative intention of addressers and the ways of their realization. The analysis shows the isomorphism of the on-line comments and some genres of the Internet communication, defines the role of the language person in the type of discourse under study, justifies the possibility of reconstructing the national worldview based on numerous on-line comments to the articles (often related to news), which attract the greatest attention and feedback of the readers.

**Key words:** The Internet-linguistics • The comment • The language person • The journalist • The reader

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### INTRODUCTION

The recent researches in linguistics focus their attention on Internet discourse, particularly on its genre peculiarities. The works by the Russian researchers O.V. Lutovinova, N.A. Akhrenova, E.I. Goroshko, E.Y. Raspopina, I.V. Rogozina are devoted to the given problem. The foreign linguists, such as D. Crystal, J. Anis, M. Marcocchia, S. C. Herring, are working out this idea.

The Internet develops a number of speech genres with analogues in the real communication [1-4]. The comment genre deserves a special attention. The rapid development of the Internet technologies influences the creation of websites by mass media. It especially concerns newspapers and magazines. However, the essential difference between virtual press and traditional one is their bidirectional character, consisting of a direct contact of the addressee and the sender, which is possible due to the transformed form of the comment genre. In this case T.V. Sinenko's point of view is assumed to be reasonable. The author says that "network technologies allow to get practically unlimited quantity of comments both from experts and ordinary readers in the shortest period of time" [5]; this gives an opportunity to an informant to estimate a degree of influence on readers' consciousness, to define the success of the set aims and even to reveal

the mistakes. N.N. Kaznova also emphasizes that "modern development of the Internet technologies provides a feedback of communicators which is complicated in traditional kinds of mass media. Moreover, the reaction of the addressee is extremely important for the sender of the message, what is proved by the development of comments' system" [6]. Earlier printed mass media used only journalists' comments as a direct explanation of an event (an act, a document). The explanation contained the certain ideological and political position of the author in order to correct public opinion on the given question, whereas readers' comments were technically impossible.

All mentioned above has defined a choice of a genre of comment to an article as a subject of the research. The object of the analysis includes two types of comments to articles, which are peculiar only for the Internet communication. Thus, the aim of the research is to identify isomorphic and allomorphic features of comments to articles from experts and readers.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following scientific methods were used in the research: analysis and synthesis, logical analysis and parametrical approach to the comparison, allowing to differentiate: the normative features peculiar to the given

genre in its traditional understanding and the modern forms of its display in the Internet linguistics, taking into account the active role of the reader during the perception of the articles. On the comparative analysis lays on the following parameters:

- The subject of the communication
- The purpose
- Length of statements
- Ways of communication
- Modelling of the language person

## RESULTS

We shall start the theoretical analysis of similarities and distinctions between two forms of comments.

- First of all, it is necessary to specify the differences between the subjects of the communicative act. On the one hand, the role of commentator belongs to journalists of one edition; on the other hand, it belongs to readers themselves.
- The differences are revealed in intentional state of the communicators which means “the state of an individual, when his activity aims to achieve a certain result” [7]. In both cases the author expresses the attitude to recent events, formulates the tasks and problems connected with them in the form of the brief analysis of drawbacks or achievements and also gives their estimation, predicts the way of development. However, if traditional extended comment has several purposes simultaneously, the virtual one, as a rule, has short list of tasks and does not set numerous aims, such as: to direct attention of an audience to the new facts, which become important to the public and estimate them; to find connection between commented event and others, to reveal the reasons of this event; to formulate the forecast of the development of commented event; to prove, usually using examples, necessary ways of behaviour or solution to the stated problems [8].

Thus, the basic difference in the aims of communication is defined by the fact that the journalist, acting as the commentator, strives for attracting the reader’s attention to his point of view and gain their trust, whereas the comments of the readers about the article are focused on the author of the article or sharing points of view and stating their own position.

- The isomorphism of intentional state influences the amount of statements, which have extended form in the journalists’ comments and ranging from short to longer ones in readers’ messages.
- Irrespective to the size of the message, both types of comments may contain such ways of commenting as: the development of interrelations between the initial and commenting facts (for example, the discussion of an event’s background); the detailed study of the basic commented events (the restoration of the details), the features which are important for stating the questions; the comparison of the facts, the development of the analogies, for example, with precedents; carrying out the parallels which can be used as the demonstration models of the revealed connections of the current event (subject) of the comment; the opposition and the confrontation of various or opposing ways of realizing actions under discussion; the interpretation of the text (the explanation of the documents, the interpretation of opponents’ reasons into clear language) [8].

However, it is extremely rare to combine all the ways mentioned above in the readers’ messages-comments, whereas the traditional understanding of the comment makes it possible. Moreover, the latter contains a range of the typical structural elements (the basic parts of the comment): the message on the commented event and the formulation of a problem; a formulation of the questions appeared in connection with the event; stating the commenting facts, ideas and details; the formulation of the statements reflecting the attitude of the author to the event, placing them either at the beginning of the text or right after the questions which reveal the essence of the commented phenomenon.

The structure mentioned above is not peculiar to the articles’ comments which have much in common with the language used in forums, chats and blogs where the communicant is free to use language without style, manner and structural limits in writing an article. In this context the language of the comments represents a mixture of literary and colloquial variants of the language, which is characterised by the presence of borrowed and colloquial elements and the morphological syntax of which reflects “the general tendency of a network to simplify the means of expression, to economise the efforts as well as a role-play orientation of a network dialogue” [9].

According to N.G. Asmus, “the genres of the computer communications are characterised by following set of the interconnected parameters: a thematic feature, a communicative purpose, a sphere of communication, an image of the author – the reader, a mode synchronous / asynchronous time, a form objectivity (affinity to written or oral type of text), a dialogue / a polylogue, a composition, language features” [10]. We consider the given parameters peculiar to a range of the Internet-comments to news articles as well. They are joined due to the common topic defined by the journalist of the commented article. The communicants can have various communicative intentions: to express their own points of view, to deny, approve or start debates with other commentators, etc. Depending on the purpose of communication, its sphere is defined. The sphere of communication is primarily characterized by role-play positioning of the communicants (status or personality-oriented). The image of the author is defined by the total number of communicants who are present at the moment or expected to be there in a retrospective and prospect; the given image is created by means of communication, such as: “many- to one”, “one- to another”, “one- to many”, “many- to many”. Anonymity of individual participants of the conversation, hidden by nicknames, allows to create a certain image of the collective author who has been not personified and possess collective sense. The comments can be considered as a kind of communication with a mode of the asynchronous time possessing an orally-written text type. The variety of the participants-communicants who represent the prospect of the present, the past and the future, creates a communication process with several logical developments. The Internet-comments of the readers, similarly to a speech genre of a forum, have the following characteristic features: non-standard, subjectivity, evaluation as well as randomness and inconsistency of statements [11].

As to the professional comment in its traditional form, the modern researches of the Russian and foreign Internet editions show the tendency of representing the experts’ comments in the rubric ‘Debates’, which are usually polemic in character. The blogs of professional journalists who assess and interpret some events and messages of mass media become more and more popular. According to K.A. Karyakina, such blog rubrics are “in fact, genre continuation of the basic media content of on-line mass-media or the Internet-based representations of traditional printed and electronic issues” [12]. The idea of expert

blogs is found in the works by A.A. Sokolova who highlights that “different thematic blogs written by the journalists or even the readers appear on the websites, making the latter the participants of the issue” [13].

- A phenomenon of the language person should not be ignored while studying the comment. According to I.V. Savelyeva, “being a spoken reaction to the initial text, the comments are the texts of secondary level and represent interpretation field with the initial text of the author as a core element” [14]. Based on the definition given by Yu.N. Karaulov, we understand the language person as a set of abilities and characteristics of a person which help to create and understand the speech texts, which are different in: a) the level of complexity of language structure, b) the depth and accuracy of reflecting the reality, c) a certain target [15]. The author also singles out the following levels in the structure of the language person: verbally-semantic (lexicon); cognitive (thesaurus); motivational-pragmatical (pragmaticon). The simultaneous functioning of these levels is the background of discursive activity of the person. In this case there is a question to answer whether it is possible to model the language person on the basis of analyzing the comments to the articles in the Internet communications?

The professional who comments the article is considered to be “the person who is characterized by creative, aesthetic use of the language units, their syntagmatics and architectonics in order to express the author’s personal perception of the world. The level of the realization of the author’s personal potential depends on strictness of objective factors, mostly of discursive origin, including the features of a modern media text, discursive genre and pragmatic-linguistic features of the communicant” [16]. It is obvious that the journalistic comment does not contradict three-level understanding of the discursive activity of the person.

However, it is impossible to create a full picture of the language person on the basis of individual brief comments of the readers devoted to a specific topic of an article. If there are numerous statements of one reader in the comment section of the article, we assume it is an opportunity of studying the author’s personality, as in this case he does not only express his subjective attitude to the topic, but starts communication with other commentators, supporting, denying or developing their

point of view. But it is necessary to consider the fact that the interpretation of speech behaviour of every single communicant cannot be absolutely authentic because of “mask (carnival) characteristic of the communication” [17]. This makes on-line comments similar to chat-communications and forums.

Some articles, especially political ones, initiate hot discussion among the readers and are accompanied by numerous comments. The analysis of the material showed that in similar cases it is possible not only to design the language person, but to form a national picture of the world as well. During the communicative situation the communicants do not limit themselves by the frameworks of the set topic, but raise other essential questions. In this case it seems that the idea of revealing the specific features of a genre of the virtual comment expressed by I.V. Savelyeva is rather successful. She notices that the texts-comments reflect the reaction of the addressee to the information received from the initial text, the dynamic vision of the processes proceeding in the society, forming public opinion. The author supposes that “the texts-comments reveal the cognitive activity of the person, the comprehension and the subsequent objectivity of the developed systems of values, public and national stereotypes as well as the identification in gender, social and other aspects. The consciousness of an ordinary native speaker often put into words those values which have been received by him during understanding of the norms of public life and also language rules and norms” [18].

### CONCLUSION

All mentioned above draws to the conclusion that the genre of comment, which historically was based on the comments expressed by the journalists in different mass media, is being changed significantly into virtual discourse, taking different forms and developing itself in favour of interactivity. The transformed kinds of comments in the Internet discourse help the journalists to evaluate the significance of the topics and expand the analytical space of the issue due to the information received from the readers.

**Outputs:** Due to the rapid development of the Internet technologies, the traditional forms of communication lose their former significance, replaced by the new interactive ways of communication. The genre of comment is no exception. Today it is not

limited by articles related to news only, but touches some other virtual resources, the receivers of which are transformed into addressers, participating in lively discussions with the authors, among themselves, sharing opinions or impressions, assessing the addressers. The comments in the virtual discourse have similar and differentiating features with the traditional forms of the comments and modern Internet genres depending on the intentions of the participants of the communicative act. The research showed that the diversity of comment forms, from traditional ones made by the journalists (e.g. personal blogs) to those written by the anonymous readers, can be found on websites related to news.

The research helps to expand the given classifications of the Internet genres and consider the on-line comments as an independent genre of the Internet communication. In further perspective the comparative study of the Internet comments is significant aiming to reveal the cultural and national features of the native speaker of a certain language.

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