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# Status in Social Networks as a Speech Genre

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**Abstract:** Modern linguistics is characterized by the establishment and formation of a new promising direction, based on anthropocentric theory of speech genres (TSG). The popularity of this direction lies in the interest of the scientists in the phenomenon of virtual communication, which has a certain structure and differs in mechanisms of influence on the social content. The multidimensionality and richness of genre forms determine the need for a diverse approach to the study of speech genres in modern genology. The aim of the article is to study and analyze the theory of speech genres in modern linguistics. The author presents the basic theoretical foundations of the study of the theory of speech genres. Taking into account the achievements of modern studies, the concept of speech genres is analyzed, features and functions of the visual elements of the speech genre are described. It is proved that the modern speech genre and its variety the virtual speech genre are an informational and communicative environment in which there is a certain styling, sphere of communication, speech behavior. The speech genre and the virtual speech genre belong to the written communication and rely on the fullest use of lexical, grammatical, graphic, and media means of speech, which foresees certain adjustments, as well as it differs by the form of dialogue and monologue.

**Keywords:** *virtual speech genre; communication; interaction; pragmatics; communicative and pragmatic aspect.*

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## Introduction

The dynamic development of the Internet technologies and the emergence of new communication platforms in the networks have necessitated the need for the constant and comprehensive study of the Internet communication. One of the most important areas in this field of the research is the Internet linguistics. Despite the fact that more and more researchers are studying the use of language in the Internet space, this trend does not lose its relevance due to the highest rates of development of this field.

Nowadays the Internet network is being explored in various fields that points at its multi-functionality. The rapid development of the electronic communication has increased the rise of a new kind of language and caused dramatic changes in the language used in the Internet. With the help of the Internet, people learn, travel, buy things, harmonize their personal life, find friends, dive into the world of music and literature. In our opinion, the most important thing is that all participants in the virtual world have the opportunity to touch the most diverse information, absorb it and reproduce it during communication.

Social networks are viewed as a “black mirror” of life that is clearly projected onto the postmodernist paradigm and the possibility of its existence. Given that the main object of research is social networks, it is fully consistent with the views shaping the core of postmodernism as a phenomenon of modern society and the processes taking place in it.

Social networks are designed to respond to political, philosophical, economic, social, cultural, moral, ethical, educational, religious and other issues of one’s existence and attitude towards the world, as well as the correlation with both reality and consciousness. One’s worldview changes and so do one’s values of a postmodernist direction. One, without even realizing it, dives into the world of the World Wide Web and perceives it not as a world of virtual life but as a real one. One finds oneself in an “internal vacuum”, which is a postmodernist attitude.

As evidenced by a thorough analysis below, social networks are websites filled by users. It means that any principle of postmodernism is quite suitable for social networks, namely, a rhizomatic reality of social networks; its virtuality, lack of structure and impossibility of full control by moderators; pluralism and citations; lack of authorship and universality of code, which allows including any information; the priority of form over content; fragmentarity.

The relevance of our study is to highlight the research foundations of the speech genre in general and the speech genre of "status in social networks" in particular, which in modern linguistics have become a general philological phenomenon and play an important role in linguistics. Interest in the linguistic genology has also grown due to the fact that linguists seek to understand its status and place in a number of linguistic disciplines (Batsevych, 2006, p. 11). Scientists discuss the ways of identifying genres, distinguishing their features, typology of genre forms, methodology and terminology of genres, functioning of genres in various spheres of communication, etc. Shmeleva (1997) offers "to go beyond the limits of everyday communication, on the basis of which the theory of speech genres was started, and to analyze genres in different spheres of functioning that determine genre transformations" (pp. 90–91). Such attempts are made in the linguistic tradition at the level of the articles (Batsevych, 2006; Bosa, 2018, Dementiev, 2002; Formanova, 2013), at the level of deep monographic research (Bakhtin, 1997; Batsevych, 2006; Dementiev, 1997; Formanova, 2019; Shmeleva, 2002), as a part of the dialogical unity (Batsevych, 2006). In Polish, Ukrainian, Russian and Western European linguistic tradition, considerable attention is paid to the speech genre. The problem of the speech genre was explored by Batsevych (2006), Formanova (2019), Kozhyna (1999), Shmeleva (1997).

Genology, as an independent branch of linguistics, has been actively developed since the middle of the twentieth century. At the present stage, scientists focus on virtual genology as a new direction in the study of Internet linguistics (Goroshko, & Polyakova, 2014), Internet communication: informative (Anisimova, 2015), representational (Goroshko, & Polyakova, 2014), communicative (Khametshina, & Shchipitsina, 2014) and other speech genres.

**The aim** of the article is to study and analyze the theory of speech genres in modern linguistics.

### **The speech genre as a process of communication**

The founder of the theory of speech genres is Bakhtin, who in the 50s of the twentieth century noted the need to create a typology of speech genres in the spheres of human activity. He defined the speech genre as "relatively stable and normative forms of expression in which each statement follows the laws of integral composition and types of communication between sentences-statements" (Bakhtin, 1996, p. 159). Under the statement Bakhtin (1996) understood the unit of speech

communication, the limits of which were determined by the change of speech subjects, which was the first constitutional feature of the statement. “This complete integrity of the statement, which provides the possibility of an answer, is determined by three moments (or factors), which are inextricably connected with the organic whole statement: 1) subject-semantic exhaustion; 2) the speech plan or the linguistic will of the speaker; 3) typical compositional-genre forms of completion” (Bakhtin, 1996, p. 182). Bakhtin also attached great importance to the study of the speech genres, because not only the obligatory forms of the nation-wide language (vocabulary and grammatical structure) are typical for the speaker, but also the obligatory forms of expression, i.e., the speech genres, which are extremely necessary for mutual understanding, as well as the forms of speech.

Bakhtin (1996) introduced the concept of primary (simple) and secondary (complex) speech genres. To the first one, he referred genres which developed in the context of direct speech communication, to the second one – the genres which developed in a complex and highly developed cultural communication (mainly written). In the process of its formation, the secondary genres absorb and modify the primary (simple) genres (Bakhtin, 1996, p. 162).

Bakhtin’s approach is leading in the definition of the theory of speech genres, which is subsequently deepened and supplemented by well-known linguists, such as: Solganik, Vakurov, & Kokhtev (1978) note that the genre is the installation of a certain type, method of presentation, nature and extent of generalizations, type of approaches, attitudes to reality (p. 7); Odintsov (1980) defines the genre as a type of text characterized by the unity of the constructive principle, the originality of the composition and the use of stylistic techniques (p. 26); Goldin (1999) refers to actual problems of the theory of speech genres the following point: 1) parametrization of genre forms and establishment of system relations between parameters; 2) creation of a classification and multi-dimensional typology of genres; 3) clarification of the leading opposition in the system of terms of genology; 4) structuring of concepts of genology in the system of general linguistic concepts; 5) study of genre forms in the historical aspect (p. 2); Dementiev (2002) suggests highlighting the following directions in the theory of speech genres: linguistic study of speech genres (genology) and pragmatic study of speech genres (genrology) (p. 47). In the opinion of the scientist, if we use the semiotic paradigm “semantics – syntactics – pragmatics”, we can say that semantics focuses on syntactics and semantics of the speech genre, and syntactics-pragmatics. The syntactics of the speech genre actively uses the achievements of linguistics of the text, in which the speech genre is

understood as a systemic and structural phenomenon; it is a complex set of speech genres, which are expediently selected and united not directly, but through the speech genre as a whole (Bosa, 2018, pp. 11–13).

The concept which Dementiev (2002) combines into a conditional group of “semantic study of speech genres” is intended to analyze the semantics of speech genres, which involves the analysis of vocabulary. Differences are seen in how many speech genres exist, which typical speech forms are considered, and which cannot be considered as speech genres. In the same direction, Vezhbitska (1997) (a model for describing speech genres using primitives) and Shmeleva (1997) (a model of the speech genre) have been carrying out their research.

Genology is based on the methodology and terminology of the theory of speech acts, but some researchers equate speech genres and speech acts. In genology, speech genres are a dialogic phenomenon and are understood as models of an invariable-variable type. They are investigated taking into account the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations of the system. The speech genres are considered mainly from the standpoint of the speaker, his intentions. This, according to Dementiev (2002), simplifies and integrates the concept of the speech genre, since the theme of the speech genre in linguocentric studies is understood as the subject of speech, and, according to Bakhtin, both the theme and style are pragmatic to a certain extent.

The next direction in the theory of speech genres is genology, which Dementiev (2002) defines as a pragmatic study of speech genres. Such an approach was based on the incompleteness of the linguistic definition of speech genres. The point is that the monologization of the idea of speech genres absolutizes the intentions of the speaker, which is quite possible to apply to the virtual speech genre. Understanding of the speech genre within the limits of pragmatics makes it possible to consider it as “verbal and sign formalization of typical situations of social interaction of people” (Gorelov, & Sedov, 2008, p. 75). Kozhyna (1999) notes that the disadvantage of such a direction is its lack of linguistics, that is, the excessive interest in extra-linguistic and sociological factors leads to the fact that the speech genres are regarded as phenomena which are opposed to speech phenomena, while the linguistic means themselves are given a secondary, service role (p. 47).

The main differences in the linguistic and pragmalinguistic directions of the study of genres Dementiev (2002) sees in: 1) the commitment to the monologue – commitment to the dialogue; 2) the commitment to logic, grammar, psychology – commitment to the interaction with the socio-cultural conditions of a particular situation – sociology (pp. 28–29).

At the same time, according to the scientist, both directions are identical. On the basis of the general communicative nature of speech genres and language synthesis is possible, since genres, like the language, are a means of social interaction. Therefore, he suggests calling the speech genres of this nature as “communicative genology” (Dementiev, 2002, pp. 28–29).

If we analyze in detail the virtual speech genre, on the surface there will be its hard signs, because it is an intermediate link between language and speech. Bogin (1997), Fedosyuk (1997) and Dementiev (2002) define speech genres as communicative attractors limiting the interpretation of speech statements and thus make it standard, which reduces the degree of uncertainty of communication.

Dolinin (1999) holds the same view and considers the speech genre as a mean of organizing social interaction, performing a number of important functions, such as: 1) orientation of the addressee in a speech event, through the activation of the corresponding scenario and the inclusion of the corresponding setup; 2) control of speech behavior by the addressee; 3) establishment of rules of the game: we build our speech according to the rules of a certain genre, the speaker manifests himself as a bearer of a certain status and performer of a certain role, that is, the choice of the speech genre characterizes the subject to a certain extent; 4) rallying of individuals within the society (hoops on the barrel): for successful integration in the society it is necessary to possess not only the appropriate language, but also the generally accepted rules of speech behavior (p. 132).

Regarding the typology of speech genres, Gorelov and Sedov (2008) suggest allocating a speech genre in the narrow sense – as a microritual, which is a verbal formulation of the partner interactions, i.e. a long interaction which promotes a dialogic unity or a monologue statement containing several microtext units: sub-genre – as a genre form, which is a one-act statement, which is equal to one speech act and can be included into the genre as a tactics (intra-genre tactics – a narrative move within genre interaction); hyper-genre – as a speech form, accompanying socio-communicative situations, which combine several genres (hyper-genre – feasts, genres – toast, table-talk, etc.) (p. 137).

Sirotnina (1999) offers to actually divide speech genres, in which there is no specially planned, deliberate use of the construction of language and the use of certain linguistic means, and rhetorical ones that are deliberately planned and in which some or other means are used. In addition, she notes that all human communication is carried out in speech genres, and thus their study is extremely important. Doubts can arise only when language genres are studied. Obviously, only those can be studied that

are or may be rhetorical at the same time (Sirotnina, 1999, p. 31). Gorelov and Sedov (2008), supporting the opinion of Sirotnina, also suggest identifying the concept of secondary and rhetorical genres (p. 125).

The most exhaustive version of the typology of speech genres belongs to Dementiev (1997, p. 149), who uses the opposition of two polar speech ideas – phatic and informatics as a basis of the classification suggested by Vinokur (1993). For the typology of factual speech genres, the author suggests two reasons: 1) an indirect degree and 2) a position on the scale of interpersonal relations. Informative genres are divided into personally relevant, which worsen or improve interpersonal relations, and personally neutral.

### **Status in social networks: mechanisms of communicative interaction**

Researchers of Internet communication (Voiskunskiy, 2017; Turkle, 2011) distinguish features that are characteristic of all forms of communication in the virtual space: anonymity, invisibility, lack of unity of space and time, creation of “virtual Me”, limited sensory experience, difficulties in the translation of emotions, emotional relaxation, the use of special abbreviations and slang, etc. (Bilopolska, 2015). As for the social parameters of virtual speech genres, almost all of them are characterized by the structure of participation: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many models. The audience of virtual speech genres varies from a few people to a few hundred or even thousands of people. Communication participants, subject, purpose, tone and norms can be completely different, depending on the forms and genres of virtual communication.

But any communication is considered as an interaction of participants of communicative act. In scientific works, this process is called "interaction".

The linguistic scientist Khmil (2004) gives the following definition of interaction: “Interaction – the process of organized verbal and non-verbal interactions that occur during communication” (p. 10).

Many researchers of this phenomenon, interpreting it in their own way, try to more fully disclose its essence, content and function. Batsevych (2004) also suggests his own interpretation of the concept of interaction in the process of communication: “speech interaction is the cooperation of communicants in the processes of communication with the use of means of language code” (p. 326).

That is, the interaction takes place only when both speakers are in contact when there is a dialogue between them. In other circumstances, we

cannot argue that this is an interaction, because there is no interaction between the speakers.

To be successful, a modern person needs to master the art of interacting, i.e., have an appropriate communicative competence and have communicative strategies and tactics. The success of any interaction depends on the ability of the addressee to manipulate the recipient through the means of verbal and non-verbal influence, i.e., the addressee must have communicative skills and abilities (Krsek, 2013, p. 106).

One of the first scientists who made a scientific approach to the study of interaction and communicative acts was Dijk (1989) – a recognized authority on knowledge engineering and discourse theory.

Considering the structure of interactions of communicants in the context of the analysis of discourse, the scientist separates the following strategic steps:

- communicative context – actualization of experience, search of typical models of the situation;
- goals and interests – activation of background knowledge;
- title – introductory thematic sentences;
- sentences – links in the text, their types and relations with the various types of information represented in the text;
- management – control over the implementation of strategic steps in communicative interaction;
- update – inclusion of new information and strategic methods in their own context, in their own strategies; an assessment is an analysis of the received and acquired information, its productivity and practical suitability (Dijk, 1989, p. 92).

One of the differences between the real-life communication and communication in social networks is the lack of auxiliary non-verbal means. However, like any other, Internet communication performs a number of functions in human life. For example, Bogdanov (2011) separates the following social functions of communication on the Internet:

1. Communicative function. Subjects of communication can transfer the necessary information, as well as establish new contacts. Partners at the same time appear in front of each other in the form of virtual images, impressions.

2. The function of self-presentation/self-expression. Social resources have become a kind of cozy personal space, where everyone can find the technical and social base for creating their desirable, virtual “Me”. At the same time, every user gets an opportunity not only to communicate and



create, but also to share the fruits of his work with the multimillion audience of a social resource.

3. Fun function. Many users consider their pages, reading of other people's topics and discussions in comments as entertainment, especially if they are limited for some reason in other forms of entertainment other than the Internet and have plenty of free time.

4. The function of socialization. Blogs and forums, performing functions of social networks, allow supporting social relations which do not exist in real life and learn something new about their friends. Due to the peculiarities of Internet communication, some users use social resources (blogs, forums, social networks) to organize the interaction of the working group, discuss business issues, etc.

5. Notebook function. Like a traditional paper diary, a blog, social networks can be used as places for personal records that may be useful in the future, becoming a way to remind you of the details of any events, a repository of facts. The purpose of such messages is postponed communication with oneself.

6. Self-development function. This function is related to the fact that social resources provide the opportunity for participants to create an image of another "Me" for which the author seeks. Publicity of a personal page makes users competently structure their thoughts, which helps them better understand the past events, their own inner world, to record the changes that they experience.

7. Function of psychological safety valve. After bypass stress, dissatisfaction with any events or circumstances, users have the opportunity to throw out their emotions, to unburden mind. In addition to expressing dissatisfaction, which can be carried out with the help of the traditional diary, social networks create new opportunities: it is a way of complaining about the lives of a large number of people and getting a certain reaction in response.

8. Information function. Blogs and forums are the perfect means to receive and share information. Many blogs are actually built up as a chain of news: the authors surf the global web, find something interesting for themselves and immediately put it on their personal diary page. However, readers do not have complete confidence in the truthfulness of information; repeated copying of other people's articles with the addition of their own reflections and evaluations distorts real information, sometimes beyond recognition.

9. Estimated function. Social resources have recently become a significant tool for performance measurement. Social resources proved to be

an effective method for fixing the frequency of site visits, feedback, and determining the level of content (content which has value) for each user (Bogdanov, 2011, p. 116).

All of the abovementioned functions reflect the main causes of the use of social networks in which a person creates space for his own needs: communication (if it is not enough in real life), self-realization (representation of own production), entertainment (use of structural components of the site for games, listening to music or watching videos), informativity (distribution of certain information for his own purposes, such as posters), etc.

The foregoing makes it possible to argue that the research of the speech genre is an actual phenomenon in both linguistics and the Internet. With its development, a new epoch of researchers of the phenomena of speech communication and interaction begins. As a category of communicative linguistics and linguistic pragmatics, the concept of the speech genre in some way correlates with other concepts and categories of language code in communication, primarily communicative situation, discourse and speech act. In our opinion, there is every reason to consider the relation between the speech genre and the communicative situation as hierarchical: speech genres consist of a set of communicative situations, which, in its turn, is a complex set of speech acts.

Functional features of social networks give us an opportunity to analyze the multi-genre spectrum of speech communication and to distinguish the status in social networks as one of its genres in the structure of discourse. Each function in one way or another is related to the active actions of users, their interaction. This happens both through SMS-messages in the social network, and indirectly – through the status on a personal page. That is, interactivity occurs when commenting on a particular status, depending on its type.

## **Conclusions**

The speech genre originates from the classical theory of speech genres, established by Bakhtin (1997) and developed by Bogin (1997), Goldin (1999), Gorelov (2008), Dementiev (1997, 2002), Dolinin (1999), Odintsov (1980), Sirotinina(1999), Solganik et al. (1978), Fedosyuk (1997), Shmeleva (1997) and others. The virtual speech genre operates on the Internet and it is intended to electronic communication, similar in form to the traditional communication. Scientific achievements dedicated to the

typology of speech genres have new forms and approaches which are associated with the integration and globalization processes in society.

Virtual communication is a form of communication which is carried out by means of the Internet and has expressions through social status.

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