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A Discursive and Stylistic Analysis of Digital Communications in Public Administration: Stating a Problem

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ABSTRACT

The transmission of information through electronic technologies leads to the transformation of the texts that provide a dialogue between government and society. New qualities of these texts ("hypertext", "interactivity", "multimodality", etc.) significantly distinguish electronic materials from traditional written texts. In this connection, the article raises the **problem** of a new object of speech studies: so called media product. To solve this problem, the authors propose a **transdisciplinary approach** based on the achievements of adjacent sciences: functional stylistics, discourse theory, management theory, jurisprudence, sociology, psychology and others. Within the limits of the problem posed, the authors' attention is focused on a number of actual **tasks** of speech studies: *a.* genre-stylistic classification of digital texts presented by executive authorities; *b.* identification of means of text influence on the addressee in a media dialogue between the authorities and society; *c.* working out of recommendations on creating digital texts of high quality. The scale of the problem posed is conditioned by multitasking of public administration, the influence of numerous discursive factors on power – society communication, by diversity of media texts created by public administration. The **scientific significance** of the study of digital content of executive authorities is determined by the need to clarify the discursive and stylistic features of actual official – business communication. Within the framework of this communication media products of various genre and format types are created: from traditional official texts to the texts bordering on other functional styles. These types of the Russian executive authorities' texts have not yet received a comprehensive linguistic description. The **novelty** of this task is determined by *a.* minimal exploration of media products of the Russian administration texts; *b.* the introduction of the concept *executive authorities' digital discourse* (i.e., digitally designed discourse) into scholarly use; *c.* the need for a professional audit of efficiency of the authorities' dialogue with the public.

Keywords: executive authorities' digital discourse; media communication; discursive stylistics; official speech genres; hypertext; multimodality; interactivity

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ОРИГИНАЛЬНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

Дискурсивно-стилистический анализ цифровых коммуникаций в государственном управлении: к постановке проблемы

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АННОТАЦИЯ

Передача информации с помощью электронных технологий приводит к трансформации текстов, обеспечивающих коммуникацию власти и общества. Новые качества этих речевых продуктов (гипертекстуальность, интерактивность, поликодовость и др.) существенно отличают электронные материалы от

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традиционных письменных текстов. В связи с этим в статье **ставится проблема** нового объекта речеведения – медиапродукта. Для решения этой проблемы авторами предлагается **трансдисциплинарный подход** с опорой на достижения смежных наук: функциональной стилистики, теории дискурса, теории управления, правоведения, социологии, психологии и др. В рамках поставленной проблемы акцентируется внимание на ряде **актуальных задач** речеведения: 1) жанрово-стилистической систематизации электронного контента исполнительной власти; 2) выявлении эффективных способов речевого воздействия на адресата в медийном сегменте диалога власти и общества; 3) разработке методических рекомендаций по созданию качественных речевых продуктов. Масштабность поставленной проблемы обусловлена многозадачностью государственного управления, влиянием на коммуникацию власти и общества многочисленных дискурсивных факторов, большим разнообразием медиатекстов, функционирующих в сфере государственного управления. **Научная значимость** изучения цифрового контента органов исполнительной власти определяется необходимостью уточнения дискурсивно-стилистических параметров современной официально-деловой коммуникации. В рамках этой коммуникации создаются речевые продукты разных жанровых и форматных типов – от «классических» деловых до гибридных, пограничных с другими функциональными стилями. Новые типы текстов российской исполнительной власти еще не получили разностороннего лингвистического описания. **Новизна** исследования обусловлена не изученным ранее материалом – медиаконтентом органов исполнительной власти Российской Федерации, введением в научный оборот понятия «цифровой дискурс исполнительной власти», а также необходимостью профессионального аудита эффективности интернет-коммуникации исполнительной власти с обществом.

Ключевые слова: цифровой дискурс исполнительной власти; медиакommunikация; дискурсивная стилистика; жанры деловой речи; гипертекст; поликодовость; интерактивность

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Introduction

The improvement of the authority of the Russian executive power in the public consciousness is largely determined by the nature of the interaction with power and citizens. The communicative component (i.e., the dialogue between the authorities and society) plays an important role in this interaction. A special communicative environment (discourse of executive power) is formed in the process of administration activities: law-making; law enforcement; control and supervision over the law's implementation; information on the power work, etc. The linguistic side of this discourse is extra-linguistically determined by a special type of socio-cultural activity, within which special types of texts are formed.

In the context of the development of modern information technologies, there is a significant transformation of the ways and techniques of speech interaction between the authorities and society. The functions of the executive administration (implementing the law, informing the public, considering citizens' appeals) cause the shift of a part of the communication to the web space, the use of various channels of the dialogue with citizens: websites of executive power departments, publics in social nets, official channels in

messengers, blogs and accounts of administration officials in microblogging services, etc.

By the type of its structure, the executive authorities' digital discourse is a multisemiotic formation, including objects different by nature: verbal texts, images, multimedia materials, etc. The specificity of communication mediated by digital technologies is so great that the verbal component of information products is transformed significantly under the influence of new conditions of functioning on the Internet. In the digital environment, the speech products of the executive power possess specific features: hypertextuality, interactivity, multimodality, etc. The features distinguish electronic materials from the traditionally written ones significantly. The Internet communication generates a new object of speech science: a media product. The product requires working out adequate methods based on transdisciplinary approach, i.e., involving data from adjacent disciplines: political science, law, sociology, psychology, management theory, etc.

All mentioned above allow us to formulate the following problems as relevant to actual speech studies: *a.* the search for and arguments for new approaches to the media communications research; *b.* the working out of genre-stylistic typology of

media texts; c. the identification of effective ways of speech influence on the addressee in media texts of executive authorities; d. professional linguistic audit of digitally designed content; e. the development of scientifically based recommendations aimed at improving the content quality.

Current state of the problem and methodology

In modern linguistics, the studies on the Internet communication are carried out within the framework of media linguistics [1–3], media stylistics [4, 5], the Internet stylistics [6], and studies on genres on the Internet [7–9]. The media forms of dialogue between the authorities and citizens are studied in political science [10], sociology [11], the Public Relations theory [12, 13]. In the works above mentioned, it has been established that under the influence of changing communication channels, the transformation of communication structure takes place. To that “cloning” of functional styles of modern Russian language, transformation and hybridization of traditional verbal genres and development of new (“creolized”) speech products are observed. Under the influence of intensively developing digital technologies, audio-visual (multimodal and hypertext) ways of informing are activated.

At the same time, nowadays studies focus on the functioning of the mass-media means on the Internet. Digitalizing of the managerial functions of the executive authorities remains an unfulfilled task in Russian and foreign linguistics. In particular, the task of forming a typology of administration digital texts (at both the federal and regional levels) has not yet been undertaken. Extralinguistic factors influencing the executive power discourse have not been studied; mechanisms of transforming traditional official texts into digital implementation have not been established; grounds for assessment of the quality of web texts have not been determined; recommendations for increasing the efficiency of communicative impact of the power on society have not been developed.

To study stylistic peculiarities of administrative web texts, it is advisable to use the **functional-stylistic approach** devised in the following works [14, 15]. The functionally-stylistic method of speech analysis, substantiated by Prof. M.N. Kozhina, makes revealing of linguistic and stylistic specificity of a text possible. Prof. Kozhina’s method takes

into account the influence of extralinguistic factors on a text’s semantic structure (i.e., socio-cultural conditions in which verbal communication is taking place). Functional stylistics has established the basic extra-linguistic factors that determine the linguistic specificity of official-business speech. These are: law as a form of social consciousness, legal sphere of activity, deontic (normative) thinking.

In the present digital environment, the linguistic parameters of a business text are influenced by new discursive factors not accounted for in functional stylistics. However, the functional stylistics methodology will allow us to solve this problem. The reliability of the methodology has been repeatedly verified in stylistic studies of scientific texts [16], official-business texts [17], and media [18] texts.

The linguistic-pragmatic aspect of the problem under research can be considered through the methodological principles of **discourse analysis** [19, 20]. The theory of discourse creates prerequisites for creating a new term — *digital discourse of executive authorities*. This term takes into account the implementation of computer technologies into the sphere of dialogue between power and citizens, as well as the transformation of standard texts into various electronic formats on the Internet platforms. In the digital format, the discourse of executive power, on the one hand, retains its invariant parameters (institutionalism, formality, socially fixed status-role characteristics of the participants of communication). On the other hand, the discourse of state power undergoes transformation under the influence of new communication channels and acquires new characteristics (hypertextuality, multimodality, interactivity) which require study.

The abundance of executive administration tasks is a cause of a great variety of new *communicative products*. The latter differ in content, in structure, in stylistic peculiarities, and in type of speech interaction with the addressee. The application of discourse analysis allows us to present the typology of these products on a common basis.

The **transdisciplinary approach** (tested in functional stylistics by the way of studying scientific texts [21]) rests upon the achievements of sciences adjacent to linguistics: law, sociology, political science, document science, management theory, etc. This approach allows us to objectively characterize the cognitive and communicative activity of officials in the executive administration.

This approach takes into account the diversity of the administration's functions: state governing, lawmaking, law enforcement, control and supervision over the implementation of laws, informing about the administration's own activities.

Genre analysis of new materials [22] will allow us to arrange the electronic content of the executive powers' communicative products, to differentiate genres and sub-genres. It can be assumed as a working hypothesis that the genre (as a typical model of text construction in reoccurring communicative situations) retains its significance in the digital discourse of executive power. However, under the conditions of digitalization, genres as multimodal types of social interaction acquire additional formal characteristics, demanding special research.

Conclusion

The study of the digital continuum shaped by the Russian executive authorities is scientifically significant for understanding the discursive-stylistic parameters of present official-business communication. Despite the fact that business texts are studied in various humanities, there are still many unresolved linguistic problems. The problems are connected with the creation, functioning

and perception of the media products that serve the executive authorities' communicative activities.

Let us present the main expected results of a functionally-stylistic and discursive research of digital communication between authorities and citizens:

a. multidimensional characteristics of the Russian executive administration' digital discourse as a new communicative phenomenon;

b. identification of the innovative processes that characterize the digitalization of speech interaction between state and society;

c. expert evaluation of the Internet texts created by federal and regional executive authorities;

d. development of recommendations for government officials for creating high-quality digital texts.

In our opinion, solving these problems will contribute to the development of speech studies, the formation of new scientific topics in the research of official-business functional style, and identification of actual processes in the Russian language. A professional linguistic audit of the digital format of the administration texts will improve the quality of speech products and thereby strengthen the prestige of the executive power among citizens.

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